

THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (MHS)



THESIS TOPIC

**BEING A HINDU IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT OF STAVANGER,
NORWAY**

THESIS FOR

MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES

SUBMITTED BY

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Abstract

This study tries hard to impart an insight about the prevalent situation of the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger, Norway. Based on the individual interviews, it intends to present some facts related to them in regard to their religion, culture, opportunities, challenges, and experiences in the multicultural context of Stavanger. Solely, it is directed to solve the research problems through primary data.

Respecting the religions, it focuses on the common perception and usual practices among the Hindus. The main target of the study is to let the reader know about 'Being a Hindu in a multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway'. Even if a temple is regarded as the center for worshipping the gods, it is possible to follow Hinduism even without having a temple in the city. In this regard, Nepalese Hindus are described as secular Hindus, religious Hindus, and online Hindus. And this research clarifies about the role of the temple and *karma* abroad. Finally, this research aims to strengthen the multicultural society in Stavanger.

Keywords: Nepalese Hindus, *Dashain*, Stavanger, temple, *Karma*, caste, cultural diversity, interviews, and informants.

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Keshab Puri

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Thesis

I am attracted to know more about the religion, culture and the people with different backgrounds in a multicultural context in Stavanger, Norway. In my personal experience, Stavanger is one of the most beautiful cities in Norway where there are diverse expressions of religion, culture, traditions, ethnicity, and nationality. Among them, my concern is towards Nepalese Hindus living in Stavanger. Being specific, I am a Nepalese Hindu living in Stavanger as a student. Since I am both, it is my subject of interest to excavate the realities particularly related with the Nepalese Hindus in a multicultural and multi-religious Stavanger.

Nepalese Hindus are a few in number but large in differences regarding their cultures, religious practices, social relationships, attitudes, caste variations and understanding in comparison to a large Christian community here. Even if one can easily find Stavanger as a multicultural and multi-religious city, my prime focus is on "Being a Hindu in a multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway". To accept and present the fact of it, is quite troublesome since they are in minority with no temple. A temple is often regarded as a center for worshipping the gods in Hinduism. It is not easy to follow the religion and culture in a different country and different situation where there is no religious environment, temple, *Pujari*,¹ and majority of the Hindu people.

1.2 Research Question

"Social events themselves may also stimulate research, providing an opportunity to explore some unusual occurrence or to test an explanatory idea."² Social events and ritual practices are the bases of every culture and religion. Considering the fact, the whole thesis solely revolves around the main research question along with two sub research questions. They are as follows: The main research question is: How is Hinduism possible without a temple? Sub research questions are: How is Hinduism perceived among the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger? How do Hindus survive as a minority group in Stavanger?

¹ Pujari is known as priest who conducts the religious practices in Hindu religion.

² Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:23

The aim of the project is to give an account of the Nepalese Hindus living in Stavanger. It goes on finding the normal life experience abroad. It comes up with the information how the Nepalese Hindus are surviving here, what type of people they are in contact with, what changes they see in *puja* practices, what the religion says and how they do it, what the geographical differences are, what they miss most while being abroad, mostly regarding religion and Hindu culture.

1.3 Background of Nepal

"Nepal is an underdeveloped land-locked nation of enormous cultural and ethnic diversity."³ Nepal is a beautiful country having so many natural beauties along with the highest peak in the world. It is a land-locked country having no any ocean. But Nepal is regarded as the second richest country in water resources in the world. Brooks, wells, rivulets, water-falls, rivers, lakes, ponds, and glaciers are the major resources of water. It has people from many different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Even if people follow the same religion in Nepal, they vary from one another because of caste, language, behavior, culture and sub-culture. People from different regions have quite different cultures, languages, dresses, and traditions, for instance, *Sherpa* is different from *Tharu* by caste, culture, dress, language, and behavior. In the context of Nepal, both *Sherpa* and *Tharu* belong to different castes that originally come from Himalayan and plain region respectively.

"The mountain areas range in altitude from 8,787 meters to 8,839 meters above sea level, with the snowline running at 4,877 meters. This region includes the world's most famous peak, Mount Everest (Sagarmatha), which is 8,848 meters above sea level."⁴ Along with the variation in geography, there is diversity in culture and tradition among the Nepalese. And because of Mount Everest many people from different parts of the world visit Nepal every year. "Nepal is situated in the southern slope of the Himalayas, between China and India."⁵ Borders between Nepal and India are open. Any citizen from Nepal and India can travel these countries without any visa. Both China and India are good neighbors. Nepal has a geographical diversity regarding the regions. "Broadly, Nepal is characterized by three distinct geographical regions: i) The mountains and Himalayas, ii) The hills, and iii) The Terai (plains)."⁶ And there is diversity even

³ Regmi 1999:8

⁴ Ibid p. 12

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

in culture, tradition, and social relationship among the Nepalese due to unique geographical structure as well.

