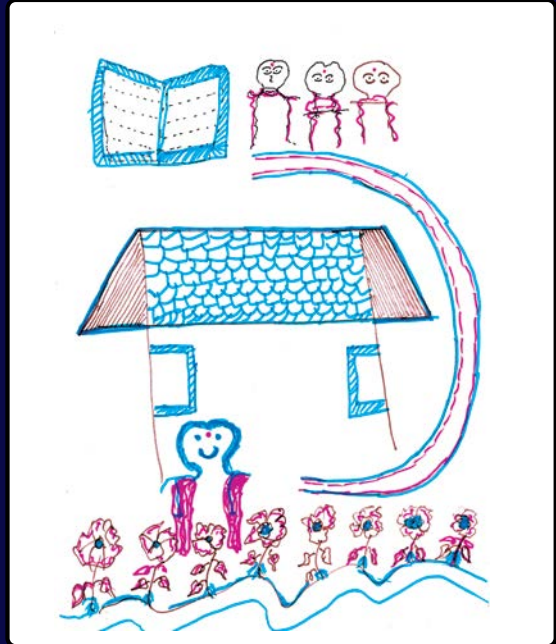


# GENDER and I

## Realisation and Inspiration



*Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society*



# Preface

## **What is this and Why ?**

During the facilitation of participatory process on raising gender awareness and as participants look into their own lives on how gender affected them, many revealing and inspiring personal experiences were shared.

They demonstrate how gender as a social structuring principle operates and impacts the person. Some, in their own ways, and instead of submission, chose defiance, deviance and subversion. This is a record of these personal stories of Gender and I. It is hoped that they can deepen our recognition and examination of gender, and we can use them to support our effort to facilitate interaction and inspire change. Gender equality is not a war of the sexes nor a women-only struggle. Let us listen to the stories of women and men, feel the person's pain, struggle and joy. After all, we are not that inherently different. We share a common humanity.

## **How and where did the stories come from ?**

The importance of sharing gender stories dawned on me when during my facilitation of the first participatory gender workshop in Kathmandu and at the end of the first day a Nepali male development worker shared his new recognition and realisation. He shared about his "automatic switching off" whenever a woman participant spoke. This illustrates the significance of awareness raising and reflection at the personal level. It also demonstrates how inadequate the effort is to simply include women physically into development effort without confronting the deeper gender internalisation and daily practices that treat women as not worth listening to.

These short one-incident stories were collected from a course of three years and they were shared during participatory workshops on gender awareness, gender and development, gender and group action and reflection processes, gender and gender policy. During these participatory learning processes, participants were encouraged to reflect on their gender experiences. With the help of their own drawing, each participant shared his/her experience. The stories here are records of these sharing.

## **Whose Stories ?**

Participants of these workshops are related with development effort in one way or the other. They included community group facilitators or social mobilisers, UMN's local partner staff and their members as well as UMN staff. All the stories included here are experiences of Nepalese. There are those with a rural or urban background, of different ethnic, caste and class groups. There are differently abled persons as well. They are women and men coming from different parts of Nepal. They are the authors.

We have changed the names and removed clues of identification of the individuals who shared their stories. The names used are pseudo names. Should you recognize any of those who told their stories, please keep it to yourself.

### **For whom ?**

This is for people who are concerned with creating a freer and fairer family and society for the individuals, for girls and boys, women and men so that each can express their potentials and pursue their choices for the good of all. It is for people who find inspiration from fellow human beings. It is for people who facilitate change processes for gender equality and justice in their daily lives and work.

### **How the Stories are being organised ?**

Each life story has its own power of influence. They connect to us in multi-ways and can speak differently to each of us at where we are at the time. I, therefore, have tried not to impose too much of my sense-making of them as I organised them in simple friendly ways. Most of the stories are told in Nepali during the workshops and Ms Cheli Gurung, my Nepali colleague, wrote down what was shared. A translated English version is also included for cross-culture learning. There are three main sessions: Women's Gender Stories; Men's Gender Stories; Gender Stories of Defiance, Deviance, Subversion. A page with some facilitation question suggestions when using these stories is added at the end should you be interested.

We have accompanied some stories with the original drawings. Not only was the use of visuals able to support the participatory process but they also added more meaning to the telling of the experience.

### **Continuous Process ?**

We have prepared a few questions at the end to gather your feedback as well as the email contact. We would love to hear from you. Perhaps one day a community of participatory gender facilitators/activists can come together in Nepal and build support with each other.

### **Acknowledgement:**

For all those who have made effort to examine their life experiences and shared their reflections, we applaud you. To recognise is a step towards setting oneself free. It is a journey we encourage you to continue on.

### **Hazel Wong Chor Fong**

Gender Advisor

UMN

Kathmandu, November 2018

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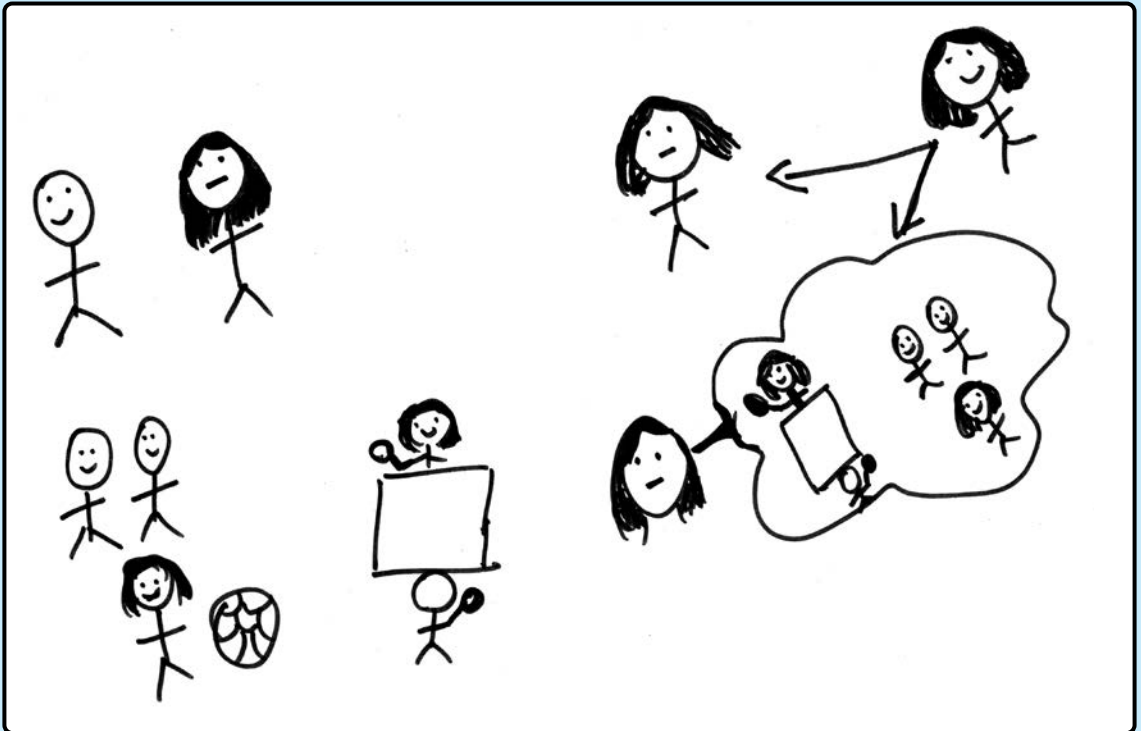
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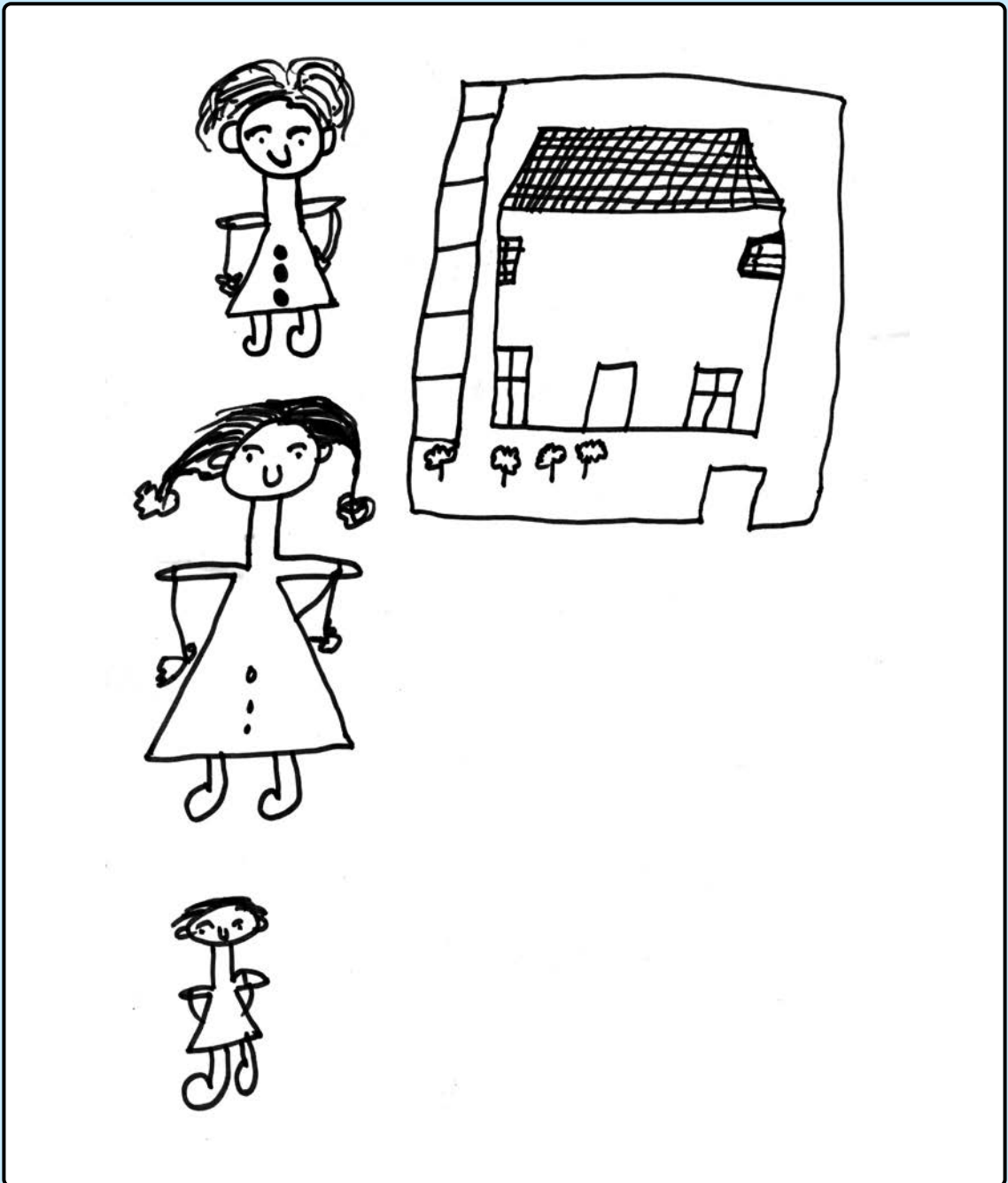
# **WOMEN'S GENDER STORIES**

1.) I am a bold person by nature. I followed what I liked doing and had my father's support. My mother on the other hand said that I was following the wrong path and scolded me for not behaving like a girl despite being a girl. After my father passed away, we usually had arguments. My mother always told me that I should learn the skills and followed the activities like that of girls but I liked studying, playing with boys, and didn't care about household work. After my father passing away, my aunt (father's sister) supported me. If there was anything, I always used to share with her and she would help me. She made it easier for me by talking to my mother and speaking on my behalf. So even now, I always remember my aunt for everything. I think my mother was deeply affected by the patriarchal society which was why she behaved that way. It was not her fault. **Divya, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**





2.) We are four sisters. My father often told us that he would sell the property because he didn't have a son to own his property. So my father was always worried about who would later take the ownership of his property. Later, he sold the property and remarried in order to get a son. He lives separately from us. Me, my sisters and my mother are together. The reason we are daughters is why our father despises us. **Priya, ethnic group, Terai region**



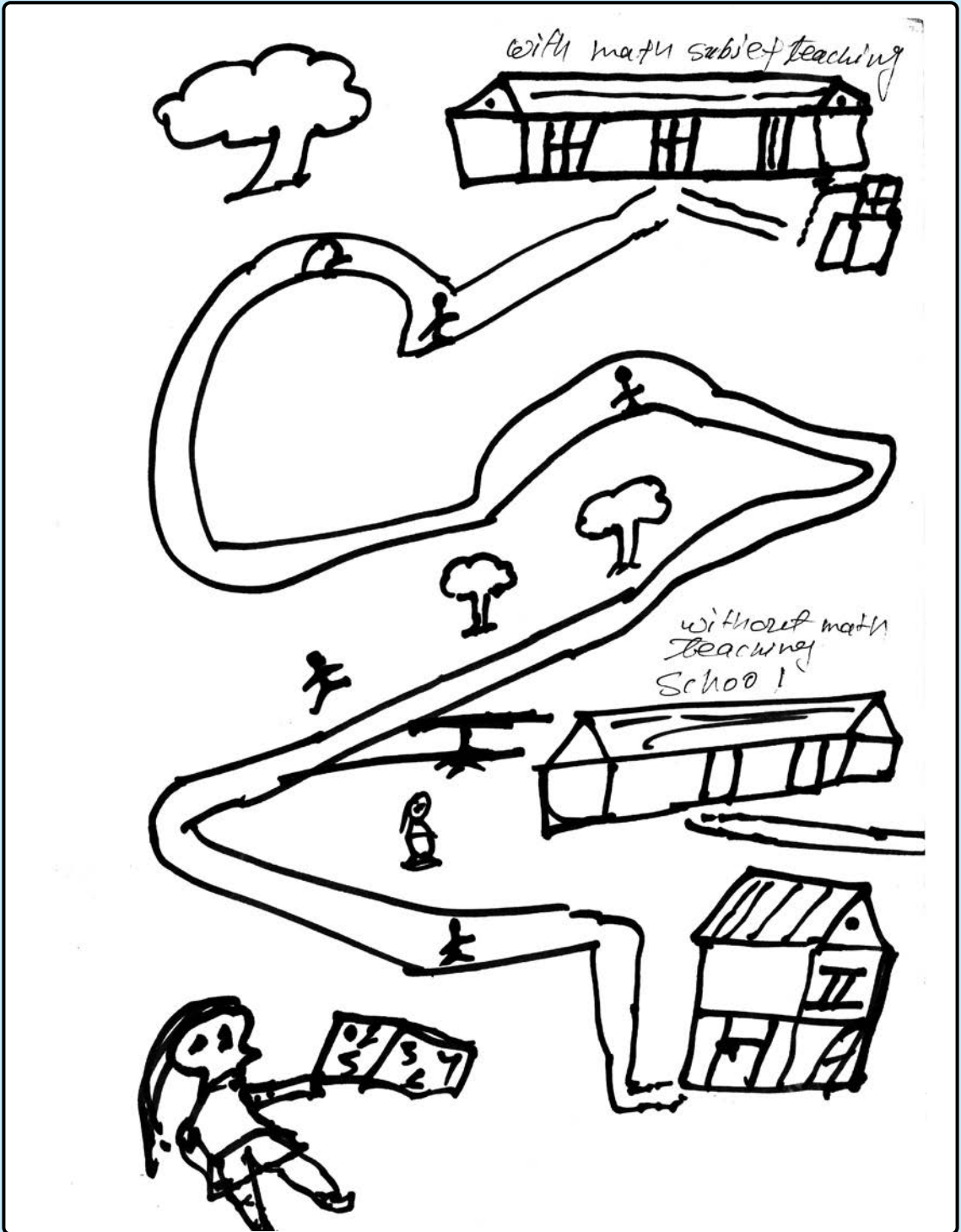
3.) My goal was to be a nurse but due to the mindset that daughters shouldn't study much, I couldn't study. When I was a child, I always sat close to my elder brother who was preparing for his S.L.C. exams and studied alongside him. One day my brother told me to go to the crossroad and study there as he didn't want to be disturbed. So I told my elder sisters that we should go and study at the crossroad as I didn't know what a crossroad was. I thought that it might be a place to study. Because of my innocent response, my elder brother realized that I was really interested to study so he got me admitted to the school. After SLC, I passed the entrance exam for Nursing but my father told me, "are you a son? You don't need to go and study that far." So I joined a nearby public college. Some of my peers studied further. Some are nurses and some even doctors. When I meet them now, I remember those days and feel sad. **Nita, ethnic group, Terai region**



