

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

(MHS)

CONVERSION INTO CHRISTIANITY IN NEPAL: A WAY TO BREAK
DOWN THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HIERARCHY

MASTER IN GLOBAL STUDIES

(30 MOPG MASTER THESIS SPRING 2014)

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STAVANGER, NORWAY
MAY 2014

Acknowledgement

The completion of this research project (thesis) would not be possible without help, encouragement of numerous individuals who provide valuable support to complete this project. I am sincerely grateful to the valuable guidance and suggestions of my supervisor Magnar Kartveit. He paved my way of this thesis with comments and suggestions. In fact, my supervisor enabled me to write this thesis in the same way that I wanted to write. During the process of writing this thesis, I have learned and met inspiring people. I have indebted to all the informants for sharing their experiences and perspectives towards caste and conversion process to Christianity in Nepal. I would like to thank all the informants for their precious time. I have obligation not mentioned their names here since I have used pseudonyms in order to respect privacy under ethical consideration. I have to appreciate the library staffs of MHS who were always helping me providing necessary books. Besides that, I would deeply thank to the professors and lectures associated with master in Global studies and all administrative staff of MHS.

Lastly, I am grateful to my wife, my parents, and other relatives who always support, encouraged and inspired me for the higher education.

Kamal Dhakal

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Table of Content

Chapter One: General Introduction of the Thesis

1.1 Introduction	6
1.2 Purpose	6
1.3 Statement of the Problem and Aim of the Study.....	7
1.4 Scope and Limitations.....	8
1.5 Sources.....	8
1.6 Methodology	9
1.7 Significance of the Study	9
1.8 Research Questions.....	9
1.9 Challenges of the Study.....	10
1.10 Structure of the paper	11

Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Design

2.1 Introduction and overview.....	12
2.2 Area Selection.....	12
2.3 Research Design.....	13
2.4 Why the Researcher Choose Qualitative Research Methodology?.	13
2.4.1 How this study is Phenomenological:.....	15
2.5 Data Collection Method.....	18
2.5.1 Secondary Data sources.....	19
2.6 Research Validity and Reliability.....	19
2.7 Ethical consideration.....	20

2.8 Conclusion.....	20
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Chapter Three: Conceptual and Theoretical Approaches

3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Conversion as a multidisciplinary research object.....	23
3.3 Theological Aspects.....	26
3.4 Psychological Aspects.....	27
3.5 Sociological Aspects.....	28
3.6 Theoretical Consideration.....	29
3.6.1 Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination.....	29

Chapter Four: General Information of Nepal

4.1 Geography.....	33
4.2 Administrative Division.....	33
4.3 Demography.....	33
4.4 Caste and Ethnic Combination in Nepal.....	34
4.5 Religious status	36
4.6 Caste system.....	36
4.7 Nepalese law provisions on caste system and untouchability....	37
4.8 Who are Dalits?.....	40
4.9 Current practices of caste based untouchability in Nepal.....	42
4.10 Escaping Strategies.....	49
4.11 A Brief history of Christianity in Nepal.....	50
4.12 Numerical Growth and Challenges of Christianity in Nepal...51	
4.13 Conclusion.....	52

Chapter Five: Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Nature of Data.....	54
5.2 Brief Introduction of Respondents and Coding.....	55

5.3 The Life Comparison and Experiences of Converts.....	55
5.4 Obstacles During and after Conversion.....	57
5.5 Christian Converts Perception on Caste System.....	60
5.6 The Encounter of converts with Christianity.....	62
5.7 Hindu Dalits attitude and understanding towards the Christianity and Dalit conversion.....	62
5.8 Hindu non- Dalits attitude towards Christianity and Dalit conversion.....	64
5.9 Conclusion.....	65
Chapter Six: Conclusion Remarks and Further Suggestions.....	66
References.....	68
Appendix 1.....	72
Appendix 2.....	74

Chapter One

General Introduction of the Thesis

1.1 Introduction:

Conversion is a process and general phenomena of religious change that take place in a dynamic field of people, ideologies and expectations.¹ The concept of the conversion as a choice of the people is itself a product of the individualism of the modern society and is rarely found in previous societies.² Most psychologists define a religious conversion as a radical transformation of self; these definitions emphasize interpersonal processes of change.³ "Allier defined conversion as a moral revolution, which goes beyond intellect and feeling, it is a new self which opposed it, and thus internal unity is re-established and then joy overflows".⁴

"Religious conversion is a phenomena that raises many questions"⁵ about the conversion situation and the conversion process of the converted people. In this context, some questions should be noted: what are the consequences of conversion? How is the phenomenon to be evaluated? What sorts of processes are involved in the conversion? These questions raise only some issues, which might be discussing on religious conversion. Every single converted people may have his or her own individual conversion story and experiences as well as their conversion motif, these things also dependent on the individual context and perception of the converted people.

1.2 Purpose:

The present master`s thesis aim is describing and projecting the Christianity as an agent of eradicating social and cultural discrimination rooted in Nepalese society. The statistics of the government of Nepal show that Christianity in Nepal is rapidly increasing in the last few decades. The motif to conversion to Christianity may be varied according to the converted people and their own experience. This thesis will present the conversion stories and

¹ Rambo, "Understanding Religious Conversion," 5.

² Momen, "The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach," 161.

³ Hood, Hill, and Spilka, "The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach," 209.

⁴ Allier, Qtd. By Seppo, "In Search of Meaning and Identity," 34.

⁵ Seppo, "In Search of Meaning and Identity," 24.

experience of converted people in description way rather than normative approach. Descriptive approach to conversion seek to delineate the contours of the phenomena with little concern for what the ideology and observes the nature of the processes where as a normative approach focuses a genuine conversion in formulated according to the theological convictions of a particular tradition .⁶ This thesis mainly focuses on the conversion phenomena into Christianity from Dalit community in Nepal to eradicate the social and cultural discrimination based on the Hindu religion. In Hindu religion, people are divided into multiple hierarchies based on their birth caste. In addition, this thesis also includes the activities, influence and attraction of Christianity and historical growth and development of Christianity in Nepal.

1.3 Statement of the problem and Aim of the study:

The conversion into Christianity is increasing from the other religions, especially from the Hindu religion in Nepal. Many people from the Hindu religion, converting into Christianity with different motives such as attachment of Christian ideology, to overcome of certain problems, influence of other converted people, for instance family members, friends, co-workers etc and unhappiness or dissatisfy with their belonging religion in general. As Rambo described, "there is no one cause of conversion, no one process, and no one simple consequence of that process."⁷ Noticing all these things in this thesis, researcher focusing on the conversion into Christianity from the Dalit community in Hindu religion, which seems more in number than the conversion of the non-Dalit in the country. Because of the caste discrimination and caste based hierarchy based on Hindu religion people are unsatisfied in this 21st century. Is conversion, helping them to eradicated caste discrimination? Are they satisfied with their conversion into Christianity? Is Christianity, helping them in any way and eradicate caste based discrimination in their life of society or not? This thesis will try to answer all these questions as well as the conversion scenario of the lower caste Hindu into Christianity and the historical situation of caste based discrimination in Nepalese society. These above questions provoke me to do a research on this particular topic.

⁶ Rambo, "*Understanding Religious Conversion*," 6.

⁷ Rambo, "*Understanding Religious Conversion*," 5.

1.4 Scope and Limitations:

In this paper, the term Christianity is implying the all Christian denominations beliefs rather than separating the Christian denomination. The term conversion is taken as a moving or change the religion from Hindu religion to Christianity. There may be more than one cause of influence and attraction of conversion into Christianity, but this paper mainly focus on the caste dominated and discriminated Hindu society or religion to caste free Christian religion or society as a cause of conversion of Dalit in Nepal.

In this study, the researcher chose to focus the Dalit conversion to Christianity, due to the caste hierarchy in Hindu religion rather than focusing other motives and influence of conversion. The researcher does not intend to incorporate detail conversion motives of Dalit people expect some of the attraction into Christianity and caste hierarchy or discrimination in Hindu religion, since that would make thesis too vague and confusing.

In this thesis researcher does not focus on any other form of way to eradicate caste based discrimination in Nepalese society, such as political movement, Dalit movements, activities of national and international human rights organizations etc in more details. These things also may include in short.

1.5 Sources:

In the interpretation and discussion of the conversion into Christianity in Nepal from Dalit community, I will use the different materials from different sources, including the data collected from field research using interview questionnaire and literatures from library research related to my research subject. Field research data will be supplemented by the library research contained about conversion, Dalit, caste hierarchy in Hindu religion, and society in Nepal and different published and unpublished statistics, related to my research subject. Besides the interview questionnaires and library research, I will use my own personal background and experience as one who have more or less understanding about the conversion into Christianity from Dalit community and the growth of Christianity in Nepal. I will also include internet sources related to this research subject. Hopefully, all these materials will help me to complete this research on this particular topic.

1.6 Methodology:

I used qualitative research methods with questionnaire data collection technique to gather information from the field, which is used in analysing and interpretation the conversion scenario of Dalit into Christianity in Nepal. In addition, sometimes for the testing of collecting data and justification of Christian growth in Nepal, quantitative research methodology will be used during the statistical analysis of the religions in Nepal. I will use statistical data through secondary sources, published by the government of Nepal, Christian organizations and other religious and non-religious organizations. These statistical data provide the reasonable analysis and defending support for this thesis. In more detail about methodology will discuss in second chapter of this thesis.

1.7 Significance of the study:

The study will may contribute to understanding the conversion phenomena into Christianity in Nepal from Dalit community. It also will provide deeper insight into the historical and the current religious situation in Nepal as well as perception and understanding of the Christianity by converted Christian and non-Christian people.

This study also may relevant to the academia, especially for the science of religion, which may help to look deeper insight into the dimensions of religious conversion and the perception of the outsiders towards the converted people in Nepal and other countries related with this context.

The study findings will be helpful to the government of Nepal, international non-governmental organizations, policy makers to set the plan and strategies to establish the social, cultural and religious harmony between different religions.

In addition, this study also serves as a fulfilment of the requirement to achieve Masters in Global Studies at the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, Norway.

1.8 Research Questions:

This paper will present the conversion scenario into Christianity in Nepal form Dalit people in Hindu religion. The data of the study were collected by using of the following main questions to get the necessary information. For this research, researcher made two types of questionnaire according to the research subject and the nature of the study. The intension of

the researcher to make two types of questionnaire is to make this research natural and lively based on the research topic and its background. In one hand researcher made questionnaire for the converted people from Dalit community into Christianity and on the other hand questionnaire for the Dalit and non-Dalit belonging in Hindu religion.

For converted Christians from Dalit community based on Hindu religion:

- A) Why did you decide to follow Jesus and become Christian?
- b) Is there any specific incident to convert into Christianity in your life?
- c) Did you face any social problems at the time of conversion?
- d) What do you think, Christianity is helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination rooted in our society?

For Hindu Dalit and non-Dalit informants:

- a) How do you perceive or understand the Christianity in your society?
- b) It is natural or unnatural. How?
- c) What do you think, Christianity is helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination rooted in our society?

1.9 Challenges of the Study:

I encountered several problems during the study. The issue of my research itself is crucial and controversial. Religion itself is a very sensitive topic. Besides religion, this paper also deals with the subject of conversion into Christianity in Nepal from Dalit community to eradicate caste discrimination in their society based on Hindu religion. Talking about caste in this 21st century, comparing Hindu religion and Christianity as a caste dominated and caste free religion accordingly seems quite challenging. Keeping in mind as Hastings quotation, "none the less the acute problems are such that if any critical of scientific treatment is once legitimate, it must be pursued as thoroughly as possible with the consideration for the conviction of others"⁸

⁸ Hastings, Qtd. by Manjupuria and Kuma, "*Religions in Nepal*,"7.

The researcher is aware about all these challenges on this research subject. Avoiding all controversial subjects, researcher will present neutrally and impartially forgetting his own personal background while interpret and analysing the collected data and materials. All the outcome of the research study will be based on the collected information from different sources as described on the previous topic.

1.10 Structure of the paper:

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of the study; it also brings out key elements of the study. The second chapter of this thesis presents the research methodology and design of this study. Similarly, third chapter deals about some of the dimensions of conversion and conversion approaches and theoretical consideration of this study. Chapter four of this thesis explores the geographical, religious, social and cultural background of Nepal. In addition, this chapter also deals with the subject of caste base discrimination in Nepalese Hindu societies. Since this study is about the Dalit conversion into Christianity to eradicate the caste discrimination based on Hindu religion in Nepal. In addition, it also highlights the historical background and development of the Christianity in Nepal. Chapter five focuses the materials and data collected by fieldwork, and present them in analysing and interpreting way using the theoretical and practical consideration. Chapter six highlights some concluding remarks with important points that will enable this research work to be useful to establish mutual understanding and relationship between converted Christian and non Christian in the society as well as between people belonging different religions and this chapter also suggestions for further research study.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology and Design

2.1 Introduction and overview:

The main purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to explore the conversion phenomena into Christianity in Nepal from the Dalit caste in Hindu religion. This chapter will include the discussion about the applied research methodology and design that the researcher used during the study process from the time of data collection, its interpretation and final presentation of this research project. As Silverman defined methodology as a general approach to studying the research topic and choice of method should reflect an overall research planning and the technique or strategy.⁹ Similarly, Clive states that, "methodology involves presenting the rules of procedure about matters, such as collection of data and analysis."¹⁰ Further, data collection method, justification to choose qualitative research, other procedures, design, validity and reliability and ethical consideration will be presented in this research methodology and design chapter.

2.2 Area Selection:

The researcher was motivated to study about the conversion scenario in Nepal from the Hindu Dalit community because researcher more or less known about this subject. As Silverman's advice for research student, "Being in familiar territory: if you can, work with data that is close to hand readily accessible".¹¹ Keeping this in mind as a researcher, I choose this research topic, which is accessible to collect data in desired and interested research topic. In this research study, researcher does not select a particular location or place in Nepal for this study being more or less aware about the scenario of Dalits discrimination and untouchability rooted in the whole country and their motives of conversion into Christianity as presented in previous chapter two.

