

## 1. Sulochana Bhojedyo

Sulochana Bhojedyo is born in a medium class Newar family. Her parents are farmers by profession. Apart from her father and mother, she has two elder brothers, two sisters in laws, a niece and a nephew. None of her family member has any kind of disability apart from her. Sulochana is 25 years old now. She is currently studying in class 11 with Major's in Sociology and Population at Bageshwori Higher Secondary School.

She is in born disable suffering from Cerebral Palsy. She has difficulty in moving her hands and legs. Her speech is also not clear. *"I remember some moments of my childhood when I could not move at all. Until 6 years, I was motionless but later after different therapy sessions some movements were possible."* However, it's difficult for her to make movements; she can't walk without others support but she does not need support in most of the day to day activities like eating, changing dress, arranging books, going to washroom. Her mother has to support her while bathing, combing hair and to tie shoe laces. Apart from that, Sulochana is independent and try to do everything on her own as far as possible as she does not want to trouble anyone.

She feels that her mother has suffered the most because of her disability. None of the relatives had behaved well with her mother after her birth. "People used to comment on my mother for being unlucky and she might have committed some sins in her previous life so she was given child like me. I remember my mother's motionless expression. I don't know what goes inside her mind, I wonder sometimes if she as well feels so for me. However, at the same moment I can't forget that my mother is the one who has been supporting me since my birth." Her mother carried her on her back to go to school until she was 10 years then later she was taken by wheel chair by her mother. As she started growing, it was difficult for her mother to take her to school as she was heavy. Her mother had an hysterectomy which weakens her body almost for a year, no one was there to take Sulochana to school so she had to stop her study for a year until her mother was fine. *"Despite my mother being uneducated, she knew education was important to me. So, she kept on struggling physically and mentally only to support in my education. She fought with everyone including my father, aunts and neighbors who were against sending me to school."*

She feels that her father is not happy with her birth. She does not share a good relation with her father. He used to drink alcohol most of the time and domestic violence was common in her home. His father used to beat her mother especially on her issues. He didn't like her being taken to CBR and later to school because he considers Sulochana as an unlucky child worth for nothing. *"I was able to walk somehow when I was either 8 or nine years old but my father used to keep us, my siblings and my mother out from the house in the chilling days when he was drunk. This made me sick quite often and later I can't walk again."*

Her mother said that, "It was Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Bhaktapur that brings rays of hope in their life." The people from the centre came to visit the house upon knowing about the disability of Sulochana. When she was 6 years old, she was taken to the day care centre run by CBR for differently able children. There she learnt to speak, read and write. She was also given physiotherapy treatment which makes movement possible to some extent. She was attentive in class and had a catchy brain so teachers there find her capable to attend to a normal school. After many rejections, she finally got admitted in

Samaj Kalyan. She studied there up to class 8, as it was a Lower Secondary School, she has to go to other school for further study. This time it was much more difficult. Schools don't want to take admission to such disable with a fear that she might not be able to pass SLC and that might have negative impact in the school's reputation because these days schools which pass 100% students in SLC are categorized as good school. She remembers a principal showing his sympathy to her disability. He wanted to provide some monetary support but was not ready to admit her in his school. "I don't want anyone's sympathy, I don't need his money. All I need is his support. I don't understand why people try to show their sympathy to us which are all fake. If they really wish to do something for us, then they can support us in our decision."

Searching school at that period was the most difficult time for my mother and brothers. They went to more than 12 schools and finally a private school accepted for my admission. *"However I was 2 months late already when the school finally decided to give me admission but it's better late than never."* This school was life changing for her. She got immense love from her teachers and friends. Most of them were supportive, caring and understanding. She failed on her first attempt of her School Leaving Certificate Exam but she passed in the second division in her second attempt. Her mother feels that she could have done much better. The result is not so good not because of Sulochana's inability, it's only because of her difficulty in writing. She can't write as fast as other children. If she was allowed more time then she could have done much better. Sulochana wishes to take a verbal exam rather than written because she faces a lot of difficulty in writing. *"The exams are not disable friendly, I have difficulty in writing but all the exams here are taken on written basis. A person could not be judged only on one basis. My handwriting is very poor and I could not write fast. Despite knowing all the answers, I feel bad I could not attempt them. It's true that I can make someone to write for me in my exams but I could not find the one. My special request is to the governing bodies of education and planning members to conduct separate exams for disable on the basis of their ability. Verbal examinations should be conducted at least on possible subjects. If such policies are applied, only then government can assure our fundamental rights of education."*