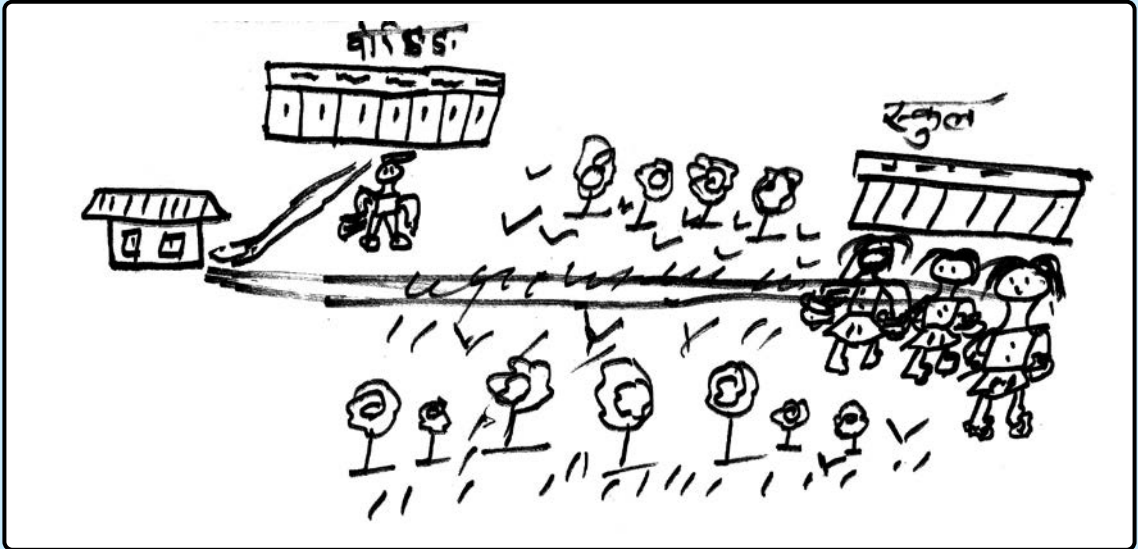
4.) I had a deep interest to study the nursing course. I was good at studies and obtained a good score in SLC exams. But my parents especially my mother didn't allow me to study further. Being a girl I was not able to study the subject of my interest. If my younger brother wanted to study to become a doctor, he would get that opportunity. This is because my parents were financially capable to support him. **Sumitra, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



5.) I had an interest to be a math teacher. Me and my brother went to the same school. As I grew older and reached upper classes, I wasn't sent any longer with my brother to study. So I was not able to study properly and my wish was left behind. **Laxmi, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



6.) We are many daughters in our house. We have an elder brother who studied in a boarding school located nearby our house. But all of us girls were sent to the government school which was far from the house. Our neighbours told our parents to send their son, who was older, to the government school which was located far. But our parents sent him to the nearby boarding school and instead sent us to the government one. Maybe it was because we were daughters. It was not the distance, age or safety they were concerned about. **Bimala, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

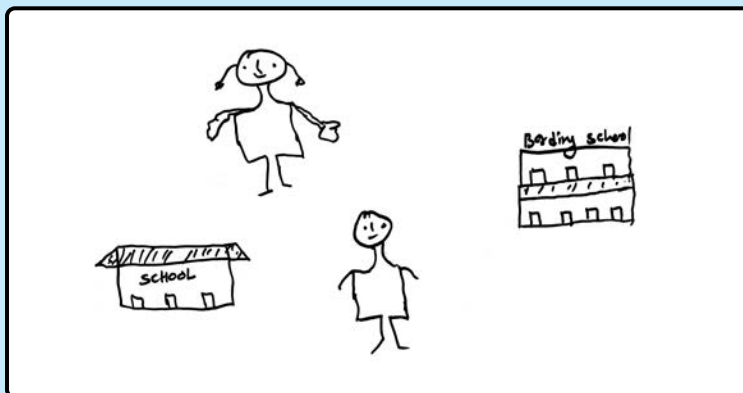


7.) We are two daughters and one son in my family. We two sisters were sent to the government school whereas our brother was sent to a boarding school. Parents also provided him with home tuition and hostel and later he passed SLC examinations with first division. Now our brother mocks us by asking the division we passed our SLC in. If we sisters had the same support and similar good environment we would have done better than him.

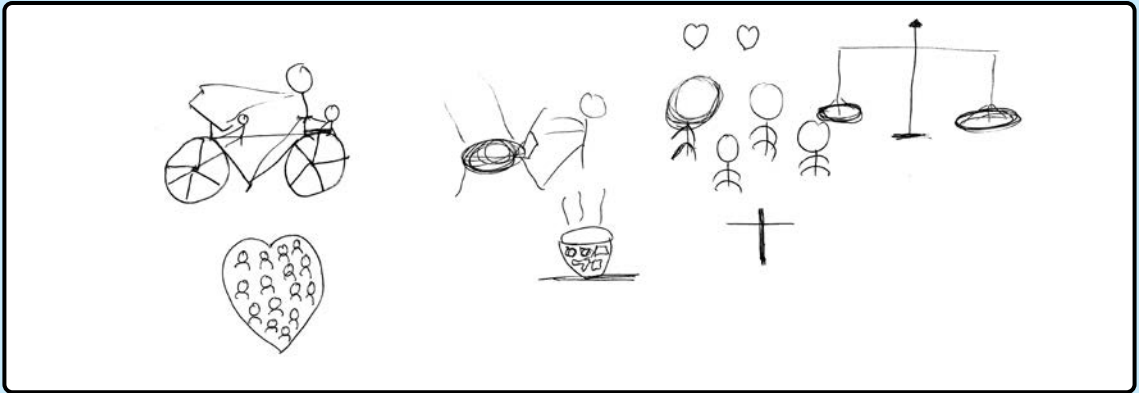
**Priyanka, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

8.) There are three daughters and one son in our family. Our parents sent us daughters to the government school whereas my brother was sent to a boarding school. His English is very good but we don't understand English. When I asked my mother the reason behind my English being poor, she replied that I was not sent to a boarding school for being a girl. It feels sad to think of it.

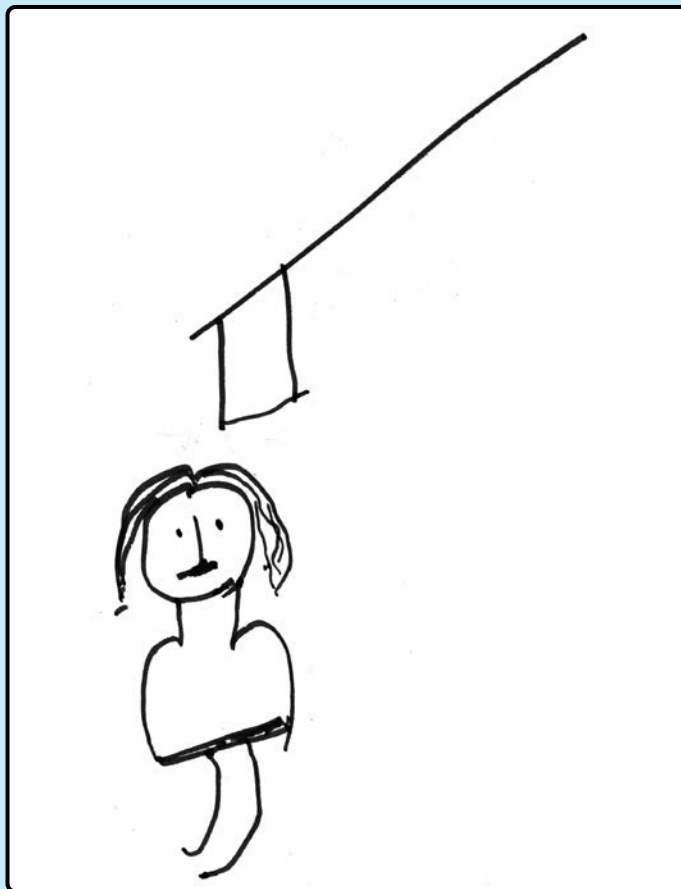
**Sanchita, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



9.) Although I am a daughter, my father worked hard to educate all of us. My father knows that education is the most important thing. He never discriminates between his daughter and son. **Roshani, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

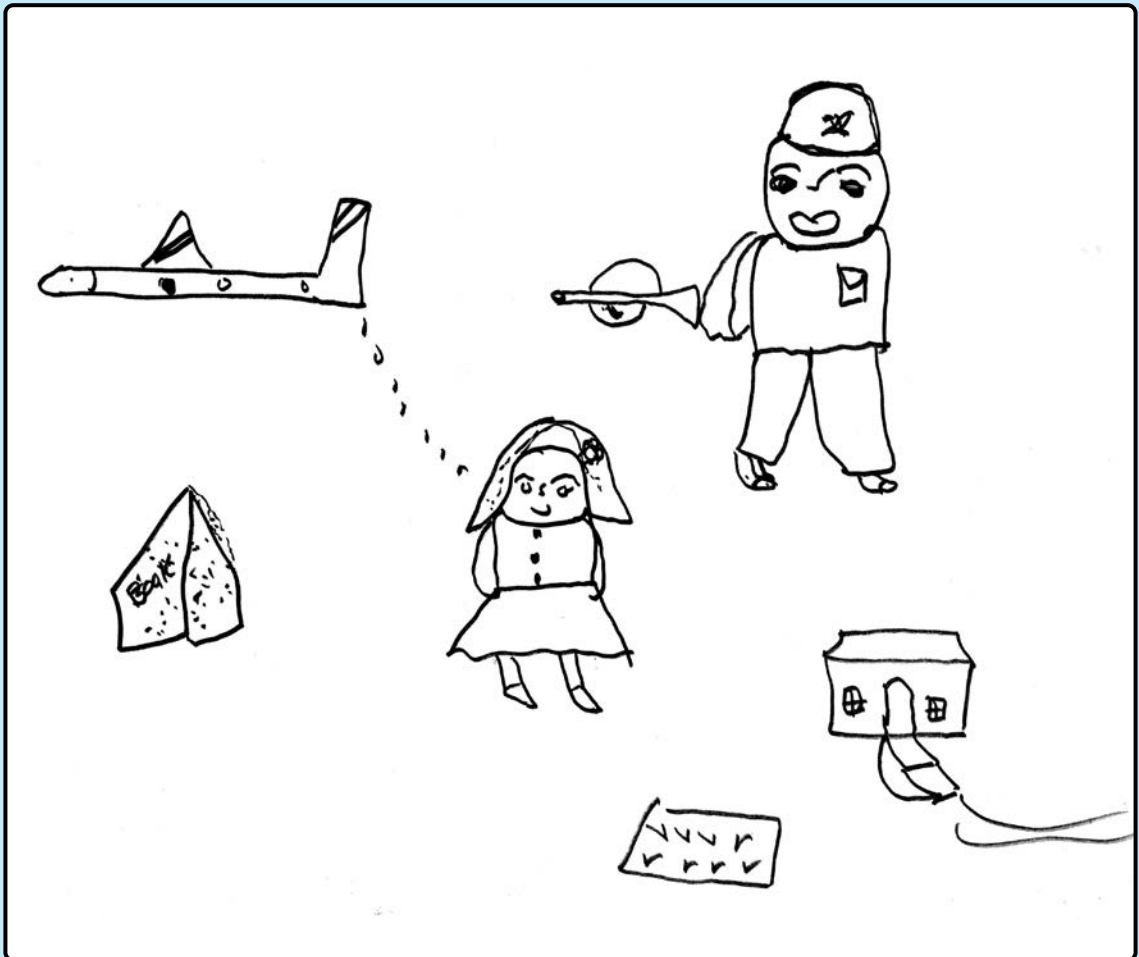


10.) “Why do you play with the axe despite being a girl?” My parents said so and they didn’t allow me to learn the skills of chopping wood as they thought that I might get hurt or have an accident. Now I need to use firewood or meals cannot be cooked. I need to use the axe. I am managing it somehow. **Geeta, Dalit, hilly region**



11.) My father was in the Indian Army. Being army children, we could get the opportunity for good education. So I told him about my interest to study pilot course and become one. But my parents denied my request to study because I was a girl. My dreams of becoming a pilot was left behind. If there was a brother or a son in my place, such wouldn't be the case.

**Sulochana, ethnic group**



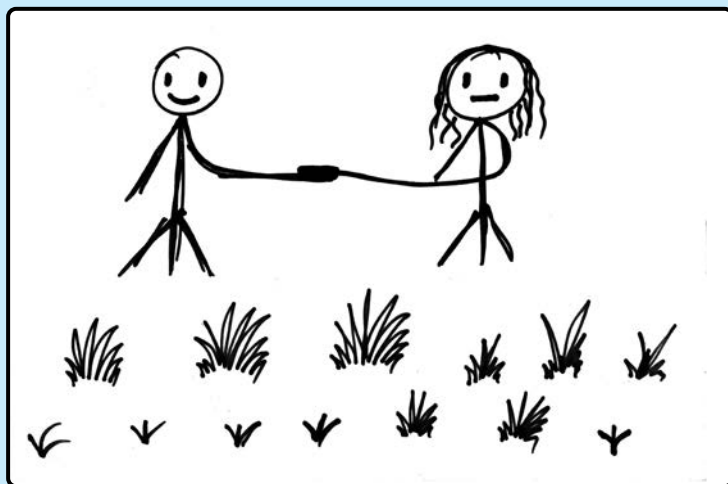
12.) I always wanted to attend college and study but my family instead arranged for my marriage. I still want to do a bachelors course in some subject.