⁹ Silverman, "Doing Qualitative Research," 109.

¹⁰ Seale, "Researching Society and Cultural," 13.

¹¹ Silverman, "Doing Qualitative Research," 39.

2.3 Research Design:

As Bryman define, a research design "provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data".¹² This definition is sufficient to understand that, research design is the arrangement of ideas or the plan sheet to collect necessary of the relevant data on this specific research topic. In this study, researcher draws needed data using qualitative research data collection techniques while doing fieldwork to get appropriate data relevant to this research issue. The justification for choosing a qualitative research methodology will discuss in the next chapter.

In have already mentioned that the study primarily has been qualitative methods specially phenomenology. The relevant data for this study has been drawn from questionnaire as a primary source and some data from secondary sources such as published books, journals, magazines, newspapers, reports etc. related to this research topic.

2.4 Why the Researcher Choose Qualitative Research Methodology?

Qualitative research method seeks, describes and analyzes the process through which social realities are constructed and it involves the interpretation and naturalistic approach to the real work. This means the qualitative researcher study the things in their natural settings and attempt to make the sense of or interpret phenomena. Gale Miller and Robet Dingwall defined "qualitative research describes and analyzes the process through which social realities are constructed and the social relationship through which people are connected to one another".¹³

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry, which studies the real experience of the people on the way they interpret which help to understand the social reality of the individuals, groups. It explores the behaviours, perspectives and experiences of the people based on their daily lives.¹⁴ To understand the lives of the converted Dalits, researcher chooses the qualitative research methods in a sense. Besides that, as Robert K. Yin emphasizes that firstly qualitative research involves studying the meaning of people's lines under real world conditions secondly has ability to represent the ideas, views and perspectives of the participants in a study; research can represent the meanings given to real life events by

¹² Bryman, "*Social Research Methods*," 31.

¹³ Miller and Gingwall, "*Context and Method of Qualitative Research*," 3.

¹⁴ Sparks and Smith, "*Qualitative Research Methods in Sports, Exercise and Health: From Process to Product*,"

people. Thirdly, qualitative research covers the contextual conditions within which people's lives take place such as the social, institutional and environmental conditions.¹⁵

Holloway and Wheeler refer to qualitative research as "a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world which they live."¹⁶ In this way, researchers use the qualitative research approach to explore the behaviours, perspectives, experience, relationships, emotions and feelings of the people and emphasis the understanding of these factors or elements. Qualitative research has an aim to explore and to discover the hidden issue about the problem or about the matter in hand because there is usually uncertainty about the dimensions and characteristics of the issues. Qualitative research uses soft data and gets rich data, which is very naturalistic to understand and explore the researcher subject.¹⁷

Qualitative researchers stress the social construct nature of reality and seek answers to questions that stress how social experiences and realities are created and given meaning, whereas in quantitative research approach emphasize the measurement and analysis of the causal relationship between variables rather than process.¹⁸ Qualitative researchers use ethnographic prose, historical narratives first-person account, life history etc but quantitative researchers use mathematical models, statistical tables, numbering system and graphs and usually generate an impersonal, third person prose.¹⁹

Stake mainly focuses three major differences between qualitative and quantitative research approach, noting some distinction features: explanation and understanding as the purpose of the inquiry, the role of the researcher in research subject for instance personal and impersonal role and knowledge discovered and constructed knowledge.²⁰ In qualitative research, researcher is assumed as a primary instrument of data collection and data interpretation or analysis. The researcher directly engages with the issue and situation to make sense of the multiple interpretations and multiple realities exist in research subject and context whereas in quantitative research approach researcher may not directly involve in research subject.

¹⁵ Yin. "Qualitative Research from Start to Finish," 7-8.

¹⁶ Holloway and Wheeler, "Qualitative Research in Nursing and Health Care," 30.

¹⁷ Domegan and Fleming. "Marketing Research in Ireland: Theory and Practice," 24.

¹⁸ Denzin and Lincoln, "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," 8.

¹⁹ Ibid. 10.

²⁰ Stake. "The Art of Case Study Research," 37.

Generally, qualitative research method was developed in social science, which enable to the researcher to in depth of study social and cultural phenomena. The context, purpose and the nature of research study determine the research methods. Both qualitative and quantitative research conducted simultaneously in social science. These have equal advantages and disadvantages while applying in any research. Neither of these methods is intrinsically better than one another.²¹

Taking all above importance, and significance features of qualitative research approaches into consideration, there are several reasons for using qualitative method in this study. Researcher wanted to know about the life situation of the Dalits before conversion into Christianity their untouchability and caste discrimination experience and their intention of the conversion. In addition, researcher wanted to explore the experience of the converted Dalit during their conversion and the perspectives behaviour of the non-converted family members, friends, neighbours, etc. Besides these things researcher also collect some data from Dalit and non-Dalit respondents to explore about their perception and understanding towards the conversion process of the Dalits into Christianity in their society. Research of this study also wanted to explore the experience and changes in the life of the converted Dalits after their conversion into Christianity. All these mentioned inquiries only possible using the qualitative research approach; the qualitative approach gives the grounds of the researcher topic. Thus, researcher of this study chooses qualitative research methodology.

2.4.1 How this project is Phenomenological Study?

Before turning to phenomenological as a qualitative research approach, I will discuss some of the notion of it. Phenomenology in its twentieth- century form, is a philosophical movement contributed by German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938).²² Phenomenological provides a method for knowing or investigating the way to know reality. It is an effort to describe the actual situation or state of affairs as disclosed by the phenomena of the world.²³ Edmund Husserl did not employ the term phenomenology in first time, earlier philosophy, such as, G.W.F. Hegel in his *phenomenology of sprit* in 1807.²⁴

²¹ Silverman, "*Doing Qualitative Research*," 46-47.

²² Cox, "*An Introduction to the Phenomenological of Religion*," 25.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

"Husserl defined the phenomenological method as a descriptive theory of knowledge. It begins from within the person, the subject and seeks to move outside the person into an objective description of the world."²⁵ Husserl as known the founder of phenomenology had a vision to develop a rigorous science starting from the things themselves "as they show themselves in the subjects' experience. The basic parts of phenomenology are the life-world, intentional consciousness phenomenological reduction and essence."²⁶

Husserl described the life-world as a central theme and other phenomenologist also depict life-world as a central theme in their work as well as in modern philosophy and human science in general.²⁷ By life-world, Husserl meant,

"the world of immediate experience, always pure given and already there. It is the world we have taken for granted the foundation for all our activities, experience and perception and the world in which we are totally immersed in everyday life. He saw the life-world or 'the natural attitude' as the base of knowledge..... The essence of phenomena, the things can only be reached through a subject's description of experiences in the life-world".²⁸

The life-world is influenced by the intentional consciousness of human beings; it shapes the life-world.²⁹ Brentano defined intentionally, as "this is not act of thinking without an object that is thought or a desire without an object that is desired".³⁰

Husserl developed the method 'epoche', which refers that, refraining from making a judgement by laying aside theories, personal knowledge, innate understanding, and expectations on an actual existence of phenomena. Husserl argues to reach the nature of the phenomena is possible being free from temporal, historical and social influence. Husserl repeatedly re-examined the things to find the possibilities of reduction.³¹ The complete reduction is quite a complex task and seems impossible. As Merleau Ponty claimed "we are trying in the world, since indeed our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on which we are try to seize.....these is no thought which embraces all our thought".³²

²⁵ Ibid. 28

²⁶ Strandmark and Hedelin, *"Phenomenological methods reveal an inside Perspective,"* 77.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. Pp 78.

³⁰ Brentano, Qtd. by Strandmark and Hedelin, *"Phenomenological methods reveal an inside Perspective,"* 78.

³¹ Strandmark and Hedelin, *"Phenomenological methods reveal an inside Perspective,"* 79.

³² Marleau-Ponty. Qtd. by Strandmark and Hedelin, *"Phenomenological methods reveal an inside Perspective,"* 79.

To uncover the essence of phenomena is an uppermost goal of phenomenology.

Phenomenology to search for the essence is a systematic attempt to uncover and describe the actual structure of living experience.³³ In sum up Husserl Claimed, "phenomenology is the necessary foundation without which an absolute as certain knowledge cannot be gained and it is therefore prior to all other sciences".³⁴

Phenomenology as a research approach, which examines the human experience, their personal and social life-word. Through close examination of individual experience, researcher seek to capture the meaning, perception, understanding of every individual and their common features.³⁵ In general, the phenomenological research, researcher interprets the experiences and facts listening to the different stories of the informants or the participants. This research method analyzes and examines the facts and the phenomena from the subjective eye of the participants. "Phenomenology (is) focused on the subjectivity of reality, continually pointing out the need to understand how human views themselves and the world around them."³⁶

Phenomenology itself is every vague term. It offers a qualitative research method of inquiry and study may be applied to study many experiences of individual. As a research approach, it gives the ground to the researcher to examine the different perspective in a large number of the participants and their common experiences in their lives. The ground it offers to analyze the common experiences of the participants as they are connected with a particular in the past or present. To develop a written description depending on the themes of the experiences of the person, what they experienced and how they experiences in term of condition, situation and context.³⁷ To combine all these things in the meaningful way help to researcher to understand the significance essence of the participants experiences and generate logical conclusion in the research work. Patton describes".....phenomenological study.....is one that focussed an descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what

³³ Strandmark and Hedelin, "*Phenomenological methods reveal an inside Perspective*," 79.

³⁴ Hedin, "*Phenomenology and the Making of the World*." 23.

³⁵ Trinidad and Starks, "*Choose Your Method: A Comparison of Phenomenology, Discourse Analysis, and Grounded Theory*,"

³⁶ Willis. "*Foundation of Qualitative Research: Interpretative and Critical Approach*." 53.

³⁷ Creswell, "*Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among five Approaches*," 60.

they experience. One can employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance."³⁸

In phenomenological research, researcher should be closely examine the common features of his/her participants experiences and unique experiences of participants as well. The outcome of the research project itself dependent on the careful analyzes the experiences of the participations by researcher. In this research project, researcher motivated to call this project phenomenological qualitative research because, the data collected for this project itself were based on the experience of the participants related to their own experience of discrimination beings Dalits based on Hindu religion and the process of conversion to Christianity. The experience of participations while conversion to Christianity and their own understanding and perception of their life before and after the conversion, all these things included on research data. Beside data from only converted Dalit, researcher also included few data from non-Dalit Hindu and Dalit Hindu to understand their perception towards Dalit conversion to Christianity. All collected data in this study were based on the experiences and perceptions of participants. Considering all these things, researcher of this project realized to call this project as a phenomenological qualitative research project.

2.5 Data Collection Method:

Data serve as the foundation for any research study.³⁹ Robert K. Yin has quoted a definition of data from *Wikipedia*, which states "data refers to a collection of organized information, usually the result of experience, observation, experiment.....this may consist of numbers, words, or images, particularly as measurements or observations of a set of variables."⁴⁰

Collecting data for qualitative research usually collected from interacting with real world situations and the people in them.⁴¹ In this project, researcher collected data using the questionnaire form. In this study, there were two types of questionnaire forms, one of those informants whom were converted to Christianity from Dalit caste in Hindu religion and another one was for non-Dalit and Dalit Hindu informants. Distributing two types of form, as a researcher, I had collected necessary information to this research project. The more detailed information about the respondents will present in chapter five of this thesis.

³⁸ Patton, "*Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*," 71.

³⁹ Yin, "*Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*," 129.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 130

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 109

2.5.1 Secondary Data sources:

In this research, researcher uses the secondary data for the purpose to make this research quite worthy and logical. In general, incorporated secondary data were developed for other purpose. In this project, I am using both qualitative and quantitative data from secondary sources in some sense. In qualitative data from secondary sources, I obtained through interviews, life history, photo, and articles, from published and unpublished books, reports and internet source. Similarly, quantitative data, generally statistics of the Dalits and religions from the national statistics of Nepal and other similar survey, and report conducted by the government of Nepal, international non-government organization, national non- government organization and so on.

Secondary sources such as books, journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, websites, blogs etc related to this research project contributed to conceptualize this research project.

2.6 Research Validity and Reliability:

"Validity is another word for truth"⁴² Yin defines "for any kind of research, including qualitative research, possibly the key quality control issue deals with the validity of a study and its finding."⁴³ A valid study, which has properly data collected and interpreted its data. Such valid study generates accurately conclusion, which reflect and represent the real world. Max well highlights the issues of validity by referring to this way "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation or other short of account."⁴⁴ In any research, authentic data and reliable interpretation determine the validity of the study.

Similarly, reliability in research stands as the assurance that the research is enough credible to trust, Silverman argue, "Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions."⁴⁵ This argument by Silverman shows that the collected data and interpretation of the data in any research study remain the same in repeated action and measurement under the same situation and environment.

⁴² Silverman, "*Doing Qualitative Research*," 210.

⁴³ Yin, "*Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*," 78.

⁴⁴ Maxwell. Qtd. in Yin "*Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*," 79.

⁴⁵ Silverman, "*Doing Qualitative Research*," 224.

Considering all these things or issue during fieldwork, I always paid attention to collect authentic data from primary and secondary sources. While doing the analysis and interpretation of collecting data, as a researcher I will maintain and consider the validity and reliability of this study.

2.7 Ethical considerations:

Research ethics help to construct the moral standard to the research while exploring truth, avoiding errors, honouring human rights and social and cultural values of the people being studied. In this research I followed the ethical rules under the *Norsk Samfunnsviten Skapelig Datatjeneste* (NSD) providing the research description and getting permission to this research.⁴⁶ I strongly followed the research ethics providing the information and consent sheet of this study to all participants before their participation in this study to their freedom, privacy and protection and confidentiality. In my information and consent sheet, I tried to incorporate details about the aim of research, freedom of participation, freedom to ignore any specific question or all questions, harm and benefit of participation and their privacy and confidentiality. I also informed them, while writing this research, name of the participants will be replaced by pseudonyms; however, their personal background such as their age, family background and situation, profession, gender, will be included. Similarly, I also assured to all my informants that, collected data and responses will be stored in my private computer and locked suitcase where no one will have access except my research supervisor and all data will be destroyed and anonymous according to the nature of the sensitivity of the collected data after completion of my project. Information and consent sheet provided to informants is available in the appendix of this thesis.