Her physical inability not only leads to difficulty in pursuing her study but it also compelled her to give up study of her choice. She wanted to study Travel and Tourism but she was not given chance to study it because of her disability. *"As I have difficulty in moving, they do not want me to study the subject but my interest is in travelling. I want to explore more and learn. Nobody feels important to ask what I want. Everybody kept on giving their views and suggested to studies Humanities which they believe is comparatively an easier subject. So, I studied Population and Sociology. These are very nice subjects but the thing is about my interest. Being disable was not my choice but that does not mean I could not have an opportunity to choose."* However, she compromises her interest and has started enjoying her study now. Despite the subject not being of her interest, she feels glad to have joined the subject, as the friends and faculty are very nice. But she is disappointed with the school building which is not disable friendly. She has to climb up to two floors to reach her class room which is impossible for her without others support but she is lucky to have friends who support her. *"Sometimes when my mother is late to pick me up, they drop me up to my home. I feel blessed to be surrounded by such lovely people. They don't hesitate to help me, they are very nice people."*

She feels terrible when any of her friends are in trouble. Most of her friends have lost their home in the devastating earthquake of April 25, 2015 and it's aftershocks. They are now living in rents. Even her house was also damaged by earthquake but she doesn't worry about it much as her family had another option. They have a new house in Libali, Bhaktapur. After earthquake her entire family has shifted here. She recalls April 25 as one of those scary day of her childhood when her mother did not use to be around her. Her mother has gone to field and she was alone at home on 25<sup>th</sup> April. As it was Saturday, she didn't had

to go to college so she was enjoying her free time doing nothing. *"I was laying down quietly but suddenly I felt some unusual movement. Few seconds later, everything started shaking, my bookshelves fall down and water bottles were rolling around. It was shaking and I heard a big noise, a moment later something fall down on my neck and I was hurt. I could not move and do anything so, I just lay down covering my head. I know my mother was not at home so I don't shout for help as well. After some moments the shaking stopped but I could not see anything as my house was full of dust. It was hard for me to move as a brick had hit me on my neck just below the head. Moving was almost impossible for me as everything has fallen down and was shattered here and there. I was just clearing the stuffs around me and trying to move. At the same moment, my younger brother came and rescued me from there. He carried me on his back. We struggle to come down from the ladder. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor has fallen down and I was lucky that my room was in 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. I was taken out. Most of the houses have fallen down, people were crying, shouting for help, and some were running here and there. Immediately my brother got his bike and I along with my sister in law and brother came to Libali in a motorbike where my new house is located. Finally, upon reaching there I could breathe a sigh of relief after seeing my mother."*

*"My mother is my world; I could not imagine my life without her. May be it was same with her as well. She was full of tears when I reached there. She hugged me and cried. I realized how much had she missed me that she came running bare footed from the field."* She feels blessed that all of her family members survived and none was hurt. She was given first aid by Red Cross members and her hurt was not very deep. It got cured within a week. She stayed in a temporary shelter for two weeks near her house in an engineering college ground. *"It was my first experience of living under a tent. It was strange to be surrounded by a lot of people and all of them asking about me. Days just passed by looking at the people and their activities. It was an interesting experience of living outside. However, I had difficulty for sanitation. I need to come up to home as the shelter doesn't have any toilet facilities. It takes me 10 minutes just to come here at home. Apart from that, I didn't have any sort of difficulty living under tent though it was excessively hot sometimes."* She felt good when near and dear ones called to know her well being. CBR officials came to visit her but none of the government and non-government organizations working for disability neither came to visit her nor came up with any relief packages. She felt good to see people helping, consoling and supporting each other at the time of need. In some way, she felt that earthquake has helped in bringing unity among people and making them realize the need to be together.