**Rima, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

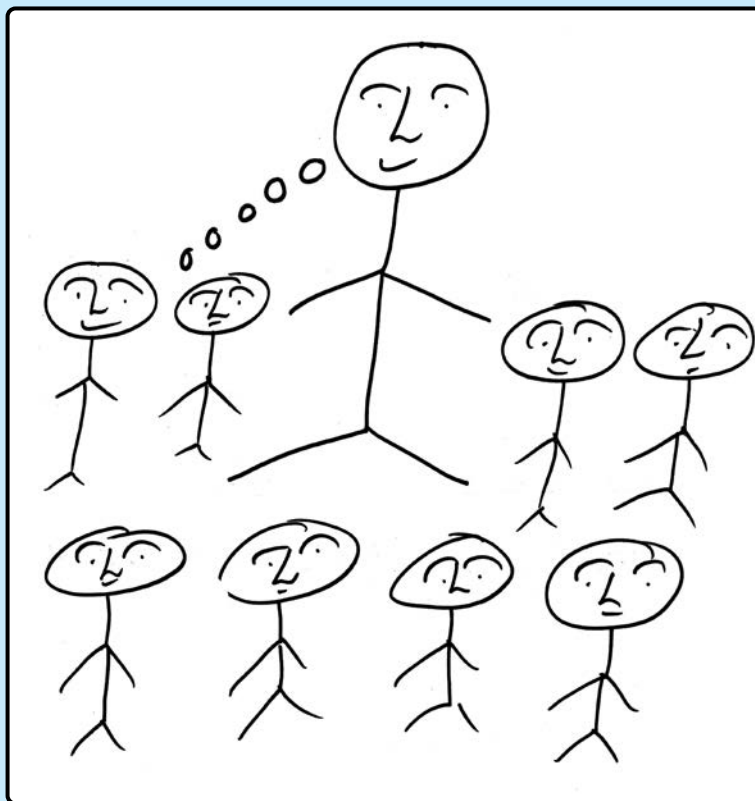
13.) My mother did not encourage me to learn Karate although I wished and liked to. When my brother turned my age, he was forcefully sent to learn Karate. But he didn't like it which is why he made different excuses and finally left it. **Meena, ethnic group, Terai region**

14.) I was a good player of table tennis. I was selected in the national table tennis team but my family did not encourage me to be a player. For my family, me becoming a good player was not a priority. So although I was interested, I had to leave it. **Reshma, ethnic group, hilly region**

15.) My family were planning for my marriage. At the same time, a proposal came. If I were a son, I could have said that I didn't want to get married then. But being a daughter, I couldn't say that. **Komal, ethnic group, Terai region**



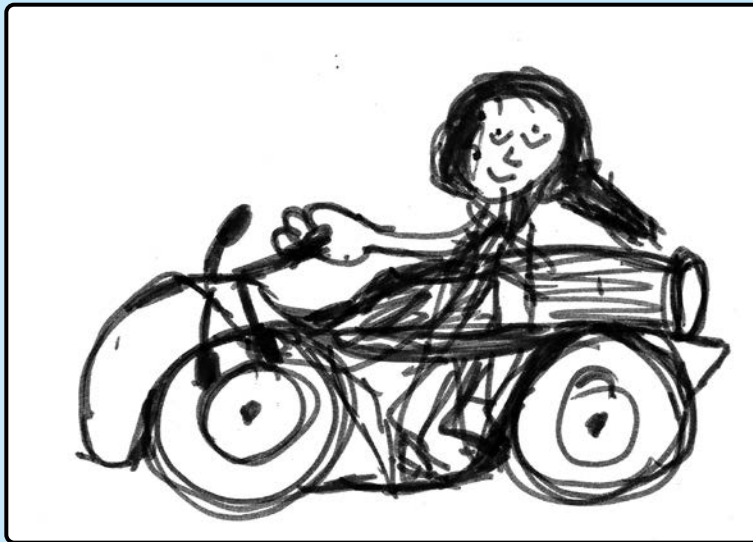
16.) My grandmother was very strict. She did not allow girls to go out. She didn't like us girls to speak or chitchat with others. We needed to stay inside, do the household work and stay disciplined. All these only apply to the girls and not to the boys of our house. They had freedom to go out. **Rima, ethnic group, hilly region**





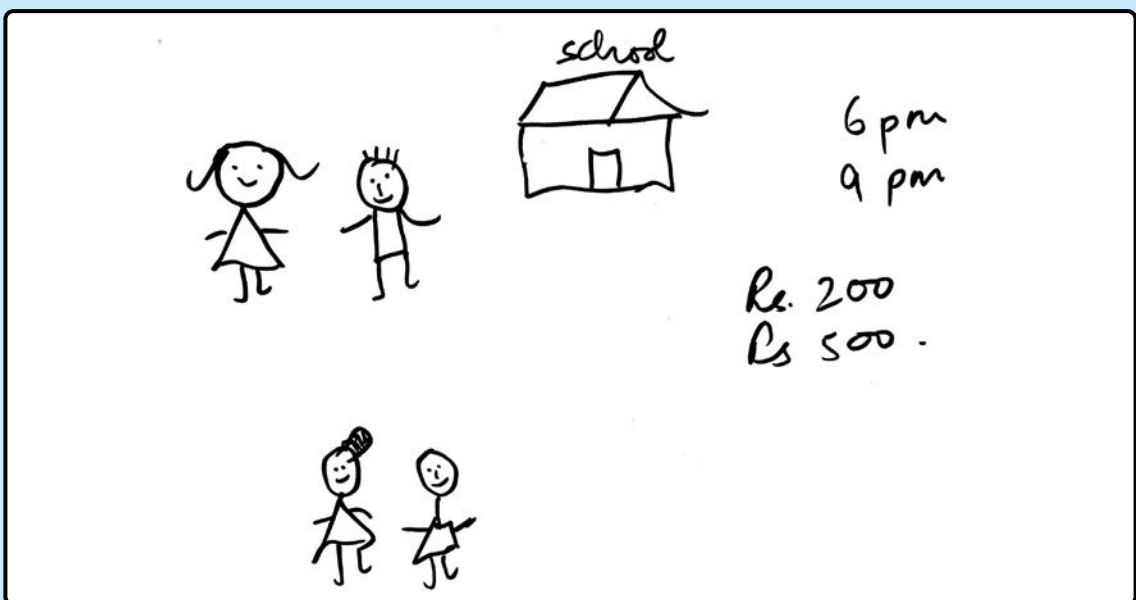
17.) I always dreamed of having a motorbike. When I returned from school, I often thought about how it would be like to own a motorbike. When I reached a situation where I could buy one, I came to know that motorbike was for men, so instead I bought a scooter.

**Ashika, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**



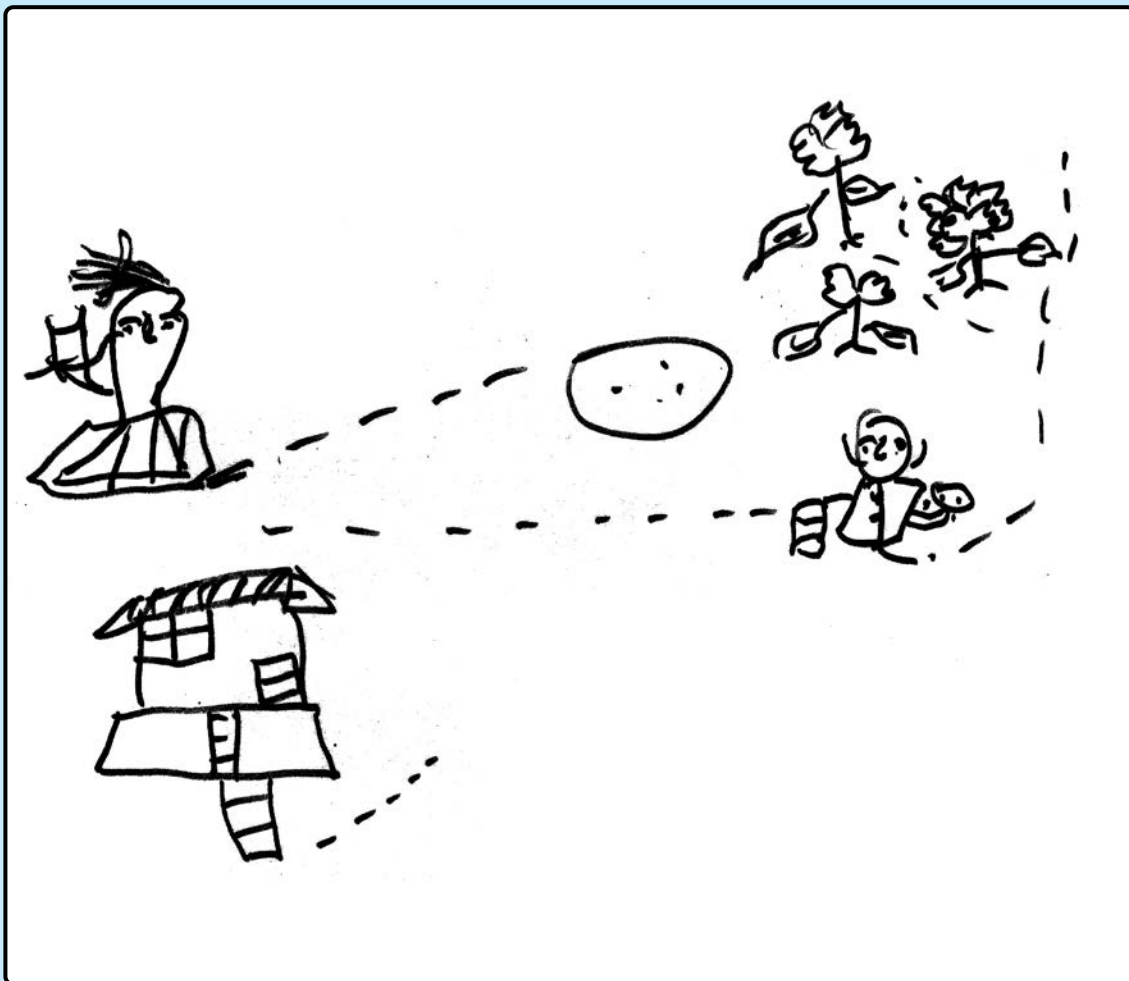
18.) When I was a child I did not experience any different treatment between my brother and me from my parents. Later my father provided pocket money differently to us. My brother started to get two hundred rupees and I got half of his. I was told it was arranged that way as I didn't have many friends and didn't have to spend like boys. I was very upset to know I couldn't spend like a son. After marriage, I felt more changes and differences and I had to do the household work and cook. I did not have to do so much of that before getting married.

**Sudarshana, ethnic group, hilly region**

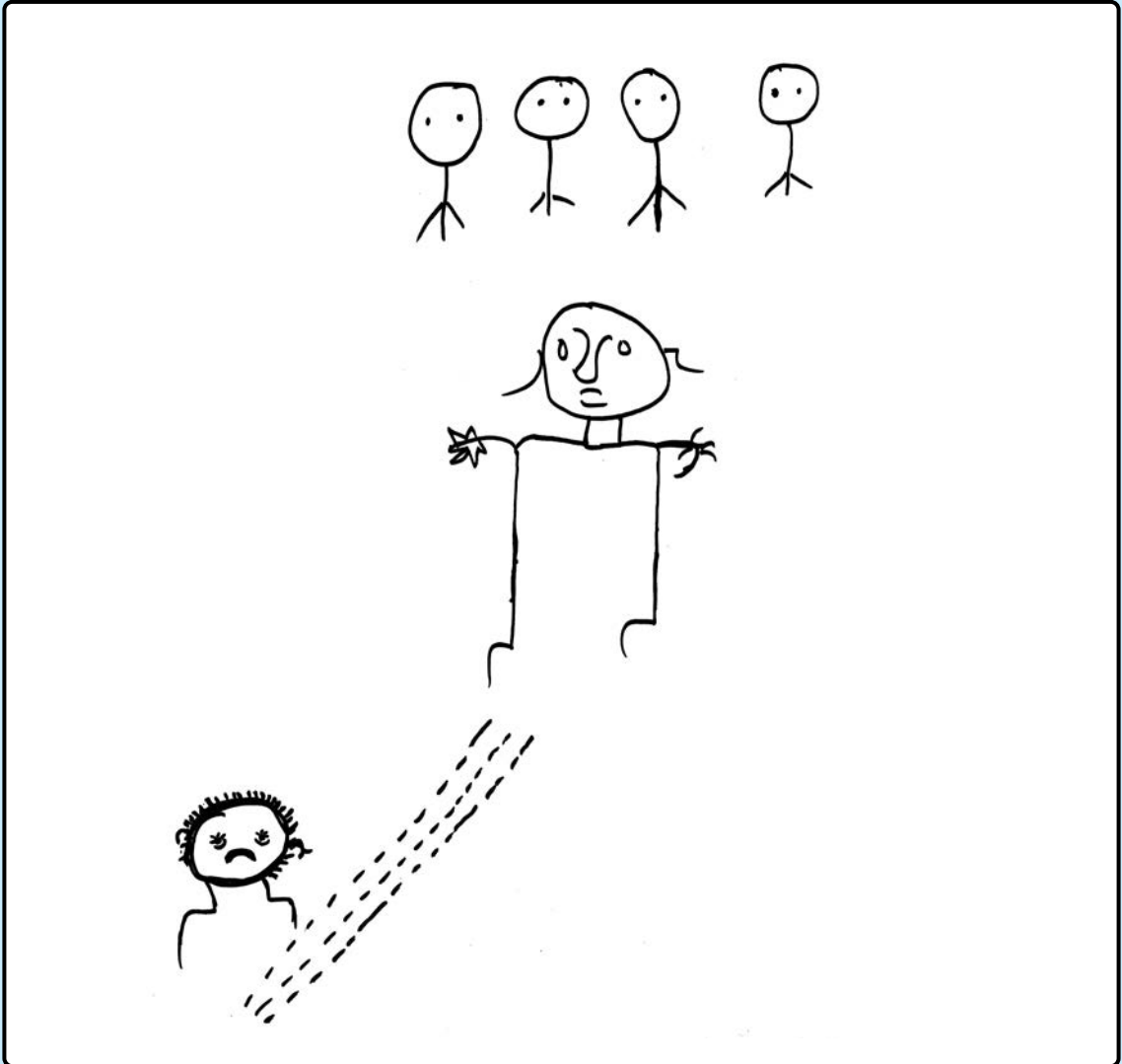


19.) People asked my father, “how many children do you have?” “Oh two girls, no son!” But my father didn’t care about it. I grew up in a liberal family and I could speak my mind. After my marriage I try to be the same me but not really yet able to. **Renuka, ethnic group, hilly region**

20.) We are three daughters. My uncles’ wife always tried to humiliate my mother for not being able to give birth to a son. So I made my younger sister walk around while made her look like a boy and said that she was our brother. I was scolded a lot for doing that. They even scolded my mother. My mother usually used to cry and I used to feel really bad. One day, my mother gave birth to a brother. Happiness knew no bounds. I thought that no one could say anything now. I couldn’t wait to tell my aunt about the news that I now had a brother and that my mother gave birth to a son. So I held my small brother and ran and showed him to her. While running we even tripped but were not hurt. At that time, my aunt still scolded us and she poured out her anger on me. After my brother’s birth, we no longer have to hear scoldings from others. My mother also feels relieved. **Kanchan, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