2.8 Conclusion:

This chapter discussed the outline of methodology, research strategies, research design employed in this study. Besides that, this chapter also included the data collection procedure in fieldwork and through the secondary sources. This study followed the model of phenomenological qualitative research. All the data using in this study is based on the

⁴⁶ Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is a service body for Norwegian research run under Ministry of Education. see more on www.nsd.uib.no

experience and the perception of the participants. In addition, in this chapter briefly described the several stages involved in the research design and research development processes. Finally, this chapter also discussed the appropriateness of the research approach with justification, validity and reliability of this study and ethical consideration during data collection and ethical assurance while interpretation of collected data as well. The next chapter will present the theoretical approach and assumption of this study.

Chapter Three

Conceptual and Theoretical Approaches

3.1 Introduction:

All men and women in general all human groups have ultimate values, faith, world view and a perspective furnishing them a more or less orderly and comprehensible picture of the world.⁴⁷ "There is a philosophy behind the way of life of every individual and of every relatively homogenous group at any given point in their histories."⁴⁸ When an individual gives up one way of life, perspectives and world view to accept another we refer to this process as conversion. The way of life, perspective and world view more and less determined by the religious faith of an individual. Most of the researchers define religious conversion from the psychological point of view. As William James argued, "The self, hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior or unhappy becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities"⁴⁹ based on a consideration of religious experience. Most of the people decide to convert to another faith or religion to make their life more integrated and happy in general. Many scholars in different fields define religious conversion from different points of view on the basis of its process. Religious conversion has a rich history of study in the fields of theology, psychology, sociology, history and anthropology.⁵⁰ Religious conversion seems an emergence popular research topic in the field of religious studies. Thus, we can understand that, "religious conversion is a process, including a personal decision, taken alone or as part of a group, to centre one's own religious life with a new focus which one believes in more liberating in every aspect of the world and closer to the truth. This involves a change of identification within oneself and normally leads to a change of outward affiliation to a new community which will affect one's life at various levels such as, body, heart, mind and soul and to tangible change of behaviour and practice".⁵¹

⁴⁷ Lofland and Stark, *Becoming a world-Saver*, 191.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ James, Qtd in Wingate, *Interreligious Conversion*, 178.

⁵⁰ Steinga and Cleary, *Understanding Conversion in the Americas*, 18.

⁵¹ James, Qtd in Wingate, *Interreligious Conversion*, 179.

3.2 Conversion as a multidisciplinary research object:

Religious conversion is a social phenomenon, which raises many questions. Why people decide to conversion? What are the consequences of conversion? How is the religious conversion to be evaluated? These above questions are only some issues of which are discussed in the field of religious studies. The answers of these questions one makes concerning subject depend on one's religion and worldview.

During this century, religious conversion has been a popular subject of inquiry in several disciplines. To understand the richness and complexity, Rambo purposes the four components of conversion: culture, social, personal, and religious system. In addition, he also added the discipline of anthropology, sociology, psychology and religious studies must all be taken into account about the subject of conversion with considering of politics, economics, and biology and so, forth should also be noted of converts.⁵²

Similarly, Andrew Wingate purposes at least four perspectives should be considered to understand the conversion. According to Wingate those perspective are religious/theological social/cultural, personal/psychological, political/economic/institutional.⁵³ As Rambo and Wingate proposed notion, most of the literature on conversion usually focuses on one or other of these perspectives in their studies. Rambo divides conversion into five types according to the process and nature the conversion. As he divided into different types, it shows that the subject of conversion should analyze in different angles of the study.⁵⁴ Types of conversion are apostasy or defection, intensification, affiliation, institutional transition and tradition transition. The distinction between these types of conversion as Rambo argues, as follows:

3.2.1 Apostasy or defection:

The repudiation of religious tradition and its belief by religious members. These types of conversion do Snot involve acceptance of the new religion but often indicates adoption of a new religious system.

⁵² Rambo, *"Understanding Religious Conversion,"* 7.

⁵³ William James, Qtd in. Wingate, *"Interreligious Conversion,"* 184-185.

⁵⁴ Rambo, *"Understanding Religious Conversion,"* 13-14

3.2.2 Intensification:

The revitalize commitment of an individual to any faith in which the convert has had a previous affiliation of that faith directly or indirectly.

3.2.3 Affiliation:

The movement in which a person or group from minimal religious commitment to full involvement with an institution or community of faith.

3.2.4 Institutional Transition:

The change of an person or group from one community to another within a major tradition. Sociological call this process "denomi national suiting." For example, as Rambo generated conversion from the Baptist to the Presbyterian Church in American Protestantism.

3.2.5 Tradition Transition:

This types of conversion refers to the movement from one major religious tradition to another, moving from one worldview, ritual system, symbolic universe and life- style to another. Christianity and Islam are initiated and benefited from massive tradition transition types of conversion.⁵⁵ All these types of conversion more or less represent the range and varying characteristics of many kinds of conversion.

Another noticeable notion in conversion is the varieties of conversion processes delineated by John Lofland and Norman Skonovd. Lofland and Skonovd propose the notion of conversion motifs, according to the defining experiences and their conversion distinctive. They identify six motifs of conversion. These motifs of conversion examine the degree of social pressure on the potential convert, duration of the conversion, conversion process, and the belief participation sequence. Lofland and Skonovd identified six motifs are: intellectual, mystical, experimental, affectional, revivalist and coercive.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Rambo, " *Understanding Religious Conversion*," 14.

i) Intellectual:

The person seeks knowledge about the religious issues through books, articles, television and other media. Such person actively seeking an alternative religion and he/she actively involved in religious rituals and organization.

ii) Mystical:

Mystical conversion is generally a traumatic burst of insight and visions. Rambo draws an example of the mystical motif of conversion as in the case of Saul of Tarsus.

iii) Experimental:

Experimental conversion involves active exploration of religious option and converts are more concern to try the theology, ritual rather than faith.

iv) Affectional:

This motif stresses the interpersonal bonds as an important factor. It is the direct experience of an individual or group being loved and affirmed by the group and its leaders of any alternative religion.

v) Revivalism:

This type of conversion motif uses crowd conformity to induce behaviour. Individuals emotionally attached by revival meetings features. For instance, powerful music and preaching at religious programme.

vi) Coercive:

The last conversion motif is coercive identify by Lofland and Skonovd. They believe that this type of conversion is relatively rare. Brainwashing, coercive persuasion, thought reform are involved in such a conversion process. Deprivation of food and sleep, fear, some allege, physical torture and other form of psychological create the pressure to surrender to another group's ideology and belief.⁵⁷

These conversion motifs and types are important to consider while doing any research on conversion. In fact, there are many motifs and types of conversion and no one conversion

⁵⁷ Rambo, "Understanding Religious Conversion," 13-16.

type and motif is normative. It seems conversion phenomena should study through the theoretical and methodological viewpoint of other various disciplines. Through the theoretical and methodological approach of other disciplines will help to better understanding of the conversion phenomena.

I have been raised some of issues of conversion in a short overview in this chapter. The topic of conversion has been studied through the methods, theories and concept in four distinct fields of study in general, viz. in theology, sociology, psychology and phenomenology of religion. The material in my hand is so much diversified and only salient parts of it can be presented. The choice is much subjected and the special focus of this study conversion to Christianity in Nepal from Dalit community in Hindu religion.

3.3 Theological Aspects:

"Clearly conversion can be considered from a religious perspective"⁵⁸ and theology or more exactly Christian theology has the longest heritage or interest in conversion.⁵⁹ In general conversion is often considered a purely Christian phenomena.⁶⁰ Robertson writers, "the idea of conversion may well be confined to Christian based conceptions of diffuse and profound change at the level of individuals qua individuals"⁶¹

This research study even more poignant theologically as this study concerns conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. What will be new and what will remain the same when a Hindu converts to Christianity? Is their conversion affects their culture and identity? In this context Cragg writes,

"We are readily familiar with the term conversion and with the issue of its cultural context. Traditionally, it is the newness we emphasize, the break with the past, which occurs in regeneration, leading to the transformation of the sinful self into the new man in Christ. But that dimension is only one side of the story. For conversion takes place within a personal continuum. There is an ongoing identity within which conversion happens, for which we need the concept of convertibility. The convertibility of man is a glorious conviction of Christian hope and mission."⁶²

The literature on conversion pervading the conception deals back to the Biblical use of the term and the cluster of words used to refer to it: the Hebrew word *shub* and the Greek words

⁵⁸ James. Qtd in. Wingate, *"Interreligious Conversion,"* 184.

⁵⁹ Seppo, *"In search of Meaning and Identity: Conversion to Christianity in Pakistani Muslim Culture,"* 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Robertson, *"Meaning and Change Exploration in the Cultural Sociology of Modern Societies,"* 189.

⁶² Cragg, *"Conversion and convertibility with Special Reference to Muslim,"* 194.

epistrephein, strephein, metanoia. These words indicate a dramatic change and a turning from one point to another.⁶³ The missionary practice of Churches and ecumenical cooperation in these days or in this century has been the major way out of the theological position concerning conversion. Rambo argues, "theology occupies a central place in understanding conversion processes theology often plays a pivotal role in shaping experience and expectations regarding conversion."⁶⁴

Thus, theological perspective has to take into account rather than paying attention to only on sociological and psychological perspective while doing any research on religious conversion without considering theological aspects of conversion. Such study will only deal superficially with this phenomenon.⁶⁵

3.4 Psychological Aspects:

In the field of psychology, religious conversion has been an important subject for several decades. After publishing a book by William James entitled "*The Varieties of Religious Experience*" in 1902, the subject became more crucial in the field of psychology. In that book, James defined conversion as the process by which a self hitherto divided and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy turned into unified and consciously right, superior and happy.⁶⁶ The interest taken by psychologist in conversion more or less focuses on the definition of conversion such as, sudden conversion, gradual conversion, conversion as a process or event etc. Similarly, they have focused on conversion of individuals and defined conversion as an internal process and little interest in the cultural aspects or influence of prevailing social realities.⁶⁷ "Conversion is self-realization or self- recognition in that one adopts or finds a new self".⁶⁸ Psychologist frequently focuses upon personality change of convert in the conversion literature with respect to the changes conversion produces in various level of personality functioning.⁶⁹ The early psychologists utilized a variety of methods to study conversion, such as raw data for analysis various types of material including personal documents (private letters and confessions), biographical and autobiographical materials. The contemporary psychology focuses on rich descriptions of the

⁶³ Barke, "*Religious Movements: Cult and Anticult*," 261.

⁶⁴ Rambo, "*Anthropology and the Study of Conversion*," 214.

⁶⁵ Seppo, "*In search of Meaning and Identity: Conversion to Christianity in Pakistani Muslim Culture*," 32.

⁶⁶ James, "*The Varieties of Religious Experience : A study in Human Nature*," 186.

⁶⁷ Hood, Hill and Spilka, "*The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*," 211-215.

⁶⁸ Hood, Hill and Spilka, "*The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*," 211.

⁶⁹ Ibid

process of conversion as a human experience rather to identify the causal processes of conversion.⁷⁰

3.5 Sociological Aspects:

Religious conversion became a subject in sociology within last few decades. It has relatively recent origin in the field of sociological concern. Robertson remarks, phenomenon of conversion comes in the intellectual interest when the conversion has been flourished and socio-cultural perspectives have appeared to be widespread.⁷¹ In addition, he connects the issue of conversion with the issue of identity of individuals.⁷² Earlier sociologists before Robert Robertson neglected the subject of conversion. They were ignoring taken as an irrational and a kind of psychological slum and to be left to psychologists. Even though, religious conversion has not been a favourite theme in the sociological research tradition before the 1960s. In the 1960s some extremely valuable research conducted by sociologist have been done and appeared with the sociological interpretations on conversion.⁷³

Some of the scholars highlight to conversion by two major approaches, roughly identified with the term classic or psychological and contemporary or sociological approach.⁷⁴ The contemporary or sociological approach is influenced primarily by sociological studies of conversion.⁷⁵ Sociologically oriented researchers tend to define conversion in terms that imply a radical change in self, which refers to conversion as the process of changing one's sense of root reality.⁷⁶

The sociological interest in conversion is characterized by various perspectives in its different dimensions. In sum up many larger issues like acculturation, assimilation, socialization, self-realization are considering in larger scale in the sociological studies of religious conversion.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Hood, Hill and Spilka, " *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*," 209.

⁷¹Robertson, " *Meaning and Change Exploration in the Cultural Sociology of Modern Societies*," 189.

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Seppo, " *In search of Meaning and Identity*," 36.

⁷⁴ Hood, Hill and Spilka, " *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*," 209.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Hood, Hill and Spilka, " *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*," 210.

⁷⁷ Seppo, " *In search of Meaning and Identity*," 41.