Regarding religion the majority of the people in Nepal follow Hinduism even if there are the followers of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. "Hinduism is the religion of the majority of people in India and Nepal."⁷ Many Hindus visit a temple more often in Nepal and it is possible there since the country has a lot of temples in each and every district. In the temple, most probably there is a priest who puts red *Tika* (red mark) on the forehead of the devotee with the blessings and flowers. It is a common practice among the Nepalese Hindus. As a devotee, one can see many Hindu temples, fellow devotees, priests, and religious materials in the context of Nepal. Many festivals are celebrated and valued as an integral part of Hindu religion and its culture among the Hindus. "There is a great variation in cultures, castes, languages, religions, and belief systems too. 2001 census identified 102 caste and ethnic groups, 92 languages and dialects."⁸ Those who come from the same ethnic group and have a different language except Nepali usually prefer to talk to each other in their languages. People from eastern part and people from far western region do not understand each other completely whenever they speak their regional dialects. There is found a variety of religions, cultures, traditions, and even civilizations in Nepal.

Notwithstanding the country is quite small in size, it carries a lot of notable pride and history of braveries. Even though Nepal was not colonized and ruled by foreigners, it had to go for war with Great Britain in a certain time period. "Unfortunately, war with the British East India Company from 1814 to 1816 led to a considerable loss of territory, squeezing Nepal's size to the confinement of the Mechi River in the east and the Mahakali River in the west, the total area being 147,181 sq. kms."⁹ Nepal is rich in religion, culture, history and natural resources which has many possibilities from researchable point of view. Moreover, it is highly appreciated for having the many more potentialities in the field of research. Many researchers visit the country from within Nepal and abroad every year to conduct a wide range of research programs.

⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism>

⁸ Sherpa 2005; in Bhandari 2013:2

⁹ Regmi 1999:9

"Recently, the Institute for Social Anthropology at Bergen University, Norway, has taken a keen interest in going further with ecological and developmental research in Nepal."¹⁰

1.4 Festivals in Nepal

Festivals are the main attraction in Nepali life. There are series of festivals in the entire year. Among them, some major Hindu festivals are noted which are as follows : *Maha Shivaratri*, *Holi*, *Teej*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, and *Maghe Sakranti*.

i) *Maha Shivaratri* is normally celebrated in the honor of lord Shiva. ii) *Holi* is the spring festival also known as the festival of colors. It is an ancient Hindu festival which has become popular in non-Hindus as well. iii) *Teej* is a special day as well as festival particularly for females. It is mostly believed that unmarried ladies will have a good husband and married ones will have a long life of their husbands who go for fasting without even drinking water on that day. iv) *Dashain* is the greatest festival among Hindus. At this festival, juniors mostly go to take blessings and *Tika* from the seniors. v) *Tihar* is regarded as the second greatest festival. It is mostly celebrated between sister and brother. vi) *Maghe Sakranti* is a Nepalese festival which usually falls around January 14. The mother of each household, wishes good health to all family members on that day. It is also known as *Makar Sakranti*. Besides the Hindu festivals, *Buddha Jayanti*,¹¹ *Udhauli Ubhauli*,¹² *Chasok Tangnam*,¹³ Eid, and Christmas are also participated and celebrated by the Nepalese Hindus.

All the festivals hold the notable place in the life of the people. "They preserve the religious beliefs, the social custom, and the economic well-being of the people of Nepal."¹⁴ They have strong ties and values in the culturally constructed society. They have religious importance, social importance and artistic importance in the daily lives. Relatives and family members are mostly together during the festivals to share the feelings and experiences, multiply joy and divide sorrow. They are happy and share happiness with each other, exchange gifts, give and take *Tika* and blessings, and cook and eat varieties of delicious foods. Moreover, people feel blessed, excited, and come closer and become happier.