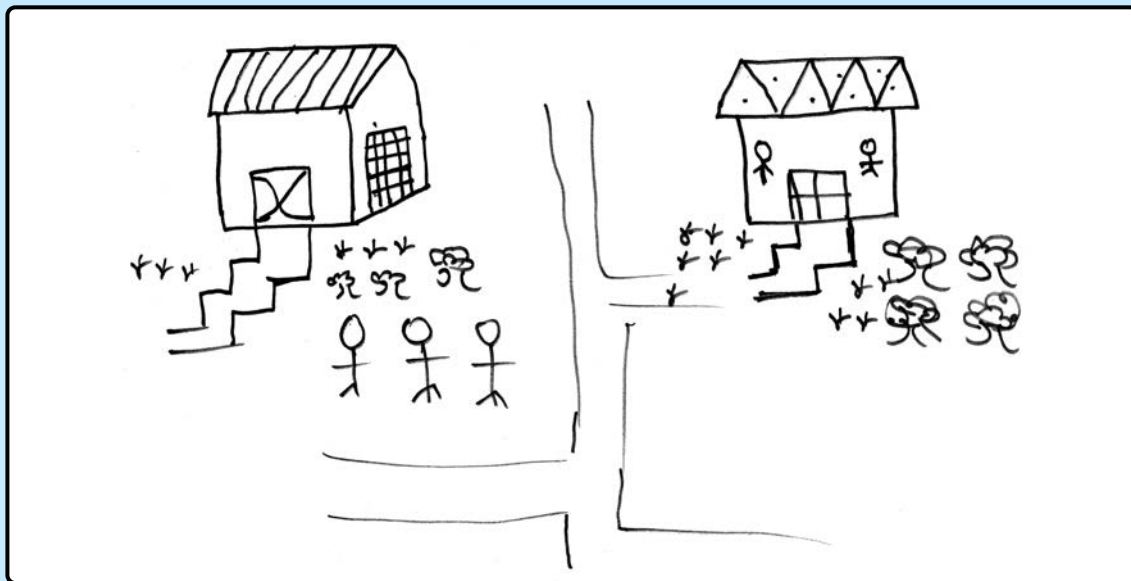


21.) I was dancing with my friends. I saw my elder brother approaching me from far. I thought my brother would beat me. I was afraid and I ran away from there. From that day on I stopped dancing. This is why although I like to dance, I don't know how to. **Sujita, Dalit, Terai region**



22.) We were daughters of the so called Brahman landlord of the village and we were not allowed to go out of the house. My family said that we had all the things that we needed inside our home so there was no need to go out. We were not allowed to interact with the Madhesi community as my family thought that we would learn their langaugae. My younger brother and I took SLC exams the same year. My brother was allowed to study further whereas I was married off. Even after marriage, I was confined within the house and I could not take my studies further. Although we are rich, the perspective towards girls are the same. They also don't allow rich daughters to mingle with poor daughters. **Lisa, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

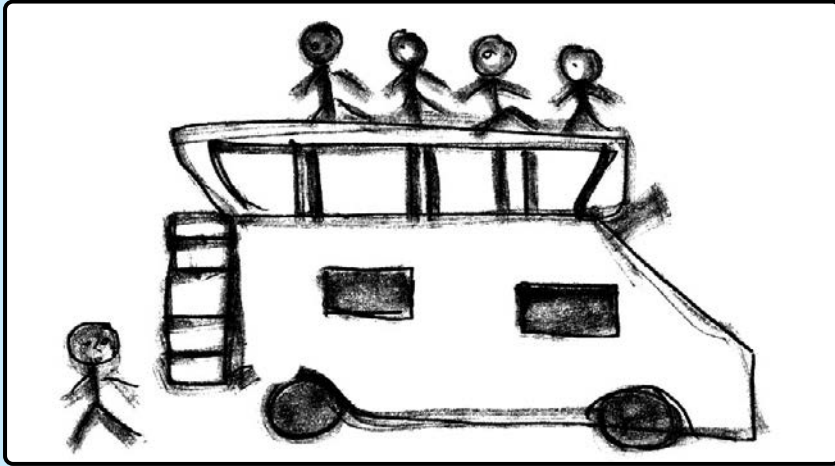
23.) In our Tharu culture, girls are not allowed to play Vailo (folk singing and dancing) during the Tihar festival. All my friends went to play Vailo but I couldn't go. My mother said that if I played Vailo I would not be able to get married so I shouldn't go. After that I never tried to ask if I could go for it. At that time I thought why was I born as a girl in a Tharu family. If I were a boy, there would be no restrictions. **Samjhana, ethnic group, Terai region**



24.) Everything about the discussion and process of dividing the property were made between my mother and brother. The property was divided when I came to know about it afterwards. Due to some work, I was not able to visit home for some time. My brother, mother and none of the others even considered to ask me once. I was not informed. I felt hurt to be a daughter. If I were a son, I would be included in all of these things. My view would be listened to and they would wait for my decision. But being a daughter, I was left out. **Tara, ethnic group, hilly region**



25.) I like to sit on the top (roof) of the public vehicle but the bus people don't want me to do so. Be it a male or a female, from safety perspective, it is dangerous for both equally. But being women, no matter how crowded the bus is, they cramp us inside. I feel unhappy about such treatment. **Luna, ethnic group, hilly region**



26.) I didn't like having long hair and I wanted to cut it short like the boys. But my father didn't give me permission. He thought that girls should have long hair and shouldn't wear pants. Even now he doesn't allow me to cut my hair and wear pants. I cut my hair a bit shorter after coming to Kathmandu but my father was not happy about it. He didn't allow us to do that because he was worried about the criticism of society, that people would say what had the daughters of a high status done. Even now we have to wear long skirts at home. I thought that my family didn't practice unequal treatment. But now I have come to realise that girls were discriminated and there was inequality even in minor practices at home. **Kopila, ethnic group, Terai region**

27.) During the absence of my elder brothers, I did everything at home and in our farm, such as digging the field, cooking, carrying firewood etc. One day I tried to plough the field but my father did not allow me. So although he was sick, he ploughed the field. He said if daughters ploughed the field something bad would happen to the family. I was very sad that I couldn't help my father during his sickness. Being a daughter I felt powerless. **Ramila, ethnic group, hilly region**



28.) My brother who is three years younger than me can help my father to plough the field. I was strictly taught not to touch it. I felt bad when I was not able to help my father's work when he was sick. If I were a boy I could support him. **Nira, ethnic group, Terai region**

29.) To participate in this training, I had to struggle a lot and had to explain and convince my father and my family. If I were a son, I wouldn't have to do any of that. I could have attended easily without any questions and obstacles. After convincing my parents, I got the chance to come here but not alone, my father picked and dropped me everyday. **Barsha, Madhesi, Terai region**

30.) Before I got married, I could go anywhere alone. I could go out with my friends. I had the freedom to talk with anyone. I got married recently. I lost my freedom after my marriage. Now my brother and father come to drop and pick me up. They do so as they think it will be bad if my husband's family find out that I commute alone. They are giving me protection as they think that a married daughter walking alone is shameful, also due to the fear that others might talk behind my back and so that my husband's family will not mistreat me. They have given me more protection after I become a daughter-in-law than when I was an unmarried daughter. **Kopila, Madhesi, Terai region**

31.) I enjoyed engaging in sports at school. After marriage I still wanted to join sport activities but as a daughter-in-law I couldn't. If I were still an unmarried daughter, I could continue playing sports according to my interests. **Lazina, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

32.) There was this temple nearby that does not allow women to enter. But I really want to enter that temple. **Mandita, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

33.) I have one brother. When I was 5, my brother was sent to school but I was not. Although I liked going to school, my physical disability was the reason why I was not sent to school. My parents bought me books to study. One reason why I was discouraged to go to school was that girls needed to wear dress and it was difficult for me to wear a dress with my leg situation. I eventually made use of my sari and turned them into kurta surwa (gown and trousers) which I could wear to school. With my clutches, I finally was able to go to school. But in school, I felt insecure due to my physical difference. I became depressed and stopped going to school eventually. **Sheela, differently abled woman, ethnic group, Terai region**

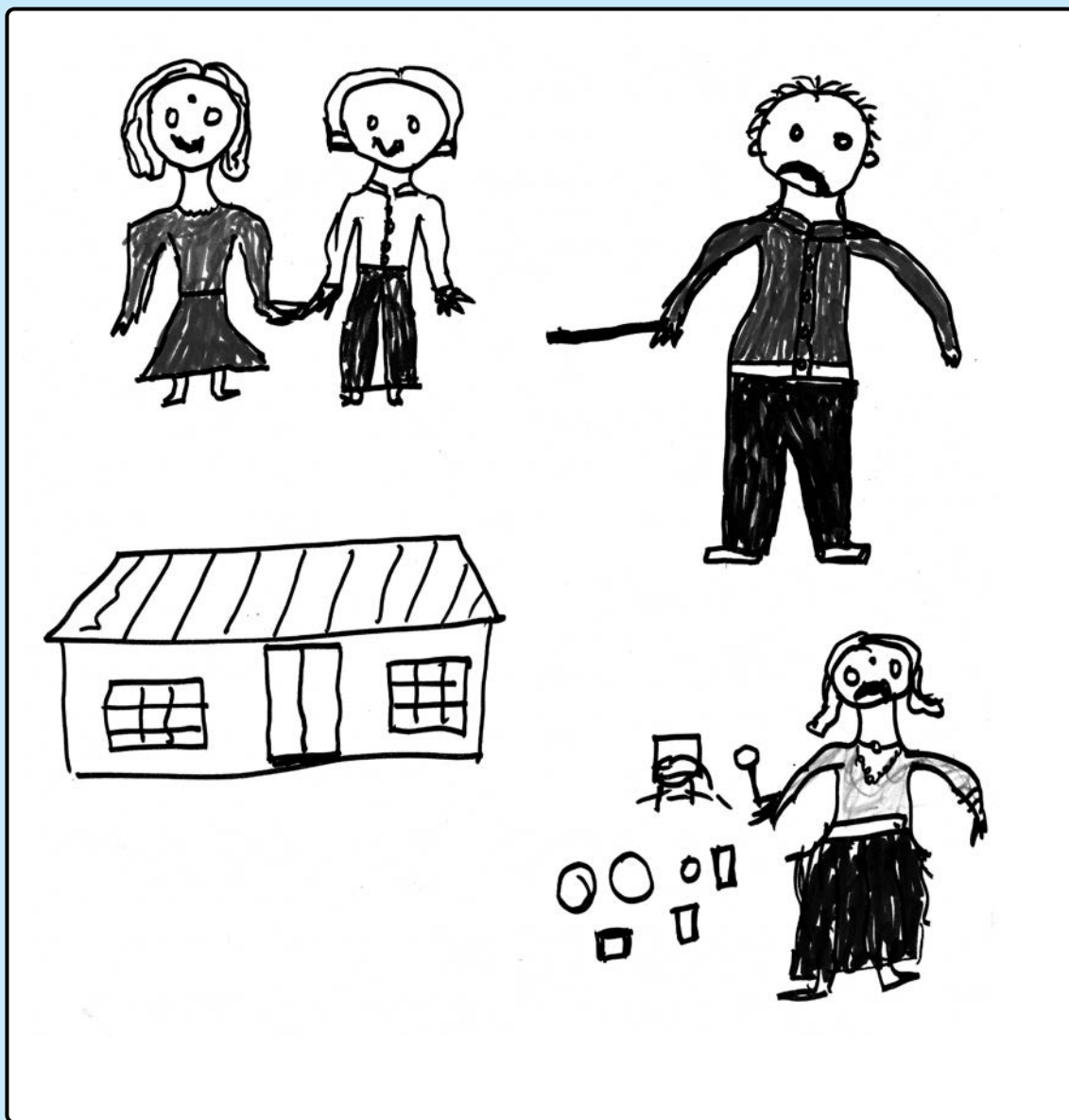
34.) There were four members in the family including me, younger brother and my parents. I was not given proper medical attention when I was young. I think it was because I was a girl. It was much later in life that I managed to get the treatment that I needed but I had already experienced a lot of discrimination because I was different. At home, when food was served by my mother, my brother would get a bigger and better portion and I was given little. It was only after my sister-in-law joined the family and she started serving food. She gave me equal portion. **Jenisha, woman with a physical condition, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



35.) I did not follow Chhaupadi practice (menstruation restrictions) but after marriage, my husband's family wants me to follow it. I follow the practices but feel uncomfortable and I don't want to do. I am still struggling with this. **Yamuna, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

36.) My menstruation started when I was 12 years old. After that, I experienced many restrictions from my family especially from my mother. I had to stay away from my friends, had to stay alone and couldn't touch things during menstruation. Once I started laughing and talking with my friends. My mother found out and scolded me. Another time I was playing and making noise with my friends and brother, my uncle who was a member of the ward (village committee) scolded me. Even now when I see him, I remember that moment and I don't feel like looking at him. He didn't say anything to my brother at that time and I used to think why he didn't do so. But I do not practice any discrimination between my son and daughter.

**Alisha, ethnic group, Terai region**





37.) I was in charge of a research project and needed to register with the government office. The government officer asked me who the contact person of the research was. I told him that I was the person. He said, "no, just give me a name, a man's name. What about the executive manager?" The executive manager was indeed a man but he did not supervise my research. The officer questioned me a lot and I had to explain a lot. I felt really bad. I started to doubt about myself and my confidence went all the way down. This did not happen to men. Women in leadership positions experience a lot of hardship. **Bijata, rich family**





**MEN'S  
GENDER STORIES**

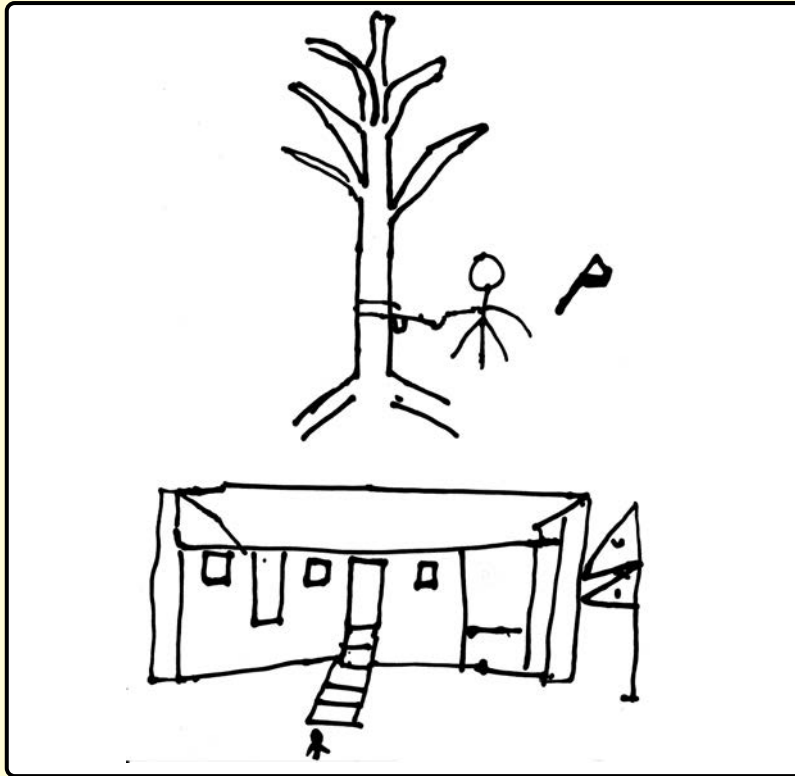
1.) I was around 10 or 11 years old. When my mother was about to go to the jungle where she fetched fodder and firewood, she said, "Come to pick me up if I don't come back after it gets dark." That day, she didn't return and it has become dark. I remembered what my mother had told me before she left. I had to get her. I was scared as it had become very dark. Although I was full of fear, I needed to find her. I took a torch light and ran towards the jungle. The jungle area was even darker. I was scared but I continued. Luckily I found her. Then we both came back home. Now I understand why my mother had asked me to watch out for her. It was because being a son and a man I was counted on to be the protector. **Bikash, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