3.6 Theoretical Consideration

3.6.1 Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination:

Stereotypes:

Walter Lippmann used the term stereotype first time in 1922. Lippmann was a journalist; he used this term to describe the judgement made about others based on their ethnic group membership.⁷⁸ Stereotypes generally refer to the typical picture or exaggerated images that come to mind when thinking about the particular social group.⁷⁹ Gudykunst and Kim define "Stereotypes as cognitive representations of another group that influence one's feelings about the group provide the content of social categories"⁸⁰ Early researcher conceptualized stereotyping as an inflexible and faulty thought process but recent research emphasizes the functional and dynamic aspects of stereotypes which simplifying a complex society and environment.⁸¹ It is taken as a natural and universal information processing strategy.⁸² Some scholars argue that "Stereotyping should be seen as a normal process that is a useful information processing tool in diverse societies".⁸³ Jandt explains stereotyping as a mistake our brain make in the perception of other people that are similar mistakes when our brain makes the perception of visual illusion.⁸⁴ Research shows that stereotype threat can occur in a variety of ways, including as a threat to one's personal self, one's group membership.⁸⁵ Similarly, Jandt argue that anyone can stereotype and anyone can be the target of stereotyping and stereotype can be positive in some cases.⁸⁶

"stereotypes represent a set of qualities perceived to reflect the essence of a group. Stereotypes systematically affect how people perceive, process information about, and respond to, group members. They are transmitted through socialization, the media and language and discourse as associations and beliefs about the characteristics and attributes of a group and its members that shape how people think about and respond to the group".⁸⁷

⁷⁸ Jandt, " *An Interduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Communities*," 86.

⁷⁹ Neuliep, "*Intercultural Communication: A contextual Approach*," 182.

⁸⁰ Gudykunst and Kim. Qtd. in Neuliep, "*Intercultural Communication: A contextual Approach*," 182.

⁸¹ Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, "*Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*,"

⁸² James W. Neuliep. *Intercultural Communication: A contextual Approach*. Pp 182.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Neuliep, "*Intercultural Communication: A contextual Approach*," 193.

⁸⁶ Jandt, " *An Interduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Communities*," 88.

⁸⁷ Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, "*Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*,"

Prejudice:

Stereotypes can be positive or negative but prejudice refer to the irrational dislike, and suspicion or hatred of a particular group in order to their race, religion, sexual orientation, and caste etc.⁸⁸ Allport defined prejudice as "an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization directed towards a group as a whole or towards an individual because he is a member of that group. It may be felt or expressed."⁸⁹ Prejudice is typically as an attitude and behavioural predisposition to behave negatively towards the target group.⁹⁰ Jandt compare prejudice with stereotyping in a sense that "anyone can be prejudiced and anyone can experience prejudice, prejudice exists in cultures all around the world."⁹¹

Psychologists and sociologists have assumed prejudice as intra-psychic process or an attitude held by an individual and large-scale social and structural dynamic in intergroup relations respectively.⁹² With respect to race relations, Blumber wrote, "race prejudice is a defensive reaction to such challenging of the sense of group position As such, race prejudice is a protective device. It functions, however short sightedly to preserve the integrity and position of the dominant group."⁹³ To understand the prejudice it is necessary to analyze the functions of prejudice. Generally there are divided into four functions of prejudice and these can be applied to the more specific case of prejudicial attitudes.

i) Adjustment functions:

An attitude becomes associated in people's minds because such attitudes lead to reward and helps to the avoidance of punishment in certain context or culture. For instance, if the unemployment rate is high and jobs are scarce, and if certain group wants, available jobs arguing, members of a certain group have no responsibility in work settings. Thus, there will be minimum competitions for the job.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Jandt, " *An Interduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Communities*," 91.

⁸⁹ Allport. Qtd. in Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, " *Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*,"

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Jandt, " *An Interduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Communities*," 91.

⁹² Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, " *Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*,"

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Samovar and Porter, " *Intercultural Communication : A reader*," 366.

ii) The ego-defensive functions:

An attitude, which helps to project the self-esteem of the people and people hold such attitude because they do not want to share certain things about themselves. This belief protects the individual from the self-admission that he/she has inadequacies. For example holding such prejudicial attitude, if a person unable to achieve any success in business and he/she may be believe that members of certain successful group are a scheming bunch of cheaters.⁹⁵

iii) The value expressive functions:

People hold certain prejudices because they want to express the aspects of life, which they highly prize. Through such attitudes, we achieve self-expression.⁹⁶

iv) The knowledge functions:

People hold certain prejudices because such attitudes allow them to organize their world in a way that makes sense to them. With an attitude, we think we understand what we are seeing. Such attitude demand to feel that we understand the world we live in. It is typically related to the cultural established knowledge and treats out-group members according to the innate knowledge shaped by their own culture. People then behave according to their cultural or social category, which they have organized not according to discrete stimuli.⁹⁷

Discrimination:

In a context of intergroup relation, discrimination has a multiple meanings. Discrimination has taken as an inappropriate and potentially unfair treatment based on the individuals group membership. It generally emphasizes actively negative behaviour toward a member of a group than toward an in-group member.⁹⁸ Jones defined discrimination as "those actions designed to maintain own-group characteristics and favoured position at the expense of the comparison group."⁹⁹

Generally, discrimination is a biased behaviour either directly or indirectly. It also may occur within a group membership creating a relative disadvantages for other groups. Scholars have

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Samovar and Porter, *"Intercultural Communication : A reader,"* 367.

⁹⁸ Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, *" Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination,"*

⁹⁹ Jones. Qtd. in Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, *" Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination,"*

argued that in-group favouritism plays a pivotal role to shape intergroup relations, taking psychological precedence over out-group antipathy.¹⁰⁰ Newer researcher in sociology focusing institutional discrimination rather than focusing on the individual level of intergroup discrimination. They argued that institutional discrimination can operate independently and it does not require the active support of individuals and their discriminate intension. In institutional discrimination, discriminate people often do not realize the existence of discrimination because laws, policies, and ritualised practices seem normal, for instance tuition fee in educational institutions, height requirement for employment as a police officer etc.¹⁰¹ Similarly in the cultural sphere, discrimination occurs "when one group exerts the power to define the value for a society. It involves not only privileging the culture, heritage and values of the dominant group, but also imposing this cultural on the other less dominant groupbelief about the superiority of a dominant group's cultural heritage over those of other groups and the expression of such beliefs in individual actions or institutional policies".¹⁰²

This prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination are the product of the biased nature of people based on their group membership. Which can occur at the individual, institutional and cultural level at any time and place and such biased attitudes are often perpetuated by habitual practices by individual, and even guided by formal laws justified with ideologies.

¹⁰⁰ Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, " *Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination,*"

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid.

Chapter Four

General Information of Nepal

4.1 Geography:

Nepal is a mountainous country, located on the lap of the Himalayan belt. It covers the land mass area of 1,47,181 sq. km. It spreads 885 kilometres from east to west and 141 to 145 kilometres from north to south.¹⁰³ It is a landlocked country being surrounded by people's republic of China to the North boarder and rest three sides, the east south and west by India.¹⁰⁴ Topographically it has unique features, beginning from 70 meter to 8,848 meter from the sea level.¹⁰⁵ With its varied topography, Nepal boasts all three types of climatic zones, extremely cold in the north, temperate in the middle and hot in the south. Nepal is divided into three geographical regions, Himalayan, Mountains hill and Tarai in terms of topography from the north to south respectively. The Himalaya region covers 15%, mountain region, 68% and the Tarai 17% of the total area of the country.¹⁰⁶

4.2 Administrative Division:

Nepal is a federal republic and religious secular country declared in 2008. Before that, Nepal was a Hindu Kingdom. The country is still in the process of creating a new federal republic constitution. For development and management purposes, Nepal is divided into five development regions, fourteen zones, and seventy five districts. Besides that, there are 3915 Village Development Committees (VDC) and 58 Municipalities.¹⁰⁷

4.3 Demography:

The country has approximately 26.5 million populations with annual growth of the population 1.35 percent with sex ratio 94.2 (number of males per 100 females). About one fourth of population (25.16%) lives in below poverty lines as per the Nepal Living Standard

¹⁰³ Dangal, "Country Profile: Nepal,"

¹⁰⁴ Rongong, "Early Churches in Nepal," 9.

¹⁰⁵ Central Bureau of Statistics, "Nepal in Figure, 2013," 2.

¹⁰⁶ Dangal, "Country Profile: Nepal,"

¹⁰⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics, "Nepal in Figure, 2013," 2.

Survey 2010/11.¹⁰⁸ Nepal is the forty-one most populous, ninety-third largest country in terms of land mass and 115th largest economy in the world.¹⁰⁹ Overall literacy rate (for population aged 5 years and above) is 65.9% in 2011. Among that, male literacy rate is 75.1 % compared to female literacy rate of 57.4%.¹¹⁰

It is a very diverse country in terms of several caste, ethnicity, religion, language, rituals and race. In this sense, Nepal is a multilingual, multi religious, multi ethnic, multi cultural society.¹¹¹ Nepal is a garden of 125 castes/ethnic, 123 linguistics and 10 religious people with their own unique features. Among the different categories and sub-categories, there is harmony and unity between each other.¹¹² In more detailed these subjects will discussed in separate titles and subtitles.

4.4 Caste and Ethnic Combination in Nepal:

Caste and ethnicity seem similar but there are some distinguished features. In the context of Nepal, these two terms merged while collecting data about the caste and ethnic groups. Here, the researcher draws some definition about caste and ethnicity separately before presenting the statistics of caste and ethnicity in Nepal, which may help to better understand in Nepalese context.

4.4.1 Ethnicity:

Ethnic group can refer to a group of people having the same descent and heritage who share a common distinctive culture passed on through generation to generation. In an ethnic group, the members of group can exhibit such distinguishing features such as language or accent, physical structure, family names, festivals, customs, religion and social and cultural identity.

Ethnic identity refers to the identification with and perceived as a group with common shared heritage and culture.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Dangal, "Country Profile: Nepal,"

¹¹⁰ National Major Findings. CBS. 2011/12.

¹¹¹ Government of Nepal, "Nepal Population Report, 2011," 54.

¹¹² Government of Nepal, "National Population and Housing Census, 2011," 4.

¹¹³ Jandt, "An Introduction to Intercultural Communication," 21.

4.4.2 Caste:

The caste is a symbolic system associated with Hinduism and a set of rules and practices regulating social and cultural organizations and power in societies based on caste. The caste system divides all of Hindu society in different groups with their hereditary membership. This caste system decides the ranking of people according to their birth caste.¹¹⁴ Caste is generally regarded as all the human activities, duties, rites, fate, future occupation are fixed based on heredity.¹¹⁵ Regarding the ideology and religion in Hinduism, the caste system is based on the notion of rituals purity and impurity, which serve to justify the division of labour according to the castes.

Defining the Nepal's ethnic community or group is complicated by the sensitive nature of ethnic, linguistic, and religious identity. There is not conducting any anthropology or linguistic survey of the population in the history. Generally, ethnic identity divided based on the various combinations, such as national origin, region, language, religion and caste and ethnic groups often are derived from the language they speak.¹¹⁶

There are 125 caste/ethnic groups reported in the national census 2011. Major caste/ethnic people are following in percentage.

<i>Chhetri</i>	16.6
<i>Brahman Hill</i>	12.2
<i>Magar</i>	7.1
<i>Tharu</i>	6.6
<i>Tamang</i>	5.8
<i>Newar</i>	5.0
<i>Kami</i>	4.8
<i>Musalman</i>	4.4
<i>Yadav</i>	4.0

¹¹⁴ Eriksen. "Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology," 150.

¹¹⁵ Kisan, "The Nepali Dalit Social Movement," 5.

¹¹⁶ Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Nepal," 8.

Rai 2.3¹¹⁷

4.5 Religious status

There are ten types of religious categories reported in national census, 2011 held by the Government of Nepal. According to that census, the religions followed by people are.

Religion	Percentage
Hinduism	81.3
Buddhism	9.1
Islam	4.4
Kirat	3.1
Christianity	1.4
Other religions	0.9 ¹¹⁸

The historical condition of religions in detail will discuss in chapter four in this paper.

4.6 Caste system

In the Nepali dictionary, the caste system is defined as "discrimination on the basis of caste" and "for one caste treats another with the intention of degrading".¹¹⁹ Caste system as a hierarchy dividing of entire Hindu population into four categories based on *Varnas* system. These four categories are *Brahminas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishya* and *Shudras*.¹²⁰ In the *Varnas*, the *Brahmins* (priest) have the highest rank, followed by the *Kshatriyas*, taken as warriors and ruler, and then in the third rank, *Vaishyas* taken as the merchant and the last one in *Varnas* system is *Shudras*, taken as artisans and workers. Outside of the *Varna* system at the bottom of the ladder, there is Dalits, a lowest caste in the society, spoken of as

¹¹⁷ National Major Findings. CBS. 2011/12.

¹¹⁸ Government of Nepal, "National Population and Housing Census, 2011," 4.

¹¹⁹ Kisan, "The Nepali Dalit Social Movement" 5.

¹²⁰ Eriksen, "Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology," 151.

untouchables.¹²¹ Untouchability in the Hindu caste system has racial elements as the ritual status of one's based on birth caste.¹²²

Therefore, the Hindu caste system perceived or understood as a hierarchy of people, which membership is hereditary and permanent. Such hierarchy creates inequality between the group of caste and access to goods and services. The crucial fact is that the caste status is determined and the system is perpetuated by birth. The low caste people are considered inferior inherently regardless their behaviour.¹²³

4.7 Nepalese law provisions on caste system and untouchability:

Nepal was a Hindu kingdom, people's movement of 2006, established Nepal as a religious secular country.¹²⁴ In Nepal, caste system began to develop from reconstructing the *Newar* society in Kathmandu Valley by contemporary king Jayasthiti Malla in 14th century, dividing *Newars* into 64 castes according to their occupations as suggested by inviting *Brahman* experts from India.¹²⁵ Later, a strong king Prithvinarayan Shah, who unified Nepal territorially from many small states fighting with other states also strengthened caste system in Nepal considered Nepal is a "garden of four *Varnas* and thirty six castes." In 1854, similarly, Junga Bahadur Rana, the founder of *Rana* autocratic rule in Nepal promulgated the "National Legal Code of Nepal, 1854", Where law and legal provisions were designed on the basis of caste system, however it did not totally follow the fourfold of the *Varna* system in the National Code of Nepal.¹²⁶ The National Legal Code of Nepal divides people as follows:

- i) Sacred thread wearing (high caste),
- ii) Liquor drinking (middle caste),
- iii) Touchable low caste; water unacceptable but not needed purification needed if touched,

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Gurung, "*Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology. Vol. IX,*" .2

¹²³ Subedi, "*Himalayan Journal of Sociology and anthropology. Vol. IV,*" 140.