¹⁰ Ibid p. 4

¹¹ It is mostly celebrated by the Buddhists

¹² It is celebrated by the Kirant community

¹³ It is celebrated by Limbu community

¹⁴ Regmi 1999:128

1.4.1 Dashain

Dashain is one of the greatest, most joyous and auspicious festivals among the Nepalese Hindus. It generally falls in October and is celebrated for about fifteen days. This is why it is a longest festival as well. It is the celebration of the Goddess Durga.¹⁵ "It is celebrated throughout the country by all castes and creeds of both Hindus and Buddhists."¹⁶ Therefore, people both inside and outside Nepal try to celebrate it cheerfully and excitedly.

It has its own religious and social significance. During the *Dashain* festival, Hindus worship Durga in her various forms, primarily in the form of Kali. During the *Dashain* people sacrifice animals, visit Durga or Kali temples and take *Tika* as well as blessings from the elders. "It is celebrated throughout the kingdom, glorifying the triumph of Durga over the terrible demon Mahisashura, who terrorized the world in the guise of a ferocious buffalo."¹⁷ Thus, it is also known as *Vijaya Dashami*. *Dashain* begins with *Ghatasthapana* and finally ends with *Kojagrat purnima*. Seventh day is *Fulpati*, eighth day is *Maha Ashtami*, ninth day is *Maha Nawami*, and tenth day is the Day of Victory. On this very auspicious day, the children and the youngsters get *Tika* and blessings from the parents, grandparents and elders. "It is seen as the victory of virtue over the evils, glorifying the invincible power of God."¹⁸ The government offices are closed for nine days at *Dashain* and almost all the employees get a bonus of one month's salary. Students get at least fifteen days off. Most of the children expect and get a new set of clothes at *Dashain*. People mostly enjoy the leisure and tension-free time during the festival.

1.5 Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger

Nepalese have been living in Stavanger for some years. They come from Nepal but live in different bases which are as follows: Marriage between Nepalese citizens and Norwegian citizens, having an official job, as a PhD candidate at the University of Stavanger, as a dependent and as a regular student at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger and UIS, Stavanger.

Up to December 2013 there are around fifty Nepalese living in Stavanger. And they are connected to each other through the different means of communication such as Face book, Skype, e-mail and mobile phone. One can easily find the group on Face book if he or she types

¹⁵ She is supposed to save people from evil forces

¹⁶ Regmi 1999:135

¹⁷ Ibid p. 136

¹⁸ Ibid p. 137

Nepalese group in Stavanger on the search engine. Almost all of them are Hindu by religion. Although they belong to different ethnic groups and sub-cultures, they are known as Nepalese Hindus in the context of Stavanger and all of them have a Nepalese Hindu culture in common. They gather together and celebrate the Nepalese festivals and more Hindu cultures and festivals. Even if they are in Norway, they organize a program on the occasion of the Nepalese New year which is called B. S.¹⁹ It usually falls around the fifteenth of April. On the occasion of Nepali New Year, they try to meet in a certain place in Stavanger and celebrate together happily and excitedly. Whenever they have got together program, they speak their native language, cook the national foods, dance in Nepali songs and enjoy the company of each other during the function.

1.6 Overview

This chapter abruptly talks about the introduction of the thesis in general. It further claims with the reason that why the topic 'Being a Hindu in a multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway' has been chosen for writing the master thesis and what the research problems are and where the problems are. This is basically related with the Nepalese Hindus. So, it gives a basic introduction of Nepal in regard to their culture and religion. Hindu culture and festival are assumed as mirrors of Nepalese Hindu society by which you can easily imagine the importance of religion and vastness of culture. In the same way, it emphasizes the way, the Nepalese Hindus carry on their festivals and cultures in Stavanger. In sum, it describes on what basis they are living and how they connect to each other.

¹⁹ Bikram sambat

Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

"A methodology shows how research questions are articulated with questions asked in the field. Its effect is a claim about significance."²⁰ Methodology is now approved as the theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. This section of my research includes a brief description about the selection of research site and informants, method of data collection, data analyzing process and theoretical aspects of research ethics. Broadly speaking, I have chosen qualitative research method for my research project since that is what best suits to my material and the aim of the study. However, while using a qualitative research method, a researcher has to go back and forth between different situations in order to get the required information about the research problem.

2.2 Research Design

A research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem which tries to define the study types, research questions, and hypotheses. "It applies regardless of the particular methods that are used to collect data."²¹ More importantly, it provides a frame work for the data collection and analysis. It is therefore accepted as a conceptual structure on the basis of which, entire research is conducted.

The prime motif of the research is to present and analyze the fact faced by the Nepalese Hindus in this multicultural Stavanger by exploring the real situation of theirs. And to answer the research questions, I have used both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, I have done field study in Stavanger among the Nepalese and for the secondary data I have studied relevant books and articles with the reliable sources.