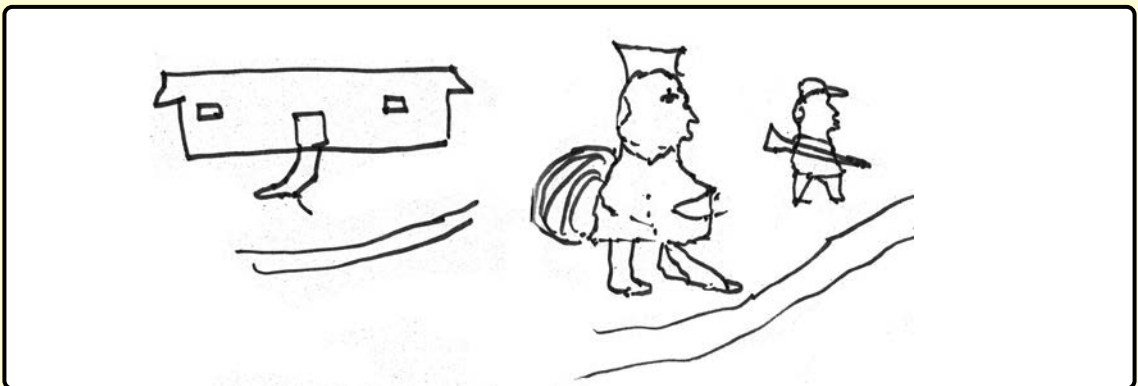
2.) I was sent as the protector of my elder sister although I was smaller and younger. My sister can protect herself, but our society thought that a man is a man and he should protect women. **Dhruba, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

3.) I was 13 years old and I was asked to donate blood to my relative who was sick. I was not ready and felt so scared. But being a boy, I was forced to do it. So I donated my blood then. **Himal, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

4.) When I was young, I was asked to climb trees to cut the twigs for firewood. I didn't like doing it because I was afraid of climbing trees. But my family and society thought that a boy shouldn't be scared, also a boy shouldn't behave like a girl. Due to such sayings, despite being scared I did things that I was afraid of. Being a boy, I was also sent to school. If I was a daughter, maybe I wouldn't have got the opportunity to study. **Harka, ethnic group, hilly region**



5.) I was in grade 7 during the Maoist conflict period. They had organized a programme near my school. I went to watch. Later, they took me and some of my friends with them. Our studies were halted. After they took us, we had to follow activities like attack houses, confiscate property and money, fight, etc. After peace accord, I returned and continued my studies. Currently I am working in the community. If I were a girl, the Maoists would not have taken me away and I could have continued my studies. **Ramesh, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

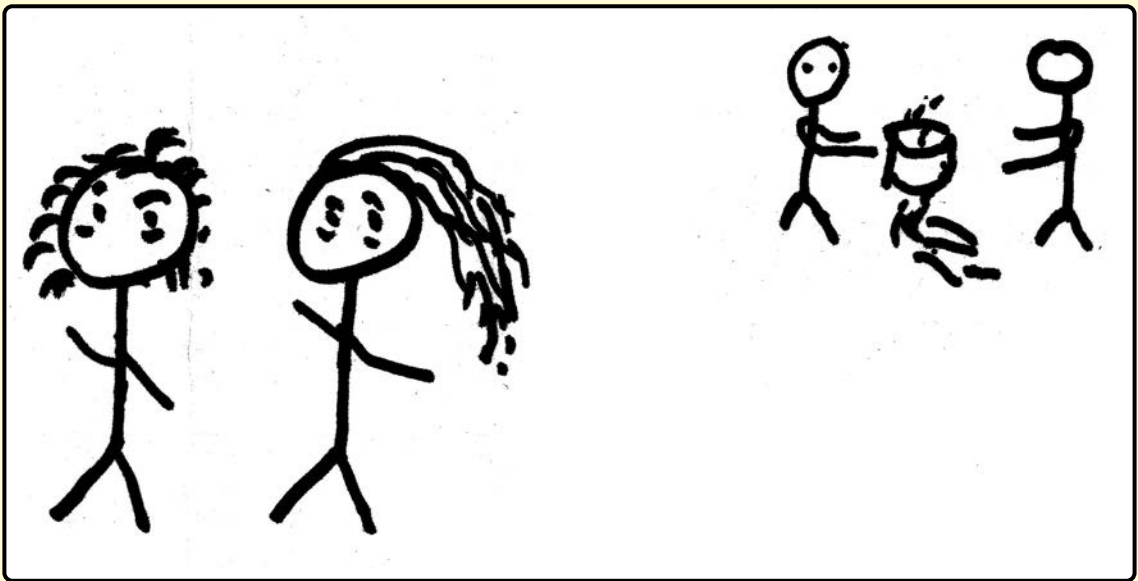


6.) Being a son, from a young age I carried cow dung and ploughed the field while my elder sisters stayed at home. They were not asked to do these work in our community. Such work needed to be done by males whether they were capable or not. I used to think that if I were a girl, I wouldn't have to do it. **Bijaya, Brahmin/Chettri, ethnic group, hilly region**



7.) Since childhood I wanted to travel my country, so I wanted to become a driver. I tried to be one but my family did not allow me. Being the only son in the family, I had to look after the house and family. The understanding that in our society men have the freedom to go anywhere didn't apply in my life. **Subodh, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

8.) I like staying with my wife, hold her hand and walk. I like to talk to her with a smile which my wife also likes. But we cannot do so because in our society if we do so they say things like we are being shameless, that I am a wife's follower, etc. Despite being a male, I haven't been able to do the things that I like so it must be worst for a woman. **Dipen, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

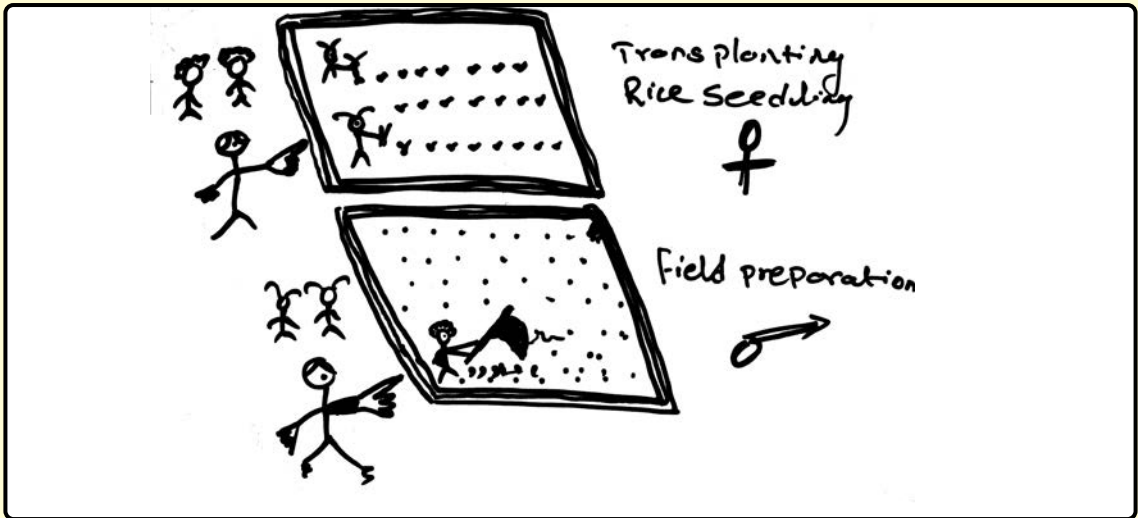


9.) I couldn't even cry when my mother passed away. I had to hide my tears when in fact I was a very emotional person, I would like to cry and share my grief with hugs. But being a male, the society stopped me from expressing these ways. I had to hear things like how could you cry when you were a man. Even today when I think of those moments, I become tearful. Those moments were very sad and painful for me. **Sujal, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

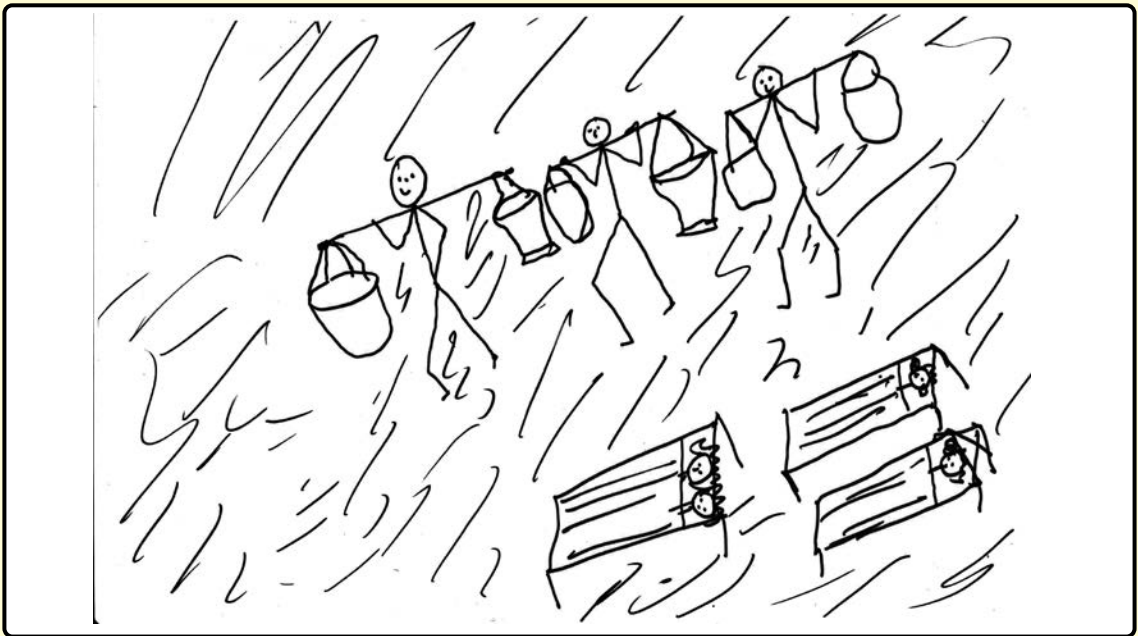
10.) My mother breathed her last on my lap. I took care of my mother till the end of her life. She never said anything to me. As she was nearing her death, she asked to call my younger sister who was married. I called her, but she was not able to come before my mother's death. I felt really bad. When she passed away, I wanted to cry but men were taught that they shouldn't cry. I couldn't cry. **Akash, ethnic group, hilly region**

11.) When I was young, I was taught that boys shouldn't cook. I went to college for my studies. At that time, I had to cook for myself. It was a difficult time for me. I made many mistakes while cooking. If I were taught to cook early on, it would not have been so difficult for me. **Brajesh, Dalit, Terai region**

12.) During college, as a part of practical session on rice planting, the boys were asked by the teachers to plough the field, whereas girl students just observed. When the field was ready for planting, the teacher asked the girls to do it and the boys just watched. Although we were interested, we never got the chance to plant. **Rupak, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



13.) When I was studying in India, there was water scarcity. The boys were handed the responsibility of collecting water for all the students. Since the water source was located far away with a jungle on the way, the girls were asked not to do it. There were also doubts as to whether the girls could carry the water so the responsibility was given to the boys only. Early morning and in the evening, we had to carry the water which was no less than a punishment. That time we boys used to say that if we were girls, we wouldn't have to do this task. If the responsibility was shared, it wouldn't be such a burden and would be good for both. **Suwash, Dalit, Terai region**

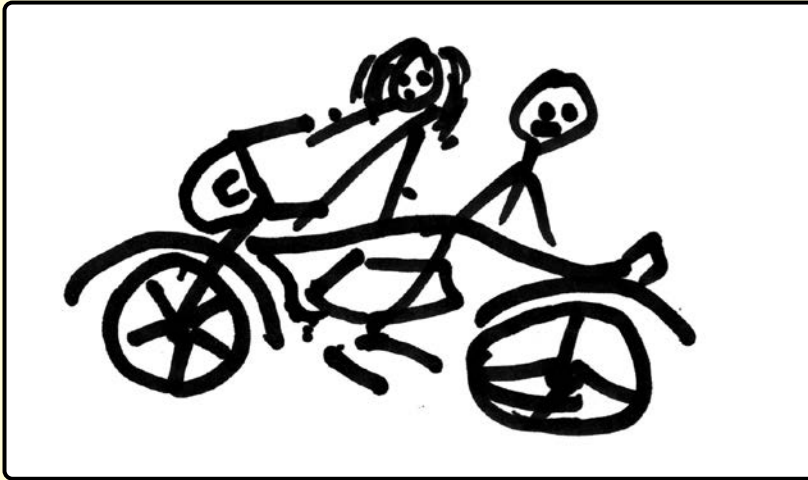




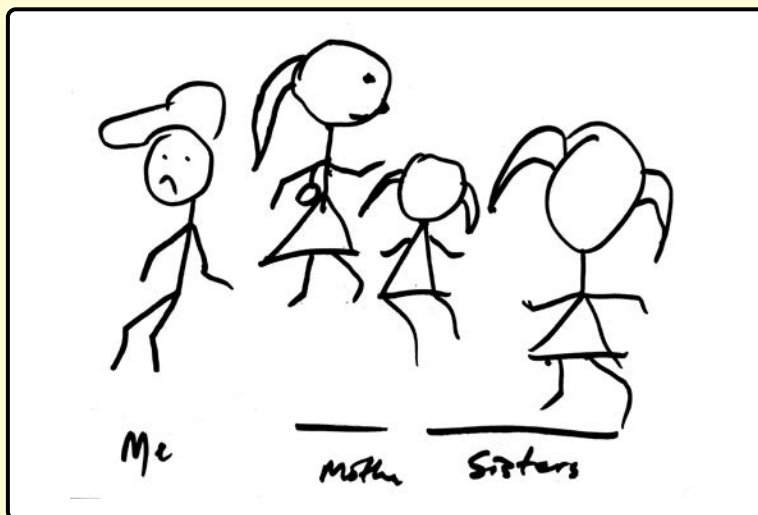
14.) My sisters had to fetch water from the tap which was a bit far from the house. I also wanted to go with them to get water because I could chitchat and play with friends like my sisters. But my mother always scolded me and never allowed me to go fetch water. She said I was a boy and I didn't have to go. She used to say that such work was for women and girls.