*"Even my family was fragmented earlier, my younger brother and sister in law used to live here in new house and rest of the members in the old house which was destroyed. After earthquake, we are living together and it feels good. This is one good thing after earthquake."* After shifting in new house, sanitation is easier for her. She does not need anyone support. She can go to bathroom herself as it is in the same floor. Earlier, she needed help as she has to go downstairs. *"Day to day life is quite easy for me after shifting here. I don't need to call my mother to go to toilet; I can easily wash my inners and change pads on time. This has lessened burden for my mother. Earlier, when I used to have periods, it used to strain all over my clothes because I had to wait for someone to help me to take bathroom. Now, it's just next to my room so I can go at any time when needed."*

*"I wonder how beautiful life would be, if I don't have to trouble anyone every time by asking their help. If all the buildings are disable friendly, my life would be normal as those of other people. I can do things on my own routine rather than others. As earthquake has destroyed most of the infrastructures, I think it's the right time for government to think about rebuilding all the structures in a disable friendly way."* Government talks about equality but when it comes into practice, she finds it nowhere. She believes that government rules and regulations are not equal and she has not received any kind of allowance for her disability. Disable can

only come forth and help government in developing process if they are prepared for it. So, she believes that government should come up with policies that would help in their personal development, only then she would feel equality exists in the system.

In future, she would like to bring change in people's perception about disability. She wants to change such minds who consider disability as being unlucky. She wants to rise as an example of a successful disable however she has not yet decided her field. But she would be working for the equal rights of disable.

## 2. Sanu Babu Bajracharya

Sanu Babu Bajracharya is originally from Namobuddha but has been living in Inacho, Bhaktapur since he was 2 years after knowing about his disability. Bhaktapur is his maternal uncle's home. Their parents realized that it would be better to shift to Bhaktapur for Sanu Babu's future as better health and education facilities are available in Bhaktapur. At that time, road transportation including other basic facilities was not available at Namobuddha. All of them could not move here because his parents have fields there which he has to look after. So, his mother along with Sanu Babu came to Bhaktapur. "I don't have much of my childhood memories at Namobuddha. It was only in Dashain and during other vacations I used to go there as travelling at that time was very difficult. I can't walk and transportation was not that easy."

Sanu Babu suffered from disability named arthrograposis. Sanu Babu had a younger brother who also suffered from same disability but his case was even severe. Unfortunately he died and while consulting with the doctors, their parents came to know that the reason behind their disability is his mother's weak uterus. So, they decided not to give birth to another child. In this disability, joints are fixed by birth and balanced growth is not possible for such disable.

It was CBR that makes walking possible for him. My mother came to know about CBR in Bhaktapur so she took me there where I was given different physiotherapy. There were signs of improvements after visiting here. Walking was very difficult earlier but later to some extent it was easy. "It is hard for me to walk and do any activities that are physical as my joints are not strong. I need the help of Crossto walk. Earlier I used to use Walker but was not friendly. It was hard to climb up in ladders and going school was difficult. Later I started using Cross which makes walking much more easy." Apart from such physiotherapy, it provides different trainings for my parents who focuses on daily living activities and rehabilitation. It also provides counseling at times.

Sanu Babu went to a normal school since the beginning of his schooling. However, it was difficult for his parents to get admission at beginning but he was bright from childhood so teachers got convinced and admitted him. Sanu Babu is 28 years now and has completed Masters Degree with major in Finance. "I wanted to study Science after clearing School Leaving Certificate but I felt it would be difficult to conduct the entire practical so I gave up this idea of studying Science and started studying Commerce. I do not have regrets for this decision. Today, I am working as an accountant in "Voice for Equality" which is an organization run by disable people for disable students. This organization especially support for the education of disable children. Apart from this, I am also giving tuitions on mathematics finance and accounts to the students of class 10, 11, 12 and also to Bachelor level students. I am happy with what I am today."