¹²⁴ Rai "*Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology. Vol. XI.*" 18.

¹²⁵ "*Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal,*" 8.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Pp 9

iv) Untouchable low caste; water unacceptable and purification needed if touched.¹²⁷

The National Legal Code of Nepal, 1854 contained, highly detailed grounds of systematizing caste discrimination, for instance, ground grains and fruits acceptable from high caste people expect if such grains must not be boiled or roasted even if it has been touched by untouchables those who required purification but such grains and fruits must be eaten away from the untouchables. That National Legal Code of Nepal also categorized untouchables into multiple divisions and their status. According to that, the National Legal Code of Nepal, the lowest caste was *Chame* above *Chame* was *Pode*, accordingly *Badi*, *Gaine*, *Damai*, *Karara*, *Kami*, *Sarki*, *Kulu*, *Dhabi*, *Kusule*, *Kasai*, are higher and lower than each other within untouchables were created. The food exchange between untouchables was restricted in that National Legal Code of Nepal.¹²⁸ In the same way that National Legal Code of Nepal also included the discrimination in marriage practice, for example, if a high caste man married a low caste woman, then his caste status decreased into a lower caste as his bride's caste.¹²⁹

During the *Rana* regime, the punishment of crime also based on caste and they could raise the status of the caste group or family if they wished, for example, Juddha Samsher Rana married an untouchable woman and he raised the caste status of that family to a touchable caste. The caste status was highly changeable during the *Rana* rulers. In the same way, a high caste man Madhav Raj Joshi spoke about against the caste discrimination and Dalit freedom at that time but rulers beat him and his caste was lowered.¹³⁰

In 1955, a new law was passed about the civil service appointment stating that; civil service appointment would be based on qualification without discrimination based on religion, class, sex, and ethnicity even though caste discriminated law was continued based on the National Legal Code of Nepal, 1854. That new law could not change any discrimination in the prevailing social context.¹³¹

In 1903, contemporary king Mahendra Birbikram Shah replaced the old National Legal Code of Nepal by new the National Legal Code of Nepal. In new National Legal Code of Nepal, all

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Kisan, "The Nepali Dalit Social Movement," 57-58.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 58.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 59.

¹³¹ Ibid. 61.

the discrimination based on caste were ceased legally.¹³² However, that legal code protects the caste based discrimination and untouchability in the name of tradition and religious rituals.¹³³ That caste system and untouchability in the practice remain the same as before.

In 1990, new constitution declared that caste based discrimination is a crime and punishable, which states that "no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of caste. No person's presence shall be prohibited in public places and no person shall be prevented from using public property. Violation of such laws will be punishable".¹³⁴ On this basis of constitution, 1990; new National Legal Code of Nepal also revised in 1992. In new updated National Legal Code of Nepal, also accept the caste based untouchability and discrimination is a punishable act. In that new National Legal Code of Nepal chapter 19, article 10 (A) states, "if anyone practices untouchability towards another, or if anyone prohibits another's presence in public places or if anyone prevents another's use of public imprisoned for a year, or fine Rs. 3000 or both."¹³⁵

4.7.1 The provisions in Interim Constitution 2007:

The constitutional history of Nepal begins from 1948 by the Government of Nepal Act, 1948. Currently, Nepal is governed by the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, which is promulgated on 14th January 2007. This constitution was made based on the people's movement in 2006.¹³⁶ In this constitution, the demands of Dalit Civil Society and various Dalit movements were addressed. These following provisions directly or indirectly addressing concerns to the Dalits in the interim constitution. Article 14 has guaranteed the rights against caste discriminated and untouchability, which made the provisions:

i) "None shall be discriminated based on caste, lineage, community or occupation with any form of untouchability and discrimination; such practice of discrimination shall be punishable as defined by law."¹³⁷

ii) "None shall be deprived from the public services, use of public places or entering religious places."¹³⁸

¹³² Subedi, " *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and anthropology*," 153-154.

¹³³ Kisan " *The Nepali Dalit Social Movement*," 63.

¹³⁴ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990. Article, 11 (4)

¹³⁵ National Legal Code of Nepal, Chapter 19. Article, 10(A)

¹³⁶ " *Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal*," 43

¹³⁷ Ibid.

iii) "The producing and distributing goods, services, or facilities, have not be limited to anyone based on caste."¹³⁹

iv) "The feeling and practices of distinction between higher caste and lower caste shall be strongly discouraged."¹⁴⁰

iv) "The practices against mentioned above shall be punishable."¹⁴¹

Similarly, Article 13 states that, "all citizens are equal in the eyes of law; none shall be deprived from the equal protection of law. It is also clarifying, none shall be discriminated because of their religion, *Varna*, caste, race, origin, language or ideology."¹⁴²

In addition, Article 34, is about the guiding principle of the state. It entails, the state shall have a social objective of eliminating all forms of economic and social inequalities and create social harmony among the different castes, religions, dialects.¹⁴³ Besides these provisions, there are many more positive provisions in the constitution, but these provisions hardly being practiced in the society or state to eradicate the caste discrimination from the bottom.

Although, the changes in the constitution, laws declared caste based discrimination and untouchability is a crime and punishable offences, but in reality there is huge existence and in practice of caste based discrimination. It only shifted from public domain to private domain.

4.8 Who are Dalits?

The word "Dalit" comes from a Sanskrit word '*Dal*', which means, 'to split'. Accordingly, *Nepali Brihad Sabdakosh*, a dictionary of Nepali language, perceived as an authentic dictionary explains the Dalit as ' thing or person who are cut, split, broken or torn asunder, scattered, or crushed and destroyed'. The definition and identification of Dalit is a disputable subject between Dalit and non-Dalit in India and Nepal from past to present. In the past, Dalit has been called in different names; all of those names were used to insulting Dalits by high caste people in India. Those words seem as synonyms of the word Dalit, such as *Dasa*

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid. Pp 44

¹⁴³ Ibid. Pp 45

(slave), *Raksasa* (monster), *Asura* (devil), *Acchut* (untouchable) but British ruler during colonial rule in India referred Dalit as 'the depressed Classes' and 'the scheduled castes'.¹⁴⁴

In Nepal, the word Dalit commonly used to use in the political sphere and right based activities in the past. The common people referred them with many derogatory terms in Nepali language such as "*Paninachalne*" (water polluting), *Acchoot* (untouchable), *Tallo Jaat* (low caste) etc. The official documents of Government of Nepal, Non-governmental Organizations, and Development Organizations or agencies referred Dalit as *Uppechit* (ignored) *Utpidit* (oppressed), *Pachadi pareka* (lagging behind), *Garib* (poor), *Nimukha* (helpless), *Simantakrit* (marginalized), *Subidha bata banchit* (disadvantaged) etc.¹⁴⁵

This term, "Dalit" was not used in National Legal Code of Nepal; it is a new term to include all untouchable and low caste people in Nepal.¹⁴⁶ Harka Gurung, quoted a definition from a writer, which explained "the word Dalit is used in Nepal to identify a vulnerable and poor group of people who are discriminated against on the basis of their caste".¹⁴⁷ Gurung also added a more definition to clarify the term, according to him "the term Dalit was chosen by their activities as a means of rejecting other derogatory terms such as 'untouchable', 'scheduled caste', or 'depressed class'".¹⁴⁸ National Dalit commission's proposed bill, 2003 defines 'Dalit community' refers to caste community listed in Annex-1, who have been kept far behind in social, economic, educational, political and religious spheres and deprived of human dignity and social justice due to caste based discrimination and untouchability.¹⁴⁹

In the Annex 1 list, National Dalit Commission (NDC) identified 22 Dalit castes, 5 from the Hills region and 17 from the Terai region of Nepal.¹⁵⁰ They were as follows:

A) Hill origin Dalit castes: "*Gandarva* (*Gaine*), *Pariyar* (*Damai*, *Darji*, *Suchikar*, *Nagarchi*, *Dholi*, *Hoodke*), *Badi*, *Viswakarma* (*Kami*, *Lohar*, *Sunar*, *Wod*, *Chunara*, *Parki*, *Tamata*), and *Sarki* (*Mijar*, *Charmakar*, *Bhool*)."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ "Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal," 10

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Gurung "Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology. Vol. IX," 5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Nepal Dalit Commission, Qtd. in "Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal," 11.

¹⁵⁰ Bhattachan, Sunar and Bhattachan(Gauchan). "Caste based Discrimination in Nepal," 3.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 4.

B) Tarai origin Dalit castes: "*Kalar, Kakaihiya, Kori, Khatik, Khatbe (Mandal, Khanka), Chamar (Ram, Mochee, Harijan, Rabidas), Chidimar, Dom (Marik), Tatma (Tanti, Das), Dusadh (Paswan, Hajara), Dhobi (Hindu Rajak), Pattharkatta, Pasi, Bantar, Mushar, Mestar (Halkhor), and Sarvanga (Sarbaraiya).*"¹⁵²

It is apparent that Dalit community is most marginalized and disadvantaged group in the Nepalese society. They are socially exploited, politically powerless and economically poorest group of the society. Most of the Dalits are dependent on caste-based traditional occupations such as metal works, leather works, tailoring, etc. for their survival.¹⁵³

4.9 Current practices of caste based untouchability in Nepal:

In 2001, Action aid Nepal, an organization carried out a study on the existing practices of caste-based untouchability. That study or survey was based in 4 Village Development Committee and 4 Municipalities from different 8 districts. The survey districts were selected to representing the Hill and Terai region's rural and urban areas. That survey finds out, all together 205 existing practices of caste-based discrimination.

- Out of the 205 existing practices, the 54 caste based discrimination were related to denial, which includes:
 - ✓ 10 related to entry;
 - ✓ 14 to service;
 - ✓ 6 to access common resources;
 - ✓ 10 to kinship and other relationship;
 - ✓ 14 to participation;
- 9 out of 205 were related to forced or discriminatory labour;
- 20 out of 205 were related to dominance;
- 20 out of 205 were related to atrocities;
- 3 out of 205 were related to social boycott;

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Bk and Gandharba. "*Dalit Bibliography*," 1.

- 18 out of 205 were related to attitudinal untouchability;
- Out of the 205 existing practices of caste-based discrimination 81 were discrimination in different fields, which includes:
 - ✓ 18 relate to occupation;
 - ✓ 11 related to educational institutions;
 - ✓ 10 related to political rights;
 - ✓ 14 related to government policy and programs;
 - ✓ 7 related to government and NGO office;
 - ✓ 13 related to development programs and donors;
 - ✓ 8 related to religious and cultural activities.¹⁵⁴

A study of caste-based discrimination in Nepal by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies in 2008, divide current practices of caste based discrimination and untouchability into five points; they were as follows:

- Religious and social-cultural sites,
- Public Drinking water sources,
- Health service,
- Economic activities and public property,
- Settlement/community¹⁵⁵

In this study, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies has focused on denial of inter-caste marriage between non-Dalit and Dalit, between high and low castes Dalits. Entering in the Hindu Temple, eating food together at festivals and wedding parties, etc. included in the religious and social-cultural discrimination sites. Similarly, in public drinking water site, drinking water is said to be polluted when touched by Dalits, which is not acceptable by high caste people, most of the place there is two separate taps for Dalits and non-Dalit, which is an example of visible untouchability in Nepal. Even in the most important place health service, Dalits are discriminated high caste health workers, Dalits are not allowed to enter the hospitals, health clinics and health workers do not touch Dalit while check up and do not enter their houses.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ "Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal," 28.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 29.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 33.

In addition, that study presents the caste discrimination and untouchability in milk collection centres, restaurants, hotels and teashop. In milk collection centres, Dalit could not sell their milk for income. Lastly, that research study highlighted the discrimination during the settlement of the Dalits in another place where they are not allowed to migrate by non-Dalits.¹⁵⁷

Here I draw a news and a story about the caste discrimination practices in Nepal, this news is about the Dalits' problem while renting room published in an English Newspaper in Nepal, *The Kathmandu Post* on 12 February, 2013 and the story is about the discrimination in drinking water source. These news and story shows the pitiable condition of the Dalits in Nepal.

"Suresh Sunar, a goldsmith, rented a flat in the Boudha area for two years in August 2012. It had hardly been a week since he took up the residence when his landlord began to put pressure on his family to move out as Sunar's caste, Dalit, had been disclosed. Sunar refused to leave the house and sought the help of the National Dalit Commission (NDC). After the Commission's directives, Sunar's family was allowed to stay on for two years as per the contract.

Similarly, Gopal Nepali, hailing from the Badi community in western Nepal, has been living under a pseudonym for the past decade, afraid that his landlord will expel him upon discovery that he is a Dalit".¹⁵⁸

Similarly, this story is about the caste discrimination in drinking water source in Nepal. I brought this story from a study by International Labour Office in Nepal, entitled "Dalit and Labour in Nepal: Discrimination and Forced Labour".

"Twenty-seven-year old Aishu BK and her family had migrated from Achham to Kuntikhet village, ward no. 9, Baliya VDC, Kailali.

There was a public tap near her house. The 'upper caste' people in the village did not let any member of her family touch that tap. If her family needed water, they had to request one of the 'upper caste' villagers, who would then give them water. In a day, having returned home from the farm, Aishu asked her six-year-old son to fetch water from the tap. As there was no one at the tap to give him water, the child himself fetched water. Kinthe Saud, a local 'upper caste' man saw this scolded Aishu's son for touching the tap. Aishu's son returned home crying. When he told her the facts, Aishu went to Saud and argued with him that her son had touched the tap because there was no one to give him water and he should not have scolded the child so harshly. But Saud retorted that her son was telling a lie and started beating him there and then. Aishu then ran away with her son to her home. After some time, Saud's mother-in-law and some 'upper caste' women came to her house and scolded and beat her for

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 35-36.

¹⁵⁸ Binod Ghimire. "The Kathmandu Post," 12 February, 2012.

arguing with an 'upper caste' person. Aishu remembers that bitter incident and laments that no one came to save her and her son at that time.