**Santosh, Dalit, hilly region**

15.) One day in my village area, I was sitting at the back of the motorbike which was driven by a woman. Everyone looked at us in surprise. When I returned home in the evening, everybody greeted me with "Namaste". They repeated this act three to four times. I understood that they were teasing me for sitting behind a woman driver. From next day onwards, I started to drive the motorbike. **Ajaya, Dalit, Terai region**



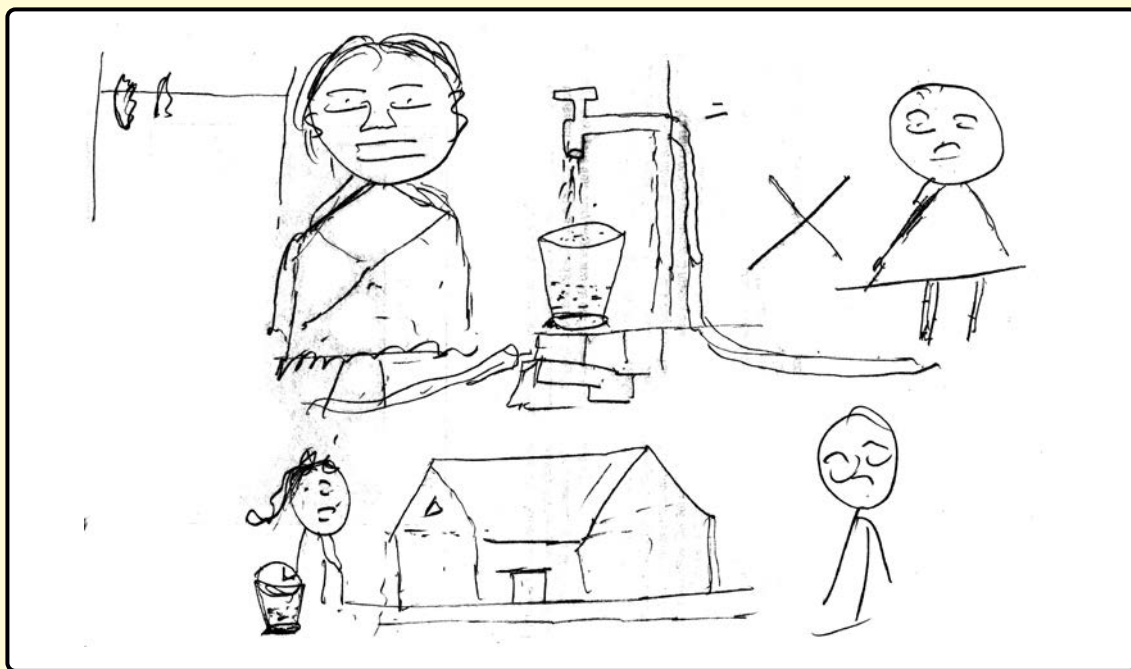
16.) Every year my sisters went to my maternal uncle's home with our mother during the Teej festival (women's festival). But I had to stay with my father and study at home. For me this felt like a kind of punishment during the festival time. I was not allowed to visit my maternal uncle's home because I was a boy even though I liked to. At that time, I thought why were I not born a girl so that I could join my mother like my sisters. **Sandip, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



17.) During menstruation, many women (sisters & mothers) stay together. They work together, stay and sleep together in the same place. My mother and sisters also did the same. Every month, they had to stay alone for three to four days. During that time, my sisters went over to sleep with my mother, but I was not allowed to even touch them. I used to wonder when the menstruation period would be over so that I could stay and sleep together with them. It used to be a hard time for me. If I were a girl, I would be able to stay together with my mother.

**Puspa, ethnic group, hilly region**

18.) One day, I ate a whole bowl of popcorn. My elder sister came and started to cry and scolded me. With panic she expressed, "Why did you eat this? You shouldn't eat this because I am in my menstruation and I have touched the food. Something wrong is going to happen to you." Then they gave me "sun-water" to drink to make me pure. Nothing happened to me. It was all about societal practice, cultural norms and perception. **Kamal, ethnic group, hilly region**



19.) My father gave me money and sent me to buy things from shops when I was young. Occasionally I bought something for myself from the remaining money. And sometimes my father also gave me pocket money so that I always had money and toys, but my sisters didn't. May be my sisters never got the opportunity like me because they are daughters.

**Shirish, ethnic group, hilly region**

20.) I requested my parents to allow my elder and younger sisters to have education. I advocated that they should not be married off before completing their studies which was why my younger sister was able to continue her studies. After she completed her bachelor's level, my parents got her married. When I was not at home due to my graduate studies, my parents took the opportunity and got her married. But I wanted her to continue her studies.

**Gopal, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

21.) The female colleagues that I worked together with were always in a rush to get home after 5 pm whereas other staff especially men were in no rush and returned home slowly. Today I came to realise that they were in a rush due to the household chores that they had to catch up with. **Krishna, ethnic group, hilly region**

22.) In our society if a man becomes sick, the woman in the family takes very good care of him whereas the man doesn't do the same when a woman is sick. When I see this I become upset and angry. I support my wife a lot. **Saroj, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

23.) When I was young, I used to wear long loose pants and a kind of a bracelet/bangle and go out with my friends to play in the cornfield and a jungle near to my home. We used to play gatta (a game played with stones). One day a lady approached me and asked, "are you a boy or a girl?". She wasn't able to recognize me due to the clothes that I was wearing. From that day on, I stopped playing gatta. I removed the bangles that I was wearing. It dawned on me that playing gatta and wearing bangles were for girls. **Raju, ethnic group, hilly region**



24.) I like sewing and even now I still stitch small things by myself. I also stitch for my family. But being a son and that also from a so-called upper caste, I didn't get the opportunity to be skilled in it or take it forward as a profession. **Binaya, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

25.) To continue my further education, I learnt the skills of sewing clothes and did the work of sewing to earn money. At first, my parents said that instead of me my sister would learn it as it was understood that sewing was a woman's job. After I said that I wanted to learn the skill to earn money and study, I got the opportunity. As my parents didn't have money for my education, so I knew I had to take care of that myself. Later, my father bought a sewing machine. I earned about 35,000 rupees and was able to continue my studies further. But although my sister learned the skill as well, she couldn't use it as a way of earning income. After her marriage, both her studies and work were stopped. **Sulav, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**



26.) My third daughter was born in my in-law's house. At that time, there was no one there to help and my in-laws were old. I thought since I was the healthy one, why shouldn't I wash my wife's clothes. I washed all her clothes and did all the other cleaning as well. The next day, my wife and her parents complained and asked, "why did you do so that, what would happen if the neighbors saw it?" They also added, "The neighbors might pity you, it is shameful and so never to repeat it again." I was happy to do the work, but my wife and in-laws stopped me.

**Arjun, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

27.) During school, I once played the role of a girl in a drama. In the drama my name was Mira. After that, my friends started to tease me and laugh at me by calling me Mira. I felt bad. I stopped participating in dramas.

**Paras, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

28.) It was the day of Dashain (local festival). My sister was given money with tika (a sign of blessing on the forehead). But I was not given any money. I started to cry. One of my uncles told me that if I said that I was a girl, he would give me money. I said that I was a girl and he gave me 10 rupees. I became happy and stopped crying. When my other family members came to know about this, they started to tease me. That 10 rupees became heavy for me.

**Nakul, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

29.) At home my parents asked for my opinion and involved me in every event and decision and they still practice that. Today I realize why my parents do that. The reason they ask me and involve me is because I am a son, but my sisters do not have this privilege.

**Udaya, ethnic group, hilly region**

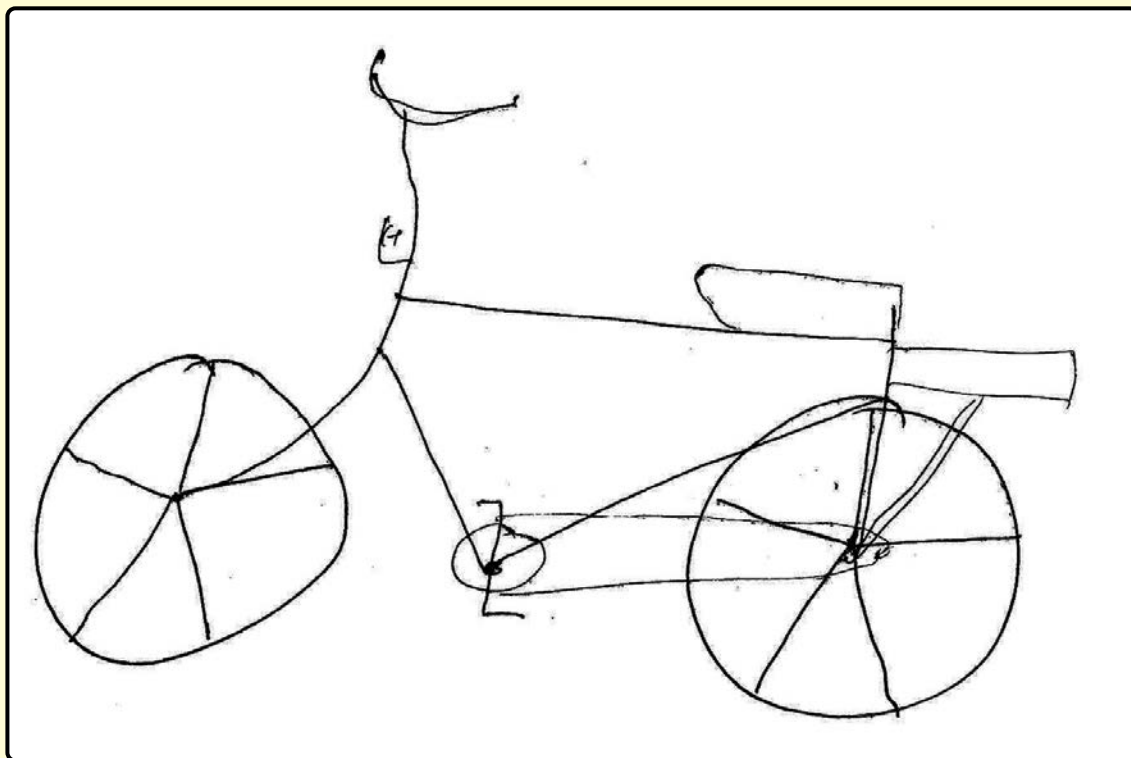
30.) After peace accord, I worked in the community with female co-workers on peace and reconciliation. One day an uncle who was a teacher came to my working area. He left without speaking a word with me. Later he went home and talked bad about me with my parents by saying that your son worked with women. He might marry someone out of our caste, etc. After that, I received repeated calls from home and I was ordered to return home fast. When I reached home, my parents didn't talk to me properly. They said that it was not necessary to have a daughter to lose respect, even a son was capable of doing that. I was shocked. Later they shared the talks that my uncle had with them. It took a lot of time to convince my parents. Later they understood.

**Nanda, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



31.) There was a decision to buy a lady's motorcycle for our female staff for work and we bought it from the city. But my friend didn't know how to ride one. So, I helped her to learn at the school ground. One day my maternal uncle saw us. He did not say anything at that moment. When I arrived home, I found my parents angry at me. Later I came to know that my uncle had told my parents what he saw, and he added many more things and that they should get me married soon, etc. I explained to my parents and finally it was settled. In my view I also think vehicles are controlled by men. Vehicles are not female friendly. **Ram, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai**

32.) One day my friends and I were returning from work and we were riding motorcycles. We saw two women crying and they requested us for a lift. We did. When we arrived at the destination, they got off and went. We were then approached by three to four men who started to quarrel with us and even tried to beat us. Later we came to know that they were husbands and close relatives of those women. They wanted to beat us as they suspected that we were having an unhealthy relationship with the women. After that incident, I have not given a lift to any woman I do not know. **Sudhir, Dalit, Terai region**



33.) I like long hair. So I used to have long and silky hair. One day my father returned from abroad after working there for a long time. My elder brother and I were at the airport to receive him. My father shook his hand with me because he did not recognize me. I told him I was his younger son. He then shouted, "why do you look like a girl?". After that, when he met others, he shared the incident of not being able to recognize me as a joke. So others also started to laugh at me. Later when I went to take photos for my citizenship card, I cut my hair as both ears had to be visible for the photograph. Later my father and others said that to have long hair for a man was also not good from the perspective of religious teaching. So, although, I still liked long hair, I had it cut. Now, when I think of it, I think it is the right thing to cut my long hair although I still like long hair. **Prajwal, ethnic group, hilly region**

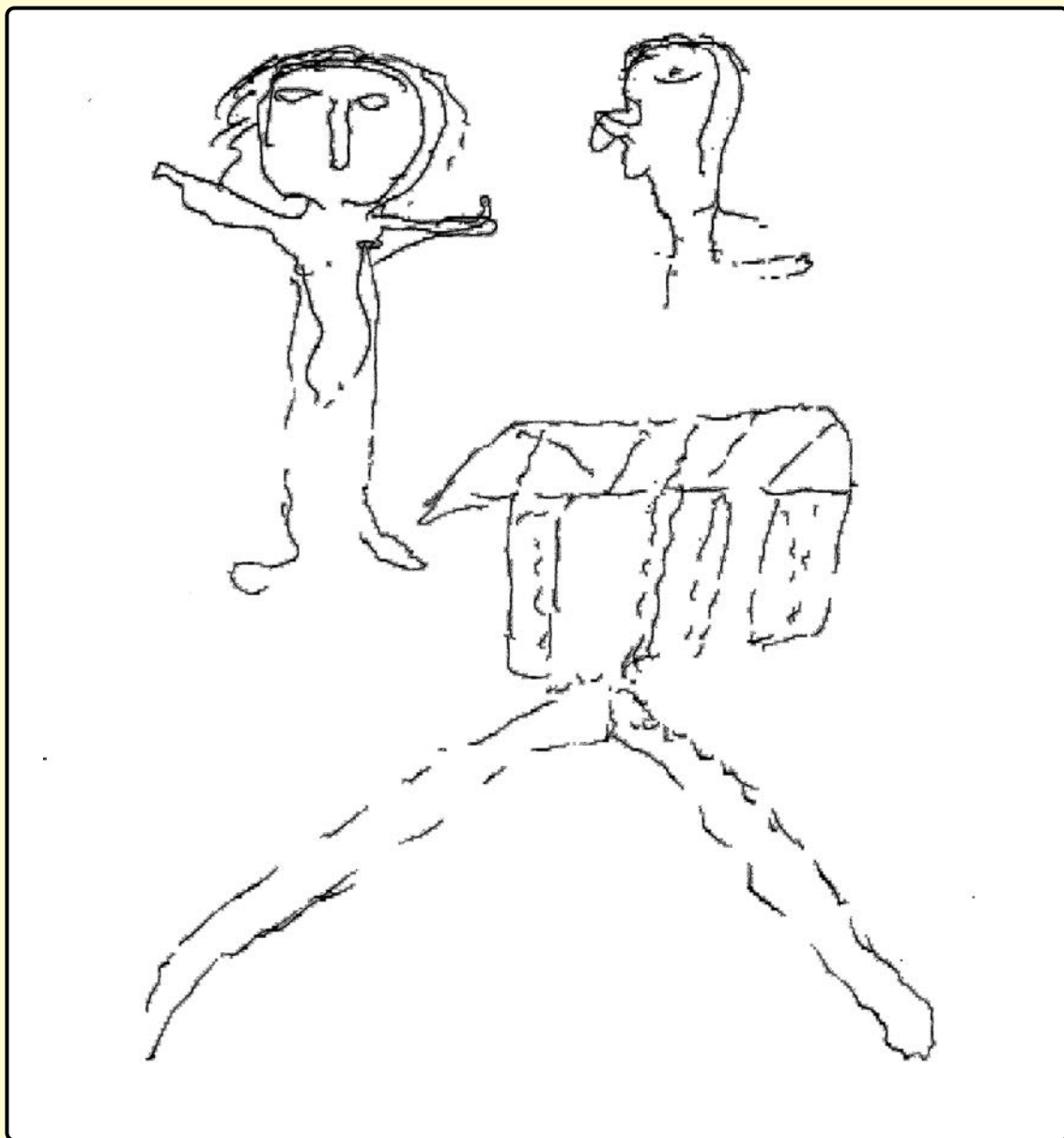


34.) When I was studying in grade 5, I had grown my hair long with a middle partition. I went to school like that. My teacher told me to stand up and scolded me in front of everyone saying that even I was a boy I had grown my hair long with a middle partition like a girl. He told me to come the next day with a haircut. I felt bad. The next day although I was hesitant and didn't want to, I cut my hair and returned to school. I still remember that incident and I also feel sad. **Som, Madhesi, Terai region**

35.) I used to keep my hair long in college. My elder brother said he would get a man to marry me. So I cut my hair short. **Dinanath, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

36.) During planting season all my sisters and my mother go to the field for transplanting. I also felt like doing the same. But in our society, there's a perception that men shouldn't do it. Men do the ploughing and digging in the paddy field. If men do the transplanting, people gossip, backbite and tease them saying– you look or have become like women, etc. So, although you have interest, you cannot do so. **Rajan, Madhesi, Terai region**

37.) I like to dance. When I was young, I asked permission from my grandfather to learn dancing. But he refused and scolded me saying, "You are a boy and you are trying to dance like a girl. You should focus on your studies." After that I never had the courage to ask him again. I didn't learn dancing. In our (caste) culture they don't give permission either for boys or girls to be dancers nor is dancing accepted. **Madan, Brahmin/Chettri, Madhesi, Terai region**





38.) Our sisters used to wear various beautiful earrings. I also liked wearing them. I asked my mother to pierce my ears like my sisters. She said this practice is only for girls, not boys.