His role model is his mother who had supported him in every way possible. It was her mother and grandmother who drops and picks him from school until class 6. It was difficult for him to carry his bag so he was needed to be drop. "As my mother works in an office, she can't come to pick me up often. It's my grandmother who picks me up but she is absent minded so most of the time she is late to pick me up. That's the time when I used to feel extremely bad for being disabled when I have to depend upon others. Later as we grew, my friends started dropping me back home so I don't have to wait." It was only

sometimes when he used to feel bad for his disability because people around him never let him realize his weakness.

"I was not much into games. I don't know was it self-realization or I really don't have any interest in games. So, when my friends were playing outdoor games, I never felt like playing. Instead, I was interested in programs like Quiz, spelling, speech and debate contest. I used to participate and have won many such contests." His teachers used to encourage him to participate in such contests and supported a lot in his studies as well. So, when it comes to pursuing education, he had no difficulty. He was catchy and had good capability of learning. He faced no difficulty in joining colleges as his education backgrounds were excellent. "I had no difficulty in my education life apart from the unfriendly infrastructure. Possessing education was not difficult but reaching to classrooms was difficult. I had to climb steps and it was time consuming and very difficult. Nevertheless, I am thankful to the friends who helped me in carrying my bags, dropping me to colleges and supported me to climb stairs. Without them I might not have been able to study efficiently."

Sanu Babu has a strong will power and is a very positive person. His disability is not any kind of displeasing fact. He is very interested in riding bikes but because of his disability, he can't ride. Even the 4 wheelers bike are not comfortable. "This particular wish of mine can't be fulfilled. Even I can't ride, I can sit back and enjoy the ride and I am happy with that." He does not want to feel bad for his disability and believes that truth should be accepted. "Generally, people consider disability as being physical weak but I take it as power. With all these inabilities, we face challenges but still continue to live a normal life."

He is liked by his friends and family. He has got a large friend circle and often participate in social gatherings as well. He believes that his life is more over as of normal people but when it comes to his mother, she worries a lot. He believes that she is a strong lady who has helped him to be independent but it might be her motherhood that makes her worry. "However, since I passed my class 12, I started teaching children and earning my pocket money. Later after graduation, I got my job and continued teaching and I am economically strong. My mother started worrying less since then because she realized that I can take care of myself now."

After 25 April mega earthquake, he has lost his house where he used to live. He is now living in a rent with his mother and grandmother. Finding rent was very difficult at that time because most of the houses have collapsed and others were not feasible to be lived in. However, for Sanu Babu it was not very difficult as he got rent in one of the house that his uncle was living in. Fortunately, they got rent on the ground floor which was very important requirement. The rent is near to his office so it's not much difficult for him in mobilization.

He recalls 25<sup>th</sup> April as a nightmare. "My office opens on Saturday as well. I was supposed to be at office but on that day but I took a leave. I was just back from Namobuddha the earlier day and I was tired so I decided to stay at home and rest. After meal, I was resting and soon fall asleep. I was in deep sleep and I thought I was dreaming but later it wakes me up and I felt strong movement. I was in the first floor at that time. I didn't panic and stayed there until I felt the movement. But in some way, it strikes in my mind if my legs were fine then I could have run down but I just don't let that thinking hover my mind. Once it stopped I and my mother came down in the ground floor. We stayed there for an hour and only then came out." They stayed in an inn in Inacho Bahal with their neighbors for 17 days. It was the nearest open space around their house. As everyone were helping each other, it was not much difficult to adjust for them.

People cook food together and share it. However, at night time it was difficult for him to go to toilet. He has to come back to his home and walking at dark is quite difficult.

He believes that despite earthquake resulted in loss of human and properties which are not curable, at least this has helped in people in improving human relations. People have more attachment now. "People were sharing food and other daily necessary items, they cared about each other's pain and help at needed times. I thought at such time, people would panic and the social relations would be disturbed but it was good to see such well behaved society."