The same day she went to Motipur police station to file a report against Saud. Saud was summoned to the police station and was asked not to stop any Dalit from using the local tap in the future. After returning from the police station, Saud and some 'upper caste' people scolded Aishu for complaining against them, and threatened to set her house on fire should she fetch water from that tap again. Since that incident, Aishu does not fetch water from that tap. She goes to a place a little far from her house where there is a tap for Dalits. Aishu tells this story about discrimination with tears in her eyes and regrets that she had no saviour then.
„159

Besides these two materials, here I am presenting three photos related to the caste discrimination, which make clear about the current situation of caste discrimination and untouchability in Nepal.

¹⁵⁹ ILO in Nepal. "*Dalit and Labour in Nepal: Discrimination and Forced Labour*" 22.

Picture 1¹⁶⁰ shows that, the separate water taps for Dalit and non-Dalit. Dalit should stand away from water sources. Dalits are not allowed touch the taps and well which is using for non- Dalits in many parts of Nepal in these days even the caste discrimination ceased legally long time ago. The researcher brought this photo from a research study on caste-based discrimination in Nepal by Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. That research study also brought this from a photographer Jakob Carlsen.



(The Picture shows the separate water taps for Dalits and Non-Dalits in a Nepalese village in Far Western Region)

¹⁶⁰ "Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A study on Nepal, Photo by. Jakob Carlsen." 32



Picture 2¹⁶¹ (Dalits drinking their tea outside the Tea House in Nepal)

This above picture shows that, Dalits drinking their tea sitting outside the teahouse, all other people are inside the teahouse. Being Dalit they are not allowed to sit inside the teahouse. Even in many places of Nepal, Dalits have to wash their dishes after they ate some food in hotels, restaurant, or teahouse. Caste based untouchability and discrimination in hotels, restaurants and teahouses are declining but not eliminated completely. Dalits have to stay away from the foods and water in such places, even have to wash their dishes themselves if they used. They also discriminated by the staffs who belong to the high caste.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. Pp 35



(Picture 3¹⁶² In this picture a Dalit eating separately)

In this picture 3 shows the caste discrimination during a get together or a programme. In this picture, we can see, a Dalit man eating his food being separate from other in a programme. We can easily suppose that he a man is separate because of his low caste. The researcher recognized this man as a Dalit from the two sticks in his pocket. Dalit uses those sticks to play a musical instrument during any traditional programme; we can see that musical instrument putting besides the big table. The researcher got this picture from a social media, facebook, and used this picture to clarify caste discrimination in Nepal.

These news, experienced story and photos show the current situation in Nepal's caste based discrimination and untouchability even having good legislation, provisions and laws against caste based discrimination and untouchability.

¹⁶² Anonymous, www.facebook.com

4.10 Escaping Strategies:

To cease the caste based untouchability and discrimination in Nepal, there is involving many different sectors such as, Nepal Government, INGOs, NGOs, development agencies, Dalit and non-Dalit leaders, activists etc. with huge amount of money and policies. Even though, the practice of untouchability is not ceased from the society and the life of the Dalits. To escape from the untouchability Dalits as an individual themselves followed different strategies. A study held by the International Labour Organization in Nepal pointed out three escaping strategies from caste discrimination and untouchability by Nepalese Dalits. Those strategies were as follows:

- Migration
- Change of traditional surname
- Religious conversion.¹⁶³

Dalit people used to migrate from their own land to another place where they do not have to face discrimination, such migration, especially occurred from rural areas where untouchability practice is visible in urban areas where untouchability practice is relatively mild.

According to this ILO research study, another popular contemporary strategies for escaping caste discrimination is changing the traditional surname from Dalit surname to non- Dalit surname to hide their real Dalit identity. This study shows that "more and more Dalits are adopting non traditional surnames to avoid embarrassment due to their caste and it does work, at least temporarily when they migrate to urban centres."¹⁶⁴

Similarly, this study pointed out, religious conversion has been embraced as an escaping strategy from caste discrimination and untouchability by Dalits in Nepal.¹⁶⁵ Thousands of Dalits in Nepal have and continue to convert to Christianity to escape from discrimination based on caste system, but Dalit leaders of various organizations seems to be opposed to

¹⁶³ ILO in Nepal. "*Dalit and Labour in Nepal: Discrimination and Forced Labour*," 49-51.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 51.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

religious conversion to bring an end to caste discrimination and untouchability. They prefer social change instead of religious conversion.¹⁶⁶

4.11 A Brief history of Christianity in Nepal:

The earliest Christian contact with Nepal came through the periodic travels of Italian Capuchin priests' route to Tibet in 1662.¹⁶⁷ In 1703, the Capuchin fathers assigned from the Roman Catholic Church to evangelize in Nepal, Tibet and North part of India. From their base in Patna, India, several went to work in Kathmandu valley.¹⁶⁸ At that time, 29 Capuchin priests lived and worked within the Kathmandu valley and outside the valley from 1715 to 1769.¹⁶⁹ During that time Kathmandu valley was divided into three states ruled by three different kings. All the rulers of Kathmandu valley gave them permission to stay and right to practice and preach their religion.¹⁷⁰ Cindy Perry notes that "two Churches complete with cemeteries were built. Our Lady's Assumption was dedicated on 24 March 1760 in Kathmandu, near the Thamel area. There was also a Church at Bhaktpur, dedicated to the Annunciation of Our Lady."¹⁷¹ The Malla kings favoured the Capuchin fathers, even providing rent free houses, and protection during that time. Before 1768, few people in Kathmandu valley started to convert into Christianity. However, at the time when the king Prithivi Narayan Shah conquered Nepal, he expelled the Christians and the priests accusing them of being agents in the expansionist plan of European colonial powers.¹⁷² At the time of uneasy existence of Christianity, in February 1768, a company of about 60 Christians with one father crossed the border of Nepal and settle in the land near the town of Bettian, India.¹⁷³

The king promulgated a decree to the effect that Nepal were out of bounds for Christians. The decree was reiterated later, as a influence of which, Nepal was closed to Christian for about 200 years.¹⁷⁴ For almost 200 years, many mission agencies and individuals thus praying and knocking at the door of Nepal. Their waiting time was over only after the 1950 when the first real revolution took place in Nepal. After the revolution held on 1950, isolated Nepal opened

¹⁶⁶ Kisan, "*The Nepali Dalit Social Movement*," 153-54.

¹⁶⁷¹⁶⁷ Burgoyne and Lindell, "*Nepal*," 462.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Rongong, "*Early Churches in Nepal*," 21.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Cindy Perry, qtd. in Rongong, "*Early Churches in Nepal*," 23.

¹⁷² Burgoyne and Lindell, "*Nepal*," 462.

¹⁷³ Khatry, "*The Church in Nepal*," 382.

¹⁷⁴ Rongong, "*Early Churches in Nepal*," 26.

her boarders to foreign influence.¹⁷⁵ The first resident missionary at the modern time started in 1951. At that time, Jesuit Fathers established the first mission high school in Kathmandu valley named St. Xavier's school.¹⁷⁶ After the formation of the democratic government in Nepal, Christian mission was permitted to enter the country but only under the certain conditions.

"They were to serve the people in such useful ways as would further the cause of nation-building, they were to follow the rules of the department to which they were connected; they were to travel and live only as their visa allowed, but they were not to propagate their religion or convert the people. The religious laws reminded substantially the same, protecting Hinduism and forbidding conversion."¹⁷⁷

In 1952, establishment of Churches on a permanent basis started. The first Church was Ram Ghat Church in Pokhara in 1952, followed by A.G (Assemblies of God) Church Nawalprashi, in the same year and Putalisadak Church established in 1954, in Kathmandu.¹⁷⁸ The largest foreign mission enters to Nepal was the United mission to Nepal in 1954, which began with ten missions from India under commitment to work as one body of Christian to build one Church in the country. The United Mission to Nepal also started working in medical, public health, education, agriculture, industrial development and training projects.¹⁷⁹ Since then, other Christian organizations and agencies entered into Nepal and the number of Christian and Churches have sprung up gradually. All have contributed to the expansion, growth, develop and strengthening Christianity in some way in Nepal which we can see and find there.

4.12 Numerical Growth and Challenges of Christianity in Nepal:

Church in Nepal has existed since 1952 after the established the Ramghat Church in Pokhara, now the number of Churches in Nepal reached about 8500.¹⁸⁰ The recorded data of Christianity in Nepal show that in 1978, there were 800 Christians. After the political change in 1990, this brought the freedom of religion in practice helps to increase the population of Christianity in Nepal.¹⁸¹ K.B. Rokay, General Secretary of National Council of Churches in Nepal writes the estimated number of Christianity in Nepal crossed 800,000 by the year 2000

¹⁷⁵ Khatry, "*The Church in Nepal*," 382.

¹⁷⁶ Fox, "*Pentecost in Asia*," 218.

¹⁷⁷ Burgoyne and Lindell, "*Nepal*," 468.

¹⁷⁸ Poudel, "*A Brief History of Church in Nepal*," 15.

¹⁷⁹ Burgoyne and Lindell, "*Nepal*," 465.

¹⁸⁰ Mahan Avaiyan, "*Population Report 2011: Contradiction*," 7.

¹⁸¹ Rokaya, "*Nepal: Christmas and Christianity*,"

and Rokaya in addition explains the growth rate of Christians has been rising due to the full religious freedom in Nepal. However, he added some issue, which are standing against full flourishing Christianity in Nepal, for instance, "conversion from one religion to another being illegal, no clear and proper legal provision to register Churches and the acute problem of the burial ground being faced by Christians."¹⁸² However, having many problems to be a Christian in Nepal, the population of Christianity in Nepal gradually increasing. According the population report published by the Government of Nepal collected in every 10 years shows the huge growth of Christianity in Nepal. The census shows that, in 1981 the percentage of Christians in Nepal was 2.4 included in others, which reached in 0.168 in 1991, 0.45 in 2001 and 1.42 in 2011.¹⁸³ But Christian organization refused the census published government in 2011, which shows that there are about 300,000 Christians, but they claimed there are more than 2500,000 Christians in Nepal. They accused that Nepal government is still biased towards the Christianity in another ways as the past.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the presented statistics show the apparent scenario of the growth of the Christianity in Nepal. A research survey report conducted by, *The Centre for the Study of Global Christianity*, entitled *Gordon Conwell Seminary Report*, published in 2013. That report identified the top 20 countries that have the highest percentage Christianity average annual growth rate declared, Nepal has the highest percentage annual growth rate of Christianity in the world with 10.93% and suggests that the primary growth factor is religious conversion.¹⁸⁵ In this context some people perceived the growth of Christianity as "due to great publicity made about the flexibility inherent in the Christianity religion that several people adopted this religion..... critics say that conversion into and even adoption of Christianity is due to the fact that Christians rendering great social and missionary service which has presented a very bright picture of this religion to the people in Nepal."¹⁸⁶

4.13 Conclusion:

Nepal is going through a peace process and democratic republic's transition after the People's Movement II in 2006. The first Constituent Assembly election held in 2008, failed to finalise a constitution by 2012, which Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 2012 without being

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ *Central Bureau of Statistics. Government of Nepal.*

¹⁸⁴ Mahan Avaiyan, "Population Report 2011: Contradiction," 7.

¹⁸⁵ "The Top 20 Countries Where Christianity,"

¹⁸⁶ Manjupuria and and Kumar, "Religions in Nepal" 323.

able to deliver a constitution as mandated to it. Again, in 2013, there held another Constituent Assembly election for constitution. The Constituent Assembly has a mandate to prepare a new inclusive constitution. The previous constitutional and legal provisions seem inadequate to eliminate caste-based discrimination and untouchability even having many constitutional and legal provisions against caste-based discriminations. The lack of effective implementation of the existing constitutional and legal provisions, Dalits are still facing various types of caste-based discrimination in every sphere of their life.

Hindu religion, as a dominant religion in Nepal, playing a main role to encourage caste-based discrimination and untouchability in Nepalese societies. The country also patronized Hindu religion, and country was a Hindu Kingdom until 2008, declared during the political partyless Panchyat System from 1960 to 1990. The domination of Hindu religion in practice is continuing as usual, even declared as a religious secular country.

In this 21st century, age of science and technology and globalization, Dalits in Nepal still facing inhuman behaviour based on caste system. To escape from the caste-based discrimination and untouchability they ought to follow different strategies. Such strategies seem their obligatory due to the inhuman behaviour from so-called high caste people and own humiliation in the society and their personal life. Due to the highly conservative Nepalese society, Dalits are still facing discrimination and escaping from the discrimination, they are converting other religions especially in Christianity in Nepal. Thus, conversion of other religious followers especially Hindu religion, the population of Christianity is rapidly increasing in Nepal.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Nature of Data:

For this research project, I had collected two type of materials or data through the two types of respondents based on their social backgrounds. Within the two types of respondents, on the one hand, there were 12 respondents who were converted to Christianity and on the other hand, there were 9 non-Christian respondents. All together, I had been collect data from 21 respondents for this research study. Through the convert respondents, I tried to understand their conversion motifs, conversion experiences, conversion situation and changes of life pattern before and after conversion. All these data helped me to compare their perception and understanding of life and perspective of their future. All the respondents of convert were converted from the Dalit communities. My motivation and intension to select those respondents from Dalit communities was to know, is Christianity helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination based on the Hindu religion rooted in Nepalese societies? Through the experiences of converted Christians this issue will discuss in this chapter. I hope all these data collected from converted Christians will help me generate logical conclusion on how conversion into Christianity, helping to eradicate social and cultural in the life of the converts and their societies.