For the primary data collection, qualitative research method has been used as a fundamental tool which is appropriate for explorative and descriptive studies that helps to depict the social world as it is in reality. Among several interview methods, I have employed the semi-structured

²⁰ Clough and Nutbrown 2012:36

²¹ Vaus 2005:xvi

interview as a chief source for the primary data collection. And the real names of the informants have been replaced with the fictive names to respect their views and ideas on the issues.

2.3 Qualitative Research as a Method

"As identified with sociology, cultural anthropology and political science, among other disciplines, qualitative research has been seen to be naturalistic, ethnographic, and participatory."²² Justifying qualitative research, it analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. It is a dynamic process which allows the researcher to generate deeper understanding and meanings of human behaviors. This method focuses on why and how of decision making not just on what and where. "In fact, identifying and describing specific activities so their consequences can be carefully studied, and so the activities themselves can be well replicated, is a research area ripe for enhancement through qualitative method."²³ However, both qualitative and quantitative methods are equally useful and helpful to conduct the research in social sciences.

"In qualitative research, there is no such thing as a format for the standard scientific paper."²⁴ In this method, a researcher interprets what he/she sees, hears and perceives while acting as an active agent in the field. What the researcher saw, observed and learnt during the field work, will be used them by the researcher to justify and answer the research questions.

Since the qualitative research method is primarily exploratory research, and having the aims to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and inspirations, I have preferred to go for this method rather than quantitative method which solely depends on the numerical data. The major goal of the research is to analyze the social world which is constructed on the bases of social, political, cultural, religious, and economic statuses. In this way, this research method is mostly applicable to apply and get the required information on the mentioned research problems regarding the cultural and religious lives of the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger.

²² Kirk and Miller 1986:9

²³ Sofaer 2002:333

²⁴ Silverman 2011:11

2.4 Data collection Method

Even if it is common to all fields including the study of physical and social sciences, humanities and business, an accurate data collection is essential to maintain the integrity of research. A researcher normally constructs the social realities by interpreting and analyzing the social phenomenon in qualitative method. In the context, interview is regarded as one of the fundamental tools to collect data which are necessary for further analysis of contexts. "Interviewing can be an extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not possible, to obtain otherwise-both about events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies."²⁵ Questionnaires, field observations, right informants, knowledge of the concerned culture and general background of the interviewees and an active participation in the field are indispensable elements to accomplish the process of interview. Most significantly, a clearer introduction with the required information of the researcher has to be provided before conducting the interview. "It has often been argued, on both strategic and ethical grounds, that the researcher should provide information about him or herself to those being studied."²⁶

Collected data from the fieldwork are evidences for the description of the issues. We can use what people say as evidence about their perspectives, and perhaps about the larger sub-cultures and cultures to which they belong. Knowledge of these perspectives and cultures will often form an important element of the analysis.²⁷ Furthermore, as a researcher of the study I have chosen the semi-structured interview as an entire source to hold the primary data.

2.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

As a researcher, I have prepared the open-ended questionnaires and have applied them during the interviews to make the research meaningful, useful and successful. One can easily figure out and understand the problems, experiences, cultural and religious practices, struggles, and realities of the interviewees with the help of these questions. This type of interview is a qualitative research method and commonly followed in survey research. The aim of the approach is to ensure that each interview can be presented with the modified questions. So, there can be a high possibility for the new ideas as the answers in semi-structured interviews. "There is a sense in which all

²⁵ Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:102

²⁶ Ibid p. 109

²⁷ Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:98

interviews, like any other kind of social interaction, are structured by both researcher and informant."²⁸

Basically, semi-structured interviews are employed with a fairly, open, and informal framework which drag both researcher and respondent in two ways conversation. Interview guide with open-ended questions were formed prior to fieldwork since it is possible while conducting semi-structured interviews. As I have done individual interview for the fieldwork, the chief target of it was to excavate the values of what the interviewees shared with the researcher. Mostly, 'why' and 'how' questions were developed in order to explore a deeper insight about the situations, perceptions, experiences and religious as well as cultural practices of the Nepalese Hindus. Semi-structured interview is naturally beneficial for interviews to have an interview guide prepared, which is informal, group of topics and questionnaires that an interviewer can ask in different ways with various participants accordingly.²⁹