Many organizations, both government and non-government reach to their shelter and distributed food items in the beginning days of earthquake. He received all kinds of reliefs from the side of the state. His family also received reliefs from different INGO's as other families. No special relief was provided to him for being disabled by any of the organizations. However, through his office, he helped his colleagues to distribute the reliefs to the people with disability. The most vulnerable were identified first and priority was given to them when they distributed the relief. "It was difficult time for everyone, we wanted to extend our helping hands but resources were limited so we decided to reach only to the ones who are extremely needy."

"Earthquake has definitely brought changes in lives of people in many ways. For me, my settlement has changed; I have to pay rents which mean more financial burden. Apart from these difficulties, I believe that I have changed as a person and my perception has changed due to earthquake. I have learnt to help others, no matter how hard my life is. Life is unexpected; we don't know what will happen when we will be needing help so we should help people in any way possible when we can."

In future, Sanu Babu would like to help more people. Especially, he wants to create a discriminatory free society where none would be behaved ill for their inability. Nevertheless, he finds that such discrimination has decreased in comparison to the past in our society but yet people with disability are seen with sympathy. He wants to convey message that people with disability also have feelings and would want them to respect. They want to love and loved back as normal people. Disability is not their choice but as humans they have feelings as well. So, to change the perception among people, he has now started video modeling. Through the video, he wanted to convey a message that even disable have hearts as normal people. Disable also have right to love and hope for same in return. So, their love should not only be taken as sympathy. He shares that this is his real life learning and believes that this perception needs to be changed and people need to look with an eye of equality.

### 3. Prahlad Thapa

"I was 11 years old when I had my visibility problem. I had slight fever at the beginning and later after recovering I got blindness. It's called 'Nerve Defected' I just had completed my primary schooling by that time. I continued my education in an Integrated school in Patan and passed SLC from there. I have completed my Masters in Education and till then I have not attended any special school. I did my I.Ed, B.Ed and M.Ed from Sano Thimi Campus which is an integrated college." Despite the college that he attended was not for special students, there were few special teachers appointed for disable students who were trained on teaching people with disability. So, when he had difficulty with his learning then he consults with the teachers and they provide notes in Braille script and manage more lectures for them. He even has to submit assignments at times which he writes in Braille script but all teachers could not understand it. So, such special teachers help in translating 557in print form. However, these special teachers are not all rounder's, they also have to learn from respective teachers before teaching them so it's not efficient sometimes. "Still, without their efforts our study would not have been possible so I am grateful to them for providing special notes on difficult chapters."

Prahlad Thapa is 32 years old and is from Pikhel-1, Changu Narayan, Bhaktapur. Since 2066, he has been teaching English, Social and Population at Shanti Niketan School to Lower Secondary students. Before this he used to work at their own NGO, where they work to make Talking Books that records school text books so that children with disability can learn by listening as well. Apart from this, he has been getting engaged in social activities and other different programs on disability. "I want to help all blind people to pursue their education so I tried my best to help in every way possible to support them."

At the beginning, when I got visibility problem, my parents were worried for me. They didn't know how my future would be. They were hopeless but after consulting with CBR, my parents got idea on how I should be taken care. CBR suggested them the school which was integrated school but special care was provided to people like us with inabilities. Next, my parents were provided counseling on how I should be taken care. I and my parents were completely unknown about Braille script. After learning about it, my parents were convinced that learning would be possible with it. He believes that CBR provided a proper guidance at that time which helped his parents on further steps need to be taken. Despite CBR not providing any visible helps for him, such counseling has helped to choose a right path.