**Sailesh, Madhesi, Terai region**

39.) In our society there's a perception that boys shouldn't do the cooking, washing, cleaning and other household work as they are a woman's job. So, boys don't get the opportunity of learning such work. I was also never given the chance to learn cooking and other household chores. When my mother feels sick sometimes, I am not able to help her. During those time, I feel bad. **Suman, Madhesi, Terai region**

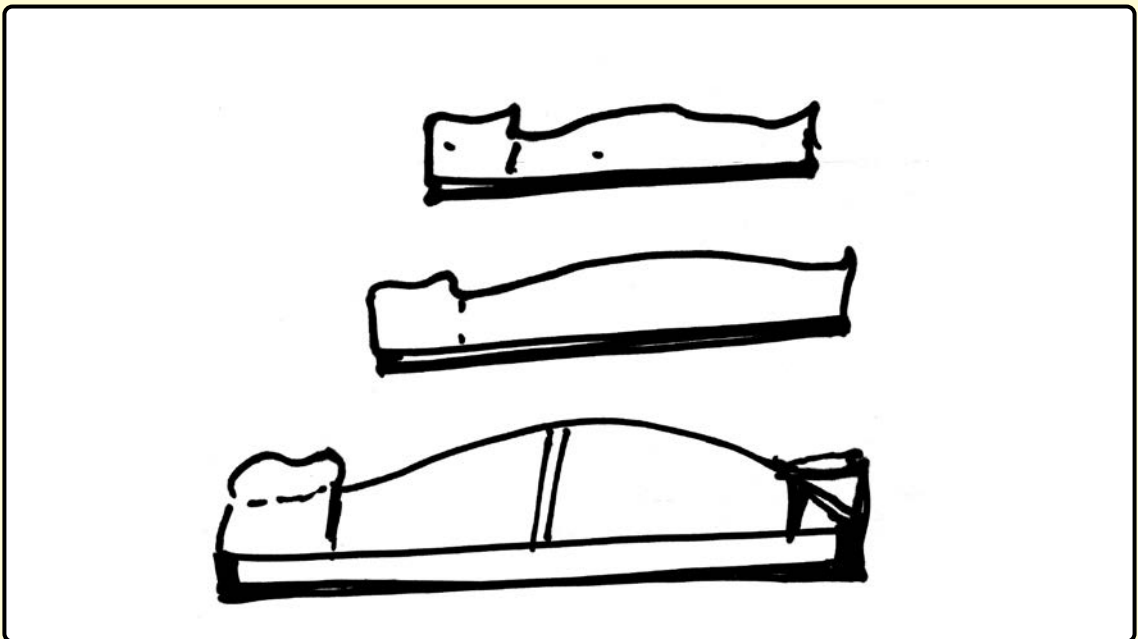
40.) I like making straw mats and cooking at home, but these are considered to be a woman's work. My relatives started teasing me which was why I stopped doing such work. But when I went to college, I did my own cooking. I fulfilled my interest then, but my other wish still remains.

**Rupesh, ethnic group, hilly region**

41.) I was a child and it was monsoon season. My mother asked me to bring the umbrella. I took the umbrella and was on my way when my teacher saw me and asked why I was carrying a woman's umbrella. I was surprised to hear such a question. So even umbrella has such a difference. **Bibek, hilly region**

42.) My father had three wives as he did not succeed in having a son from either of his wives. As time passed by, he had 10 sons. We all were not able to go to school every day as we had to help in the field and work which was why we could only go to school alternatively each year. Now I have three daughters and I have given them good education. **Heera, ethnic group, Terai region**

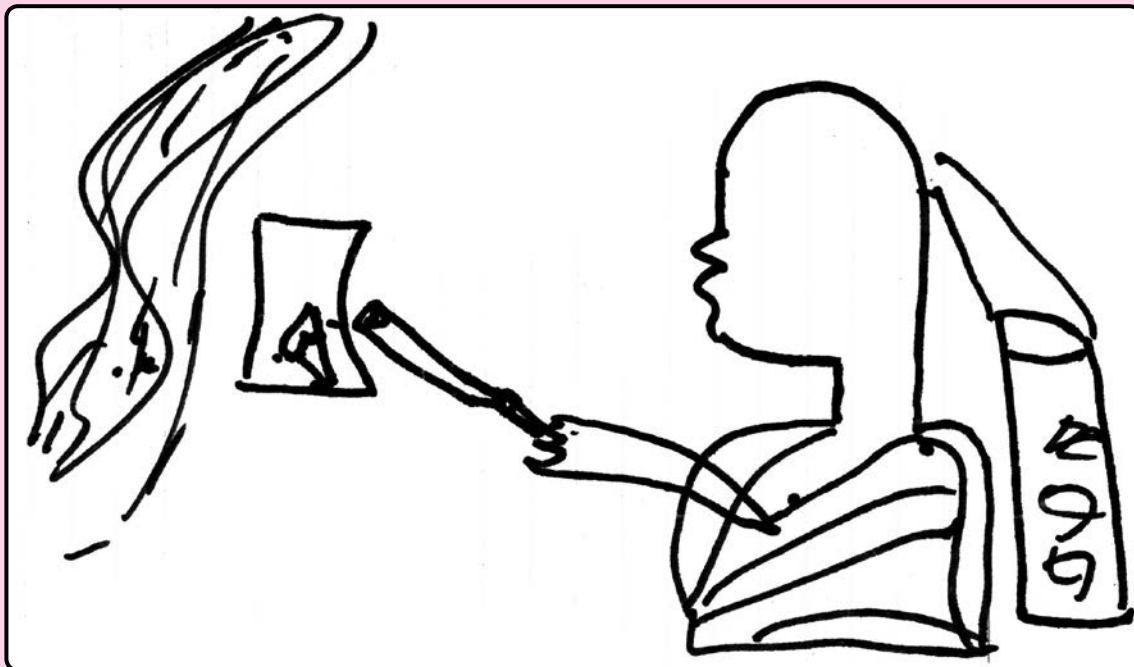
43.) My mother passed away 15 years ago, and my father also passed away recently. It is difficult for me to express my grief even though I feel it deeply. To distract myself, I got busy with the recent local election activities which made me feel a bit relieved. Now, every evening I just want to return home and stay with my small child. **Pratap, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**



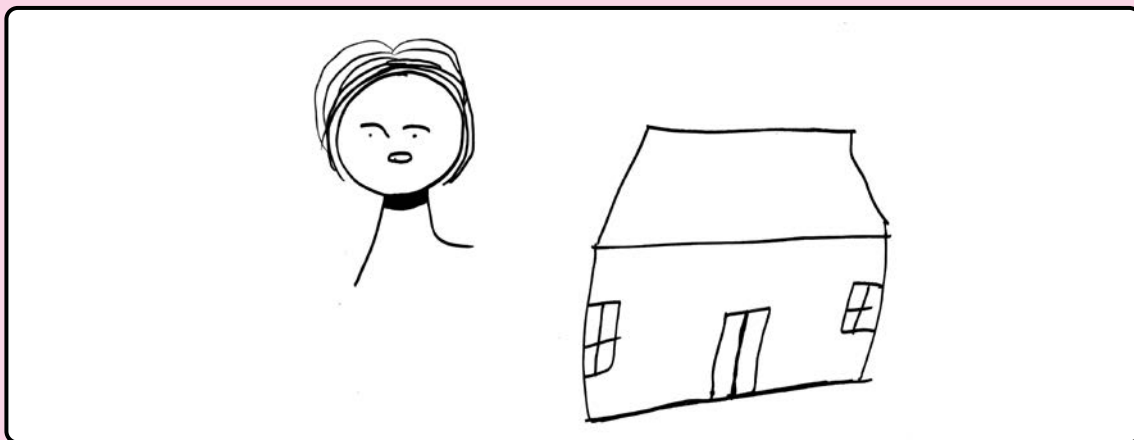


**GENDER STORIES OF  
DEFIANCE, DEVIANCE,  
SUBVERSION**

1.) My mother was very sick and suffered from a bleeding problem. I did everything like washing her clothes, cleaning and taking care of her. I went to the nearby river to wash her clothes. I washed, dried the clothes and fed her myself. People around asked me why and what was I doing as I was a man. But I didn't listen to them, I did not care what they said. I made sure to fulfil all the responsibilities. **Mahesh, male, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

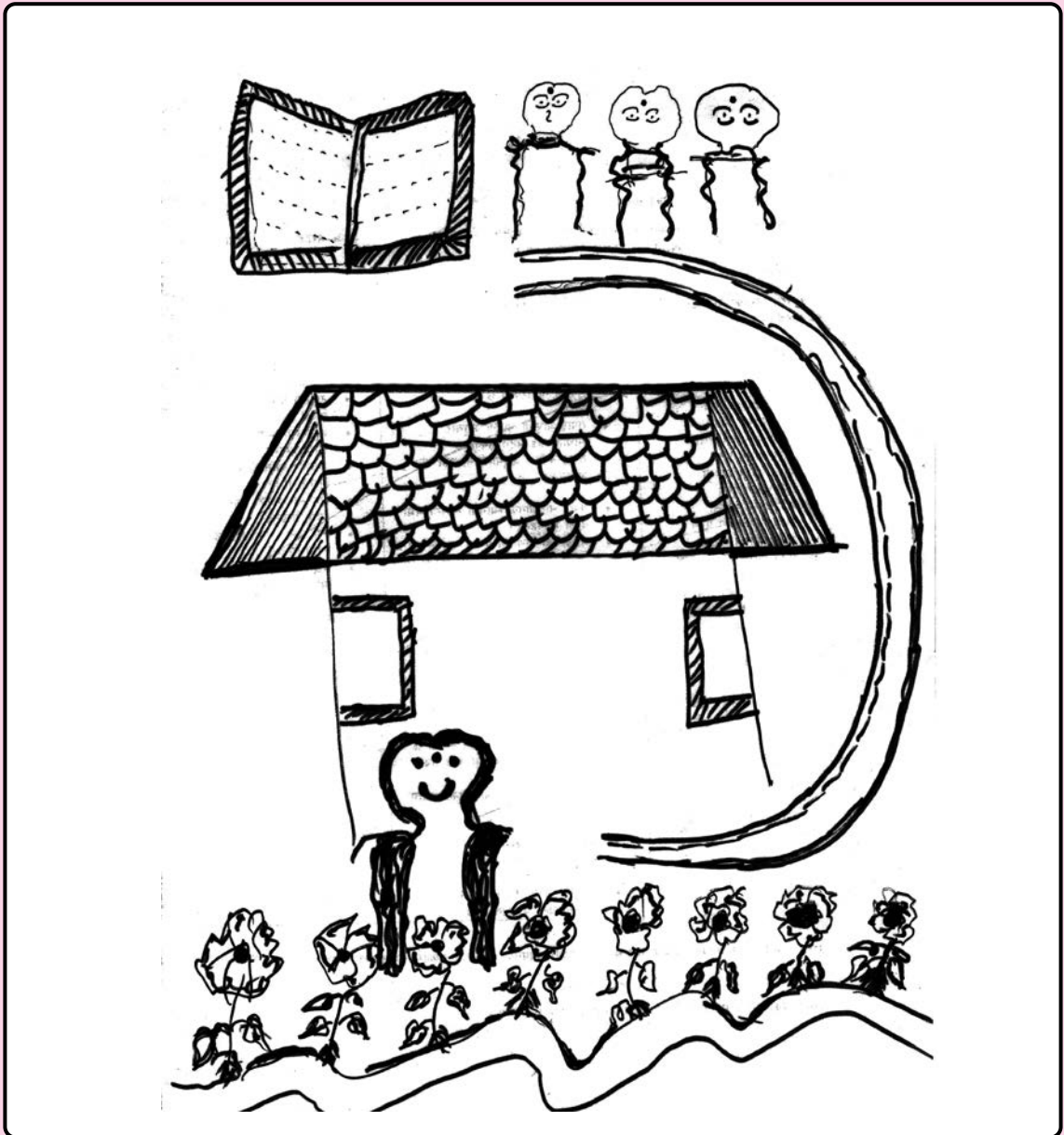


2.) After my marriage I was required to wear sari (a traditional draped garment) in my husband's house. I wore it for a year and I did not like it. I started to wear kurta surwal (gown and trousers). My father-in-law refused to eat the food cooked by me and insisted that I wore a sari. He started to cook for himself. The sisters-in-law in the house supported me and said that we should be able to wear what we want. In the end, our father-in-law accepted our choice and ate the food cooked by us. **Suruchi, woman, ethnic group, Terai region**



3.) When my maternal grandmother died, our relatives tried to find someone who could conduct her funeral rituals. According to the social norms my mother was not considered as the right person to do it because she was a woman and my grandmother had no son. Other male relatives were asked to perform the rituals. It was unacceptable to my mother and I because no other people took care of my grandmother when she was alive. They did not even visit her when she was sick. My mother and I did everything to take care of her, but the society did not allow us to perform her funeral rituals of lighting the fire for the body. My mother and I would not accept this, so we did all the funeral rituals ourselves. From that day on, some of our relatives were unhappy with us and did not talk to us. We also don't care about them.