On the other hand, I had been collect data from non-Christian respondents as already mentioned. There were 9 Hindu respondents in total, 5 belongs to Dalit community and 4 belongs to non-Dalit Community. The intension to include Hindu Dalit and non-Dalit respondents in this research project is to make this project most logical, natural and lively. Through the Hindu informants, I tried to understand, how they perceive the growth of Christianity in Nepal and massive number of conversions from Dalit communities. Are these Hindu respondents agree on Christianity helping to eradicate caste based discrimination in the social and cultural sphere or over all caste based discrimination practice area? These non-Christian informants mainly included in this study to analyze the Dalit conversion process into Christianity and growth of Christianity in Nepal through different dimensions.

Being aware about the Nepalese social and cultural context, since where I born and grown up. I took a decision to collect data from two types of respondents. In this chapter, I will present all my collected materials and analysed them considering ethical values of a researcher.

5.2 Brief Introduction of Respondents and Coding:

In my project I collect data from two type of respondents, as I mentioned already, converted Christian and non-Christian. In converted Christian respondents, I have been collect data from 12 respondents who were belonging Dalit community before, among them, six were men and six were female. All the respondents were between 22 to 38 years old. All of them were literate and involving in different professions. They were converted into Christianity within 15 years or between 1 year to 15 years. I coded them as respondent 1 to respondent 12 in my project to hide their personal identification for their confidentiality.

On the other hand, non-Christian respondents all together were 9. Among them, 5 were from the Dalit community. All were literate and most of them working as a social worker and in NGO. I coded them in my project from respondent 13 to 17. Four out of nine non-Christian respondents were from non-Dalit Hindu student, studying master in different subject in Stavanger. I coded them in my project as respondent 18 to 21. I am dividing this chapter in different subtitle according to my data. I will present more detail about respondents on appendix -2, of this thesis.

5.3 The Life Comparison and Experiences of Converts:

Most of the converted Christian were unhappy and were in trouble themselves or such things were facing by their family members before their conversion. After their conversion, all their problems solved and their trouble transformed into happiness after the conversion into Christianity. Their despair changed into hope and success. Here I want to draw some examples, which were experienced by my respondents after their conversion into Christianity. "My Mother was sick and was cured after conversion into Christianity and established mutuality between family members which was not before".¹⁸⁷ "Peace and harmony came in our family, which was not before".¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Respondent - 3

¹⁸⁸ Respondent - 4

The life of the respondents becomes easier after their conversion and happiness comes in their life as well as unsystematic life turned to the systematic way of life. "Life changed.....became happy ...life driven in a systematic way which was not before." ¹⁸⁹ My respondent 6 describes his conversion as a rebirth in a happy world with a happy life. ¹⁹⁰ A respondent gives all the credit of her happiness after the conversion to the blessed of God. ¹⁹¹

People change their habit, according to the religion where they belonging, here all the converted Christian becomes happy and leave their bad habits after the conversion. ¹⁹² In addition, people describe themselves became more spiritual, increase the mutuality between family members ¹⁹³ and understand the just truth of the world and the worthy life rather than running after the material gain or success. ¹⁹⁴

All these above experiences of converted Christians realized to solve their problem through the alternative religious options. As Rambo explained in his book *Understanding Religious Conversion*, "some form of crisis usually precedes conversion The crisis may be religious, political, psychological or cultural." ¹⁹⁵

Similarly again, Rambo argues, "human beings continually engage in the process of world construction and reconstruction in order to generate meaning and purpose The notion of quest begins with the assumption that people seek to maximize meaning and purpose in life, to erase ignorance and to resolve inconsistency." ¹⁹⁶ It shows that every individual were definitely aware of alternative worldview or religion while crisis management was concerned with their life. For surprisingly, many of my respondents, realization of conversion comes in their mind during their personal crisis. Ordinarily, personal problems in the life of the converted Christians had not been the only cause of their conversion to Christianity and a reason to arise dissatisfaction with their religion. The personal problem or crisis only played as a role of the catalyst during the process of their conversion. There were many factors to trigger to the conversion process, such as caste discrimination and missionary work, which will be discussed later in more detail.

¹⁸⁹ Respondent - 5

¹⁹⁰ Respondent - 6

¹⁹¹ Respondent - 7

¹⁹² Respondent - 9

¹⁹³ Respondent - 11

¹⁹⁴ Respondent - 1

¹⁹⁵ Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, " 44.

¹⁹⁶ Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, " 56.

Most of the presented experience of converted Christians more or less helping to create a kind of stereotype in the society. Stereotype as a process of judgment, the converted Christian might be judged positively and negatively. In a positive sense, they all are happy and satisfied with their conversion decision and negatively judgement may occur towards their conversion, such as they converted into Christianity to solve their problems and in search of a better life with in the Christian faith. As Jandt explained, Stereotype can be positive in some cases.¹⁹⁷ The conversion, Christians must be taken or stereotyped positively because everyone have right to follow any religion and participate any religious practices, which has also been accepted by the *Universal Declaration of Human Right, 1948*, article 18. That right protected the right of religion of every individuals, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."¹⁹⁸

As described above, transformation or resolutions of their personal crisis after conversion, conversion do not limited only solve their recent crisis. The converted Christians realized the change of habits and the perception of reality too. Andrew Wingate raised the questions of essential validity of conversion and answered himself, highlighting the holyday changing from Sunday to Friday or vice versa, and the celebration of Christmas rather than Eid or vice versa.¹⁹⁹ Like described by Andrew Wingate my respondent realized the internal changes in their personal life, such as habit, thinking and behaviour.

5.4 Obstacles During and after Conversion:

All my respondents did not faced any obstacles during their conversion directly, since the country was a democratic Hindu Kingdom until 2007, even though, the right to practice different religions was protected by law. But persuasion to conversion was against the contemporary law, which is still the same even declared the secular country, but the converted Christians faced many problems, such as blaming and teasing their friends and neighbours as to gain something for instance to get job, money and better opportunity etc,

¹⁹⁷ Jandt, "An Introduction to Intercultural Communication," 88.

¹⁹⁸ "United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article," 18.

¹⁹⁹ Wingate, "Interreligious Conversion," 186.

after their conversion. For instance, "friends started to backbiting and blaming me convert for money" ²⁰⁰ and started to tease as a cow eater, for money and job. ²⁰¹

Some respondents also blamed as to hide their caste ²⁰² and become a higher caste. ²⁰³

Besides the blaming and teasing, some converted Christians have mixed reactions from their friends and neighbours, "some neutral, some criticized". ²⁰⁴ Beyond the neutrality and biased criticise of the friends' and neighbours', some converted Christians faced more or less problems within their family after the conversion. My respondent 2's family members were negative towards her conversion. As the respondent 2, the family members of the of the respondent 6 also were negative and against in the beginning of his conversion. Later they became neutral and positive towards the conversion decision. In this context, respondent 10 has an interesting experience after his conversion, in the beginning of his conversion, parents tried to convince him not to convert, later they also converted into Christianity after understanding the Christianity and Jesus Christ. ²⁰⁵

Some of the respondents of the converted Christian still facing some problems in their society and in their family, mostly they face the problems during the traditional festivals and religious ceremony or activities in their own family and society. "My family members are still negative with me because of my conversion into Christianity I could not attend and participate in their traditional festivals and religious ceremony based on their religion". ²⁰⁶

One of my respondents also faced a problem during a Hindu festivals "Tihar"²⁰⁷. His sister tried to convince him to participate in "Tika"²⁰⁸ even forced psychologically, but he could not participate because of his belief in Christianity, then his sister cried for him due to his refused her proposal to take Tika.²⁰⁹

Some neighbours and relatives seem more understandable of the converted Christian' towards the conversion as a choice and the right of the people. Those neighbours and relatives do not

²⁰⁰ Respondent - 4

²⁰¹ Respondent - 6

²⁰² Respondent - 4

²⁰³ Respondent - 7

²⁰⁴ Respondent - 8

²⁰⁵ Respondent - 10

²⁰⁶ Respondent - 12

²⁰⁷ A festival in Hindu religion, celebrated once a year.

²⁰⁸ In the Tihar festival, sisters put some colour mixed with paste and put on the foreheads of her brothers to ensure long life.

²⁰⁹ Respondent - 5

invite them in any social and cultural programme related or based and the Hindu religion, such as marriage programme, funeral programme etc,²¹⁰ and some were more biased and negative towards the conversion into Christianity even leave to visit their house, blaming for her commit a big sin accepting the foreign religion.²¹¹

It seems that the attitude towards the converts have had extremely intolerable and out of control to bear. Almost all the converts face more or less discrimination and become a subject of prejudices in their society. Nobody care about his or her own personal crisis, consciousness of alternative religions. Most of the converts were did not get positive responses from their family members, which comes first to get the certain responses of other people such as relatives, neighbours, and friends. The reaction of the family member of converts determines the response of outsider people who converts have had less contact. The converts also may more confident with their conversion decision if they get support from their family member, which was not applied in most of my respondents; however, they seems more confident and strict with their decision. If we analyze the family member's reaction of converts towards the conversion issue in a neutral position, the reaction seems a natural, which is their obligation belonging Hindu religion and social and cultural context. Such reactions also may create another stereotype within converted Christians and other groups. Converts had had face many difficulties during conversion, after conversion and even long term criticize from family members, and people around them. These experiences of converts proves their strong attachments with Christianity and their conversion decision, if any Dalit converts into Christianity, he/she may have some kind of prejudice and discrimination because of their previous social identity and social background more than others convert from the high caste background.

As Richard W. Brislin defined the form of prejudice, converted Dalit Christian may be targeted prejudice in a *tokenism* prejudice Brislen explained tokenism; certain people harbour negative feeling about a given group but do not express to themselves. Such people do not realize themselves as prejudiced and discriminatory.²¹² For instance, some people may convert without personal crisis but converts highly motivated by the Christian ideology; they also may perceive as converts into Christianity after trouble in previous life.

²¹⁰ Respondent - 1

²¹¹ Respondent - 7

²¹² Samovar and Porter, "*Intercultural communication: A Reader*," 368.

Similarly, converted to Christianity in Nepal, facing many obstacles during the celebration of festivals and ceremony based on Hindu religion. People in Nepalese societies celebrate festivals with family, relatives, friends and neighbours, being a Christian converts sometimes could not involve in such events themselves and sometimes ignored by their relatives and neighbours because of their conversion. Even sometime forced to participate, this all seems prejudice and discriminatory behaviour despite their conversion. Finding welcoming community is very difficult, to convert in Nepal.

5.5 Christian Converts Perception on Caste System:

In this topic, I am trying to draw an overview of the converted Christian over the caste and their own experience before and after their conversion. All of the converted Christian agreed on the equal treatment in the Christianity and against the unequal treatment in Hindu religion based on the caste. One of my respondents argue that "only Christianity do the equal behaviour to all".²¹³ In this subject, another respondent added, "there is no caste discrimination in Christianity; we do not discriminate according to caste".²¹⁴

All the converted Christian believes that Christianity is helping to eradicate caste based discrimination in Nepalese society. Some informants also adding not only caste discrimination, Christianity also helping to erase conservative thinking rooted in the society such as witchcraft, witch doctor.²¹⁵ The converted Christians do not believe in caste after their conversion into Christianity and appreciate Christianity. One of my converted Christian respondents accepts that due to the caste discrimination in Hindu religion, Dalit are converting into Christianity. The Dalit conversion into Christianity, the social and cultural discrimination seems a main cause in Nepalese context. "Of course ... Hindu Dalit also converts into Christianity because of caste discrimination as we were but now we are Christianity, we are equal with other"²¹⁶

If we notice all these data closely, we can understand that, personal crisis of the Dalit is a linear cause and a showcase argument of converts. In depth, Dalit converts into Christianity due to the discrimination based on the caste system in Hindu religion. As I discussed the caste based practice in Nepal in chapter four in this thesis, caste system standing as a

²¹³ Respondent - 3

²¹⁴ Respondent - 9

²¹⁵ Respondent - 3

²¹⁶ Respondent - 8

destructive factor of society and Hindu religion in Nepal. Generally, people from the Dalit community convert into Christianity to escape and eradicate the caste based discrimination. The conversion factors may be varied according to the respondents. The respondents in this study also presents many cause of their conversion. In conversion, there may be various causes according to the situation of converts and social, political, cultural environment in every particular situation. In Nepal, there are many causes of conversion to Christianity as encourage to conversion, overcome and solve personal crisis or problems, family problems, psychological problems, spiritual achievement, ideological influence etc, besides these all factors the Dalit conversion to Christianity seems social and cultural discrimination based on the caste hierarchy in Hindu religion. The discrimination as a main factor in Dalit conversion to other religions, especially into Christianity, which we can understand through the expression of the Christian convert from Dalit community. They all are strongly disagreeing with the caste-based discrimination in Nepalese society based on Hindu religion and spontaneously praising Christianity in the sense of caste free religion.

The fact, the caste discrimination raises many questions about whether or not caste liberation would require doing away with Hindu religion, culture and its rituals. Dalits always feels humiliation and seeking the better option for the equality in the society; and "many Dalit continue to reject Hinduism and convert to other religions.....in Nepal thousands of Dalit have and continue to convert to Christianity."²¹⁷

In the context of Dalit conversion to Christianity for the purpose to eliminate caste discrimination and social and cultural hierarchy, the Dalit leaders of the society refused the conversion tradition just for the sake of equality in the society. "Religious conversions are not the only solution to Dalit problems it is a reformist idea and that will not bring an end to the caste discrimination and untouchability."²¹⁸ Leaders of the Dalit social movement focus to change the attitude of the society rather than the conversion into other religions. . "Dalit will not find solutions to their social, economic and political problems through conversion. Conversion, they maintain, will not bring change in the attitude of Hindu society. Therefore, they believe that the Nepali Dalit Social Movement must focus on social change instead of religious conversion."²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Kisan, *"The Nepali Social Movement,"* 153.

²¹⁸ Kisan, *"The Nepali Social Movement,"* 153-154.

²¹⁹ Kisan, *"The Nepali Social Movement,"* 154.