"I had got a good environment in my school that always inspired me to learn. My teachers were loving and my friends were supportive. I get help every time when I am in need but mostly during exams, I get into troubles. Specially, when the exam centre is outside of the school then I get into problems. Most of the times they are not informed that people with disability are also taking exams. All their exams halls are packed but we need a separate room to take exams. I have to spell out all my answers to my helping hand who would be writing for me. I just can't stay in the common room and take exam with others. They might copy my answers and might be disturbed by my speaking. At such times, in lack of room they just make us sit for exams in office room or staff room where teachers keep on coming and that disturbs me." Next, he sometimes had difficulty in finding helping hand to write his papers. He has to convince his friends or juniors to write for him. "Sometimes, they come late in exams which panic me. As they are juniors, I can't fully trust that they might have written everything I said so to ensure I asked them to read it out in order to



check. This is time consuming; sometimes I could not attend all the questions. My time is wasted in such process. I feel extremely bad, despite my ability I can't perform well in exams."It's especially at these times, he feel extremely bad for losing his visibility. "I wish government has a system of taking exams verbally. It would have been better if we can record answers then only our ability could be judged well. Else our exams should be taken in Braille script and time should be provided enough."

Despite these difficulties, he completed his study and became independent. His school is 15 km far from his home. Direct bus up to his school is not available. He has to walk for around 20 minutes from the bus stop to reach his school. He walks alone up to his school with the help of stick. He had taken mobility orientation when he was in school. "This workshop teaches me ways to move in roads. It gives us different techniques on walking on roads. It does not matter how far my school is, my family is convinced that I can take care of myself."This mobility orientation provided by "Nepal Blind Welfare Center" was very helpful indeed. Since, I took that training, confident level rises in me to be more independent."

It was mobilization training that stops him from panicking on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 when the strong earthquake hits the country. He was out in a tea shop near his school. He had just finished his tea when he felt movement. "A moment later, it was such a huge tremor but I don't panic and stay quite their just covering my head. It stopped after a while. I heard people shouting, crying but it does not disturb me. People were saying that houses have collapsed and there are people trapped inside. I could imagine the scenario after such huge shake but I was not scared. Yeah, I had fear inside my heart but I didn't let it hover on me. May be I had a benefit of being blind here. I can just imagine what's going outside but don't have an idea of real picture. I guess this is why, I did not panic."

He came out from tea shop and tumbled couple of times as the road this time was different because of the debris from houses collapsed. Within few minutes, he got help from someone. She helped him to take to an open place nearby where he stayed for 5 hours. He tried to contact his family but the phone was not reachable. "I was feeling horrible and the environment around makes me feel the worst. People were crying; some lost their houses and some lost their family members. And as the aftershocks continued, people shout with fear every time it strikes. Not having anyone around and not knowing about my family was the worst moment. As soon as I got a call from my home, it was a sigh of relief. Everyone was fine at my home. After few hours my brother came to pick me up then I was taken back home."

His house collapsed in earthquake so they stayed under tarpaulins for safety. He stayed outside in the temporary shelter for 12-13 days. His family is large, there are around 20 people living under the same tent so they were having problems. Space was not enough, sometimes water was lacking and for sanitation it was difficult. However, they managed to stay there and are now managing to stay together in another house which is owned by his elder brother. All 4 brothers with their families are living there. "I am happy that we started living together again. However, it's not an easy job to live together with such a big family. I have to adjust a lot. It's not about me and my feelings I have to care and respect all others feelings as well." He felt that earthquake has taught him to be tolerant and has made him even stronger.

All kind of reliefs that the state provided were received by his family. He supported in distributing reliefs through the related organizations of CBR. Even some of the NGO's and INGO's have come to their area for providing reliefs. The relief included tarpaulins, blankets, food items and buckets.

"During post earthquake period, I feel more loved. Relatives and neighbors were more concerned about me and keep asking about my well being. This doesn't mean I was not loved earlier. I had never been

behaved wrong for my disability. People always believe in me that despite losing eyesight, I would be able to do well. It might be the reason that my wife chose me. She is perfectly fine and can see the world. Despite that she chooses to be with me and our families were as well supportive. I am a happily married man and we have a small daughter.” He believes that he is lucky to have a caring family and supportive people around and having such positive environment around makes people progressive. So, he would like to spread positivity in the life of disable people and support them to lead their life normally. For this, he has been engaging in “**Bhaktapur Netrahin Sangh.**” He was former President of the organization and still is an active member. The organization organizes different programs that support and build strong willpower to people with visibility problems.