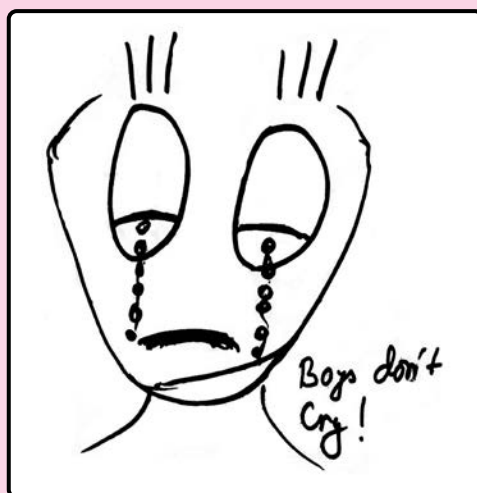
**Sikshya, woman, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**



4.) In our society women become impure during their menstruation time. They are prohibited to cook food and enter the house. If they cook anything they need to eat and finish it themselves. They are strictly prohibited to touch men during that period. But I have eaten food cooked by my wife and daughter during their menstruation. At first, I had some fear that something bad would happen but later nothing happened. I realized these were socially made rules and norms and they could be broken. **It just needs courage. Deepak, male, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

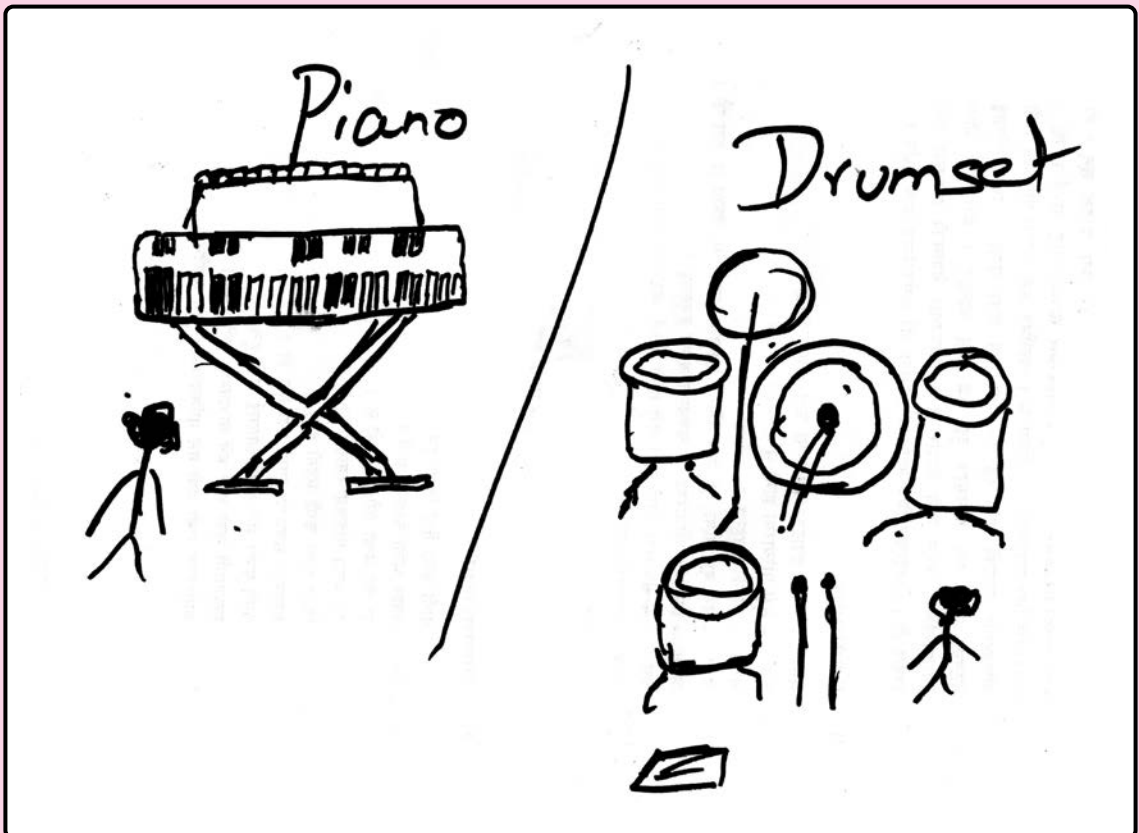


5.) There's a perception in our society that men shouldn't cry, and we find all men following that. But I cry, I get emotional and I like that. Sometimes my family members say, "such a cry-baby," etc. I don't care about it. Don't we feel the pain, and don't we also want to cry?  
**Hem, male, ethnic group, hilly region**



6.) I like playing drums but due to the mindset of the society that girls are not supposed to, I couldn't play it. That's why I played piano. After few years I couldn't stop myself from playing drums. I finally did it. I am very happy for being able to do that.

**Sadikshya, woman, ethnic group, hilly region**



7.) I didn't like to study nursing or become one. Despite having no interest, I still studied it because of my parents' pressure. I did not feel good working in hospitals and taking care of patients, cleaning their beds every day. I didn't want to work at the hospital after my studies and I didn't. My parents however always told me that they had spent so much money for my studies. Now I am working in my area of interest which is community work and I am happy.

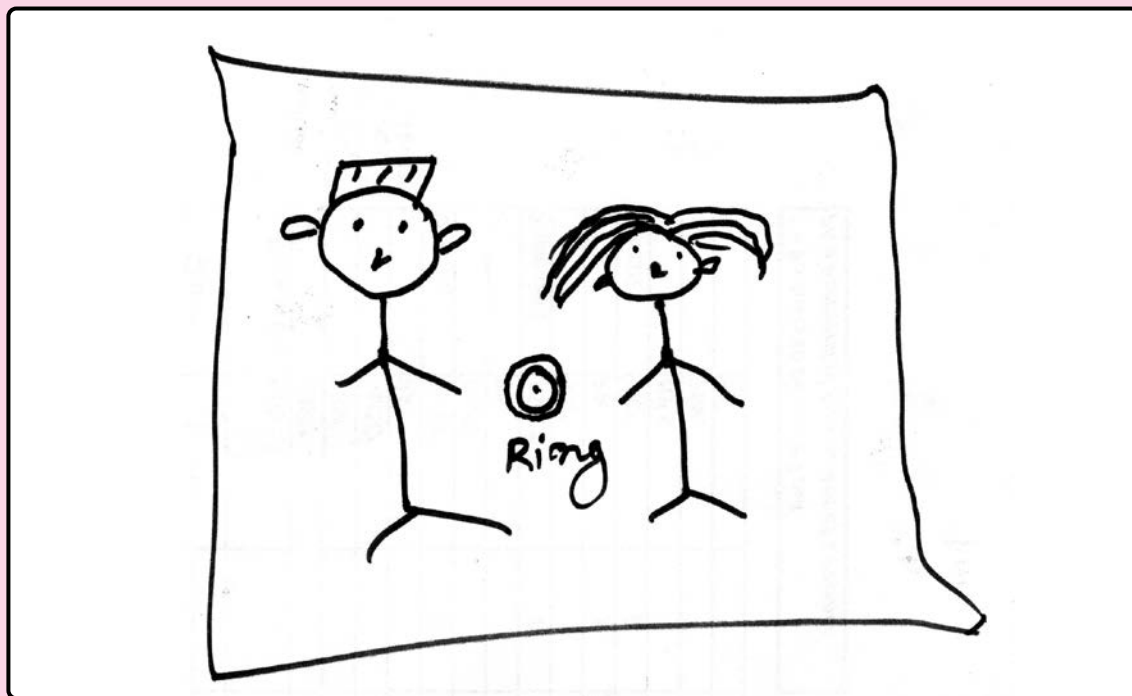
**Sajana, woman, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

8.) At home, a decision had to be made between my brother and me regarding who should take care of the goats and household work. But in the end, I was given the responsibility of all the work. I had to both take care of the goats as well as do the household work. But I was very much interested to study which is why instead of looking after the goats, I went to study. After I returned home from school one day, I saw the goat's ears hanging at the door. My parents scolded me and tried to catch me to beat me up. I ran away and didn't come back for three days. Later only after my parents said that I could go to study, I came back home. That's how I struggled for my studies.

**Aparna, woman, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

9.) My father said that I was not a man and that I was not a brave man. He used to say that I did not follow the culture and practice of my caste. In my caste/culture there is a practice of elopement marriage among relatives and the kinship. Only if a person practices it, he would then be recognized as a man and a brave one. I don't like the system. I didn't follow it.

**Himanshu, male, ethnic group, hilly region**



10.) I have been doing household work before and after marriage. But after being married, I often expected or tried to get gratitude from my wife. May be it is also gendered. At home, whether consciously or subconsciously I would say things like I did this for you, I helped you, etc. So, from now on, I will try not to use those kinds of words, talks and behaviour. Whatever work I do at home, I will take it as my responsibility. **Abhinna, male, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

11.) I was born and raised near Kathmandu. I studied in a government school and passed grade 12. Both my father and other leaders said that women were not allowed to read a certain religious book and didn't allow me to read it. But I made sure to read it and I did anyway.

**Sulakshana, woman, Brahmin/Chettri, hilly region**

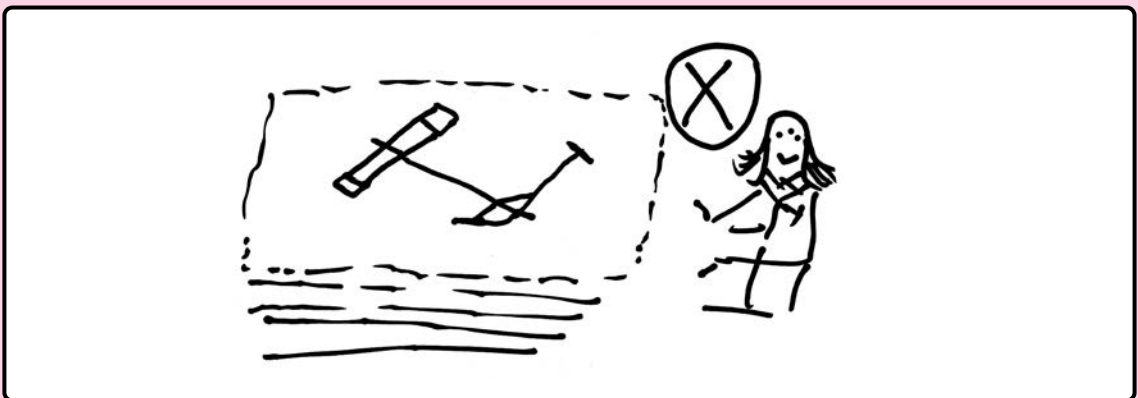
12.) My father discouraged me to go to school or become educated. I dropped out in grade 8 but later I rejoined the same grade and passed SLC exams. I didn't ask my wife to cover her head and didn't stop her from talking to others freely. Due to this, there were talks that I might have to stay separate from my father's house and the extended family if I didn't follow or obey my tradition. Right now, me and my wife have a small home of our own. We have also decided not to have children for the time being. **Rakesh, male, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



13.) Right after marriage I was engaged in a lot of household work. I had to do work inside home which I didn't have to before my marriage. Due to that, I felt very tired within a couple of days. I shared this with my husband. But he didn't say or do anything. After that, I thought that I shouldn't just stay at home like this and if I do, it will always be like this, so I decided to do a job. I am holding a job now. **Charchita, woman, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

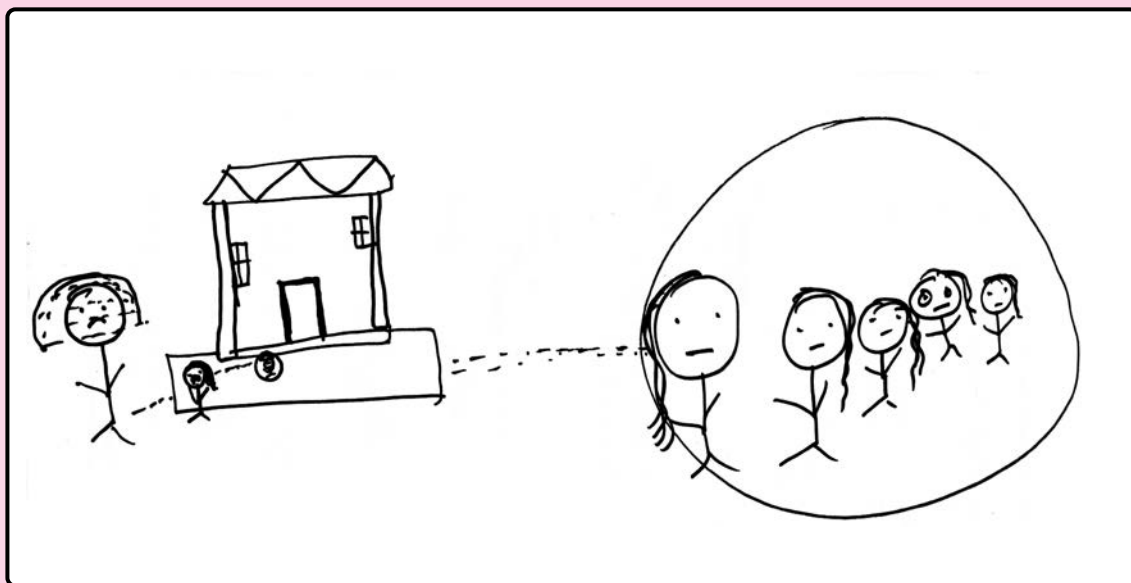


14.) Whenever my brothers went to plough the field, I also wanted to do the same. But due to the practice of our society that a daughter or a woman shouldn't plough the field, and shouldn't even touch it, I never got the chance to try my hands on it. But I was really curious to know what would happen if a girl ploughed the field. One day, my brother had to pee, so he went a bit further and told me to look after the ox. I took that opportunity and ploughed the field. The way the society said bad things would happen, but nothing like that happened. I came to see this just as a superstition. **Nikita, woman, ethnic group, hilly region**



15.) I got married at the age 16. The house that I got married into was known as the house of the so-called high caste/status family. I was taught that being a daughter-in-law of such a house, I shouldn't go out, shouldn't speak to strangers which was the rules. So even some time after being married, I didn't know much about the village area where I was married into. One day I went for a job interview. They asked my name and I was not able to answer. I couldn't speak a single word. I left the interview and returned home immediately and cried. Later I pull myself together and I thought that being an educated person from a rich family, I had become like this so what would the situation be for other women. I decided to do something for myself and others. I shared this with my husband and he supported me. I was able to come out of the house and of such social norms and practices. Nowadays I am working to raise awareness on the importance of education.

**Nirmala, woman, rich, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**



16.) My elder brother has taught both me and my younger brother about a lot of things. I did not receive any formal education until I was 18 years old. After I was 18, I was able to receive treatment to improve my physical condition. I always wanted to study but due to my physical restrictions, it was not possible. I didn't want to be dependent on others but my guardians especially my mother and elder brother didn't encourage me to have my studies. But finally, due to my interests and determination I was able to learn a lot. Now I am involved in social work.

**Renu, differently abled woman, Brahmin/Chettri, Terai region**

17.) I am the only daughter in my family. My neighbours used to tell my parents that there's no use of having daughters, they could not do anything. As I grew up, I met a woman who was working in an NGO. She encouraged me to continue with my education. Due to her support and encouragement every time, I am now involved in an NGO as a volunteer in the board.

**Mikisa, woman, ethnic group, Terai region.**

# Using These Stories

There are multi-ways of using these stories to stimulate discussion and further sharing. It can be used as a case study based on one story or different combinations of stories to illustrate common or different dimensions of how gender is being experienced in Nepali communities. One can develop different facilitation questions depending on who the people these stories are being shared with and the purpose of the sharing. Here are some suggestions.

- ➔ What does the story speak to you about?
- ➔ What did it mean to be a girl/woman or a boy/man? What was expected of them? What were the norms governing behaviour and allocating roles and opportunities? What ways of sanction and encouragement were used to keep the individual in line? Who were those who enforce gender requirements? What parts do we play in all these?
- ➔ What did the experience tell about the relationship between boys/men and girls/women? How were they expected to relate with each other? How do they perceive the other?
- ➔ How were individuals, families and societies impacted by gender expectations, norms and rules?
- ➔ How did class or caste or ethnicity or disability interplay with the experience of the woman or man?
- ➔ How did individual negotiate or manage to create their own space and generate change?
- ➔ How relevant are these experiences to your own? What is your story?

## Giving Feedback

Dear friends,

We hope you have found this booklet interesting and useful to understand some gender experiences as told by individuals in Nepal. We hope you can take a few minutes to answer the questions below and send your feedback to this email: **communications@umn.org.np**

1. How do you find this booklet on 'Gender and I – Realisation and Inspiration'?
2. Is there any take away? What are the key ones?
3. How would you make use of these stories and the booklet?
4. Who else would benefit from this booklet and how we can reach them?
5. Any suggestions of improvement if we are to continue with collection of gender stories for effort of awareness raising and gender equality in Nepal?
6. Do share some basic background of yourself so we have some idea of your context.

It is our desire to see the growing of participatory gender equality facilitators/activists to support each other. If you are interested, do ask us to keep you in the contact list.

Thank you and looking forward to your feedback.