After the close observation of these conversion scenarios of Dalit into Christianity, converts themselves much more biased and prejudiced towards the Hindu religion. They only focus and explaining Hinduisms through the weaker factor i.e. discrimination practice. There may be some positive factors in Hindu religion, but nobody speak on it. Focusing only the discrimination practice in Hinduism itself is a product of stereotype and prejudice of converts. The conversion of Dalit to Christianity more or less raising a question in the political sphere in Nepal, the rapid growth of Christianity and highly Dalit conversion in Nepal which reminding the mass conversion to Christianity during the 19th century in India from so-called untouchables, and low caste groups from the Hindu religion.²²⁰

5.6 The Encounter of converts with Christianity:

In this section, I am going to discuss how converted people get informed at the first time in their life about the Christianity. As Rambo explains, "The encounter stage brings people who are in crisis and searching new potions together with those who are seeking to provide the questions with a new orientation."²²¹ The respondents in this study most of the converts got touch or were aware and encouraged to convert to Christianity through their parents, relatives and friends whom already converted into Christianity. In this globalized world, Christianity itself is a world religion in the ideological sense and geographically, Christianity has always been widespread and practised in different communities across the world.²²² I mean, how converts became closer to Christianity being as an outsider. Besides family members, friends and relatives, converts became close with Christianity through different sources, such as church members, books, films, radio, programme related to Christianity etc. They explained, all these mentioned sources of information deliver the message about Christianity and encourage them to learn and understand more about Christianity and came to a crucial moment in their life to decide to convert into Christianity.

5.7 Hindu Dalits attitude and understanding towards the Christianity and Dalit conversion:

I am coding Dalit informants in this project from 13 to 17, as I already mentioned in previous chapter. All of my informants seem bias and against towards the conversion into Christianity

²²⁰ Moffett, *"A History of Christianity in Asia,"* 420

421.

²²¹ Rambo, *"Understanding Religious Conversion,"* 167.

²²² Kim and Kim, *"Christianity as a World Religion,"* 1.

from Dalit community to eradicate the social and cultural discrimination. They are not only against the conversion; in addition, they also criticize Christianity as a foreign religion, a business in the name of religion.²²³

Some of the Dalit informants more or less accept that Christianity is helping to eradicate the social and cultural discrimination rooted in society,²²⁴ even though they are focusing to eradicate caste discrimination through Dalit social movement and political process.²²⁵

Respondent 16 focuses on struggle against those who discriminate based on caste system rather than religions conversion. In this context a respondent do not agree Christianity is helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination in the society, he argues that Christianity do not eradicate the social and cultural discrimination, in addition it increased the conflict in the society and the family between converted and non-converted members.²²⁶ It is becoming a crucial subject in the field of the other social sectors and academia.

“Various others social leaders and academicians have expressed opinions in regard to religious conversion among Dalits. One has said that, “Dalit have converted to Christianity, due to their poor economic status and because of caste discrimination. But it is also due to their search for new things and in response to change in society. In India there are separate churches built for Brahman Christians and Dalit Christian. That is why religious conversion is not the only solution for caste liberation”²²⁷

Obviously, being a non- Christian, there might be more or less stereotype and prejudice established against the out-group members. As Dalit leaders' voice against caste-based discrimination and Dalit conversion to Christianity to eliminate caste based discrimination most of the respondents of this study also focuses on the empowerment of Dalits socially, economically rather than encourage to conversion in other religions. Among the respondents, some agreed that conversion to Christianity helping to eradicate discrimination in the society, however, all non- Christian Dalits respondents disagree towards the conversion process of Dalits into Christianity to eliminate caste based discrimination rooted in the societies. They have stereotypes and prejudice attitudes towards converted Christians, they do not analyze their conversion for other purpose, such as to overcome personal crisis, spiritual achievement and ideological influence of Christianity. They only focus their statement on Dalit conversion only for escape caste discrimination and criticise Christianity as a foreign religion, and many

²²³ Respondent - 15

²²⁴ Respondent - 17

²²⁵ Respondent - 17

²²⁶ Respondent - 13

²²⁷ Kisan, "*The Nepali Social Movement*," 155.

people converting to Christianity for material gain. Definitely, there are always certain people who do business in the name of religions all around the world, but these cases may be exceptions in the Nepalese context. Such things might be true in some cases who misuse religion for material gain. As an intellectual, we have not run after such rumours and we have to discourage those who misusing religion for material and non-material benefits. Standing on this fallacious point and generalizing some specific cases creating negative stereotypes against some group is a misfortune for the society and the country. In sum, non-converted Dalits should come out from such prejudice against the people who converted from their community to establish sustainable harmonious society.

5.8 Hindu non- Dalits attitude towards Christianity and Dalit conversion:

Like the Hindu Dalit, non-Dalits also seem biased and opposed to the growth of the Christianity and Dalits' conversion in their society. They have negative stereotypes towards both growth of Christianity and Dalit conversion in Nepal. I coded my non-Dalit informants from 18 to 21 in my project.

One of my respondents perceived Christianity imposing imperialism and attracting illiterate people for financial gain, in her own word, "financial incentive ".²²⁸ All the respondents believe or agreed on that, all the Dalit converting into Christianity is unnatural and harmful to the social order and social harmony. One of my respondent argued and claimed that "many poor, illiterate Dalit people are misused and cheated"²²⁹ and he added that caste discrimination is not the cause of the religion, it is a social cause, due to the lack of education it is in practice. In addition, he focuses and suggests providing education to all rather than converting other religion for eradicating social and cultural discrimination; "building school is far better than the church in our land for eradicating social and cultural discrimination".²³⁰

As mentioned above non-Dalit respondents strongly disappointed about the Dalit conversion to Christianity in Nepal. They all are well aware about the Christian influence into Dalit communities and their conversion to Christianity. They have many stereotypes towards converts as Dalits Hindus had. They only perceived people converting to Christianity only to gain material benefits and Christian missionary and leaders persuade people and specially illiterate and Dalits to convert Christianity presenting bright future after conversion. They all

²²⁸ Respondent - 18

²²⁹ Respondent - 20

²³⁰ Respondent - 20

are annoying the push and pull factors of convert into Christianity, for instance, theological, social and cultural, personal and psychological etc. All these perspectives of Hindu non-Dalits' shows that, non- Dalist in Nepal are perceiving understanding Dalit conversion to Christianity in a negative way and growth of Christianity as well.

5.9 Conclusion:

The Christianity in Nepal is growing gradually as data shows and the all the respondents accept this truth whatever they argued on it. The interesting things is that, converted Christians are more confident and satisfied with their conversion decision as well as more hopeful towards their own future because of the blessing of Jesus Christ after their conversion into Christianity even they faced many problems or obstacles during and after their conversion. Unlike the Hindu Dalits and non-Dalits, converted Christians do not attack or criticized any other religions, except a respondent. He argued that "... in Buddhism, no way after death, in Hinduism, no one for justice... in Christianity equal everybody and justice to all" ²³¹

The Hindu Dalit and non -Dalit seems more biased towards the growth, presence and influence of Christianity and the converted people in Nepal. Those comments and criticism look insignificance in front of the confident, attachment and devotion of converted Christian to Christianity. The argument of the Hindu Dalit and non- Dalit seems illogical and lack of understanding of the converted Christian's experience and the phenomena of conversion.

²³¹ Respondent - 6

Chapter Six

Conclusion Remarks and Further Suggestions:

Religious conversion is a process of change from one religious faith to another. Generally, a person change their religious faith, because of the dissatisfaction of their religion, in terms of, meaning and purpose of their life and seeks an alternative religion which offers a new meaning life and new emerging hope and meaningful and purposeful life definition in another religious option. As Rambo defines, " conversion is a complex, multifaceted process involving personal, cultural, social and cultural change."²³² It shapes or brings the changes of converts according to the rituals of new religious option, such as personal habits, behaviour and the mode of praying god, etc. In this phenomenological qualitative research study, I tried to present some of the conversion issues and the scenario gradual growth of Christianity in Nepal. Since, as a phenomenological qualitative research. In this study I present some of the experiences of the converts while the conversion process and the difficulties during conversion and after their conversion. Throughout the fieldwork, I found most of the converts faced more or less personal problems during their conversion and after their conversion. People around them criticize converts in terms of their previous social and cultural background i.e. low caste in Hindu religion. Non-converts Dalit and non- Dalits strongly disagree with Christianity helping to eradicate caste based discrimination in Nepal. They only perceived or judged Dalit conversion to Christianity from the surface level; they never tried to understand the theological or religious attachment of Dalits to Christianity. Such things seem, much more guided by the personal and social prejudice towards the converts from Dalit community to Christianity. Unlike non-converts, converted people to Christianity seems more confident and highly positive in regards their conversion decision and Christianity as well. They compare their life, as life was in a difficult situation in trouble world and after conversion they perceived their life as a rebirth in a heavenly world with happiness and systematic life. Drawing some of the experience of the converts from Dalit community focusing on their conversing motifs, and altitude towards caste discrimination practices based in Hindu religion. The attitude in surface level between converts Christians from the Dalit Community and non-convert Dalits and Non Dalits Hindu have quite different on Caste System, Caste discrimination and growth of Christianity in Nepal and understanding each

²³² Rambo, "*Understanding Religious Conversion*". 165.

other as well. All groups suppose themselves superior than other groups. The converts standing as a resistance position without attracting any religion and religious practices, but Hindu Dalit and non-Dalits attract the Dalit converts and Christianity as well. Even though, we can say that, the relationship between converts from Dalit Community and non-converts Dalit and non-Dalits seem discriminatory and negative prejudice to each other. The government, academic scholars, intellect in the society have to establish the mutual understanding and relationship protecting the right of conversion in any religion. On the other hand, non-convert also should try to understand the genius cause of conversion rather criticizing converts. If people in Nepal, wanted to establish harmony between converts and non-converts, there should needed respect, to convert for their right to choice any religion.

Finally, as I mentioned in this topic, the number of Christian in Nepal gradual growing day by day, and such growth definitely makes some changes in the society. People belongs to other religions obviously may biased to the growth of Christianity in Nepal. Thus, researcher should focus on the prevention of the upcoming conflicts between religions, study on those who taking unnecessary profit in the name of religion, search to possibility to organize interreligious dialogue, increase respect between religions etc. To establish the peaceful society and protect the right of the religion as mentioned in Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

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Appendix 1:

Interview Questionnaire used for research project::

1: Personal Information of the respondent:

1) Full Name:

2) Your Birth Caste:

3) Marital Status:

a) Unmarried

b) Married,

Caste on marriage.....

c) Other, specify:

4) Education:

a) Illiterate

b) Literate, specify:

5) Occupation

6) When you converted into Christianity?

a) Your age:

b) Other social status, Specify if possible:

7) What is the name of your Church?

8) Do you been Baptized?

a)Yes

b) No

9) How many siblings do you have?

10) How many of those are Christian?

11) How many of them are Baptised?

2: For converted Christian:

1) Who was first converted into Christian in your family?

2) How do you compare your life before and after you become Christian?

a) Changes in your life and social status? In your family and in your society?

3) How did you come to know about Jesus Christ?

4) How long have you been a Christian?

5) Why did you decide to follow Jesus and become Christian?

6) Is there any specific incident to convert into Christianity in your life?

- 7) How did your family respond you when you became Christian?
 - 8) Has Christianity make some changes to your relationship with your family?
 - 9) If yes, could you explain, how?
 - 10) Has Christianity make some changes to your relationships with your friends?
 - 11) If yes, could you explain what they are?
 - 12) Are there any changes in your social group after conversion?
 - 13) If yes, can you explain what kinds of changes they are?
 - 14) Do you find the sort of change in the behavior of the people you work with on your conversion?
 - 15) If yes, can you explain what kinds of changes they are?
 - 16) Did you face any social problems at the time of conversion?
 - 17) If yes, what kind of problems you faced?
 - 18) Do you still facing any social problems because of Christianity?
 - 19) If yes, how?
 - 20) Conversion has helped you in any way?
 - 21) If yes, how?
 - 22) What do you think, Christianity helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination rooted in our society
 - 23) Did you get any support or help from your Church or Christian Organizations?
 - 24) If, yes could you name them and what kind of help or support was that?
 - 25) Do you getting any help or support now?
 - 26) If yes, what and how?
 - 27) Do you have something you would like to add?
- 3: For Non-Christian:
- 1) Which religion do you belong to?
 - 2) How do you perceiving or understanding the growth of Christianity and conversion into Christianity in your society?
 - 3) It is natural or unnatural? How?
 - 4) How do you understand it is harmful or not?
 - 5) What do you think, Christianity helping to eradicate social and cultural discrimination rooted in our society?
 - 6) Do you have something you would like to add about the scenario of conversion?

Appendix 2

General overview of Respondents:

Respondent Code No.	Age (Years)	Sex	Marital Status	Education	Profession	Converts date in year.	Baptized or Not
1	38	Male	Married	S.L.C.	Agriculture and Job.	2011	No
2	24	Female	Married	Bachelor	Student and House wife	2012	Yes
3	30	Female	Married	Bachelor	Teaching	1998	
4	32	Male	Unmarried	10+2	Student	2005	Yes
5	38	Male	Married	Bachelor	Job	2003	Yes
6	35	Male	Married	Bachelor	Christian Leader	2003	Yes
7	27	Female		S.L.C.	Swing	2012	Yes
8	22	Female	Unmarried	Bachelor	Student	2005	No
9	28	Female		Bachelor	Teaching	2009	Yes
10	31	Male		S.L.C.	Business	2006	YES
11	38	Male	Married		Social Worker	2002	
12	31	Female		10 Class	Business	2003	

Converts Respondents.

Respondent Code No.	Sex	Education	Profession	Belongs to Dalit or Not
13	Male	8 Class	Job	Yes
14	Male	Master Degree	Consultant	Yes
15	Female		Social Work	Yes
16	Male	Master Degree	Social Work	Yes
17	Male	Bachelor	NGO Job.	Yes
18	Female	Master Degree	Student	No
19	Male	Master Degree	Student	No
20	Male	Master Degree	Student	No
21	Female	Bachelor	House wife and Job	

Hindu Dalit and non-Dalit Respondents.