Semi-structured interview is very useful in helping out the research problems through research questions where the concept and relationship between them are easily understood. Eleven informants have been interviewed in the research, and all the interviews have been conducted in Stavanger. Nepalese nationals with the Hindu religious and cultural background and living in Stavanger are the targeted subjects of the research. Concerning the informants, I have had an important opportunity to meet the key personalities both males and females as the above mentioned subject matter. Regarding their stay, some of them are living as students and rest are living as job holders who are well known to the culture and religion from their homeland. The respondents are all above twenty five years old. They are from different parts of Nepal even if they all come from the same country. They belong to different castes, locations, cultures, and traditions. So, it has been fruitful to have such a great coincidence in order to gather the information from them. The questions have been asked from general to specific one. The questions are related to the religious activities, changes in *puja* practices, temple as the main center for worshipping the gods, challenges of being a Hindu, and about the people and cultures they meet around the city. At the very beginning, very simple and general questions have been asked in the interview process. Each interview follows the research ethics strictly and all the

²⁸ Ibid p. 117

²⁹ Lindlof and Taylor 2002:195

information provided by the informants will be destroyed after the successful completion of the master thesis.

2.5 Sampling Method

Regarding the sampling method, I as a researcher have decided and applied the snowball sampling in my project. Snowball refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects because this procedure results in samples with questionable representativeness; it is primarily used for exploratory aims.³⁰ It is a very useful technique for finding and getting research subjects through which a researcher can get the way to other subjects. The first one gives the contact information of the second one and the second one gives the necessary information of the third one, this process continues in snowball process until a researcher stops in finding the informants to contribute the study.

Nepalese Hindus living in Stavanger have been focused as the sampling informants. Since I am a friend of some informants, it has been easier to approach the other informants and get the information on the study. As an interviewer, I was neither too distant nor too close with the interviewees during the interview. In a way, I have treated all of them equally and have maintained the gap between the researcher and the informants as it has to be in the research. Among eleven interviewees, seven were males and four were females who were different in nature from each other. As it is noted in Hinduism, my informants belonged to different castes. And consequently, all of them have been able to contribute this specific study as the participants.

2.6 Fieldwork

Since fieldwork is a collection of information, it is mostly conducted for acquiring the primary data in qualitative research method. Field research involves informal interviews, direct observation, and participation in group, collective discussions, and self-analysis. Every new researcher while doing fieldwork discovers his or her own framework to gain the research objects. "Fieldwork is the moment when the researcher climbs down to everyday reality and finds out that the rules of academia are not necessarily the same as those of everyday life."³¹

³⁰ Babbie 2011:208

³¹ Blommaert and Jie 2010:1

The fieldwork for the thesis has been done in Stavanger, Norway which was held from 24 September to 25 October 2013. Having an approval letter from NSD³² in July 2013, I started to contact the participants in Stavanger. Out of eleven interviews, three were conducted in the coffee shop, and the rest were conducted in their own apartments. Prior to the interviews, I as a researcher had asked for their permission by presenting a letter of consent. Face book, Skype, Mobile phone and the regular contacts were the means to organize the contact. From this point of view, it is furthermore emphasized that the participations were voluntary. As a span of time, every respondent was provided around one hour where almost all respondents were enthusiastic and interested during the interview but in exception, some were quite serious regarding their study and career, and therefore, more reluctant answering my questions. Pen, question paper, and the notebook were used to keep the record of the participants' responses. All the interviews have been written carefully and sensitively in notebook at the time of interview. Since all the participants were educated, the interviews were conducted in English. But in the course of interviews, some informants have used some typical Nepali words such as *nwaran*, *pasni*, *pujari*, and *murti* to describe and make the issues sensible in the context.

An interview guide was formed before and used it as a crucial framework for having the interview. Twelve questions of open-ended nature were included in the guide which was directed from general to specific. Formally, this was my first experience to work as a researcher in academic field. Snowball sampling was very useful and helpful to reach the participants which was facilitated and begun by my three friends. Even if I had begun it with the blend of fear, excitement, and optimism, subsequently, it ended up with a lot of new ideas, experiences, and cordial relations.

2.7 Situatedness

As a researcher, I have noticed some notable achievements during the interviews and observations. Actually, I had a great time to participate and celebrate the annual rituals such as *Dashain* according to their culture and tradition among the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger. The interviews were conducted and succeeded in a very pleasant way. The act of speaking Nepali language entirely facilitated me to understand and involve as a participant observer in the

³² Norwegian Social Science Data Services

context. Furthermore, I was already friend with a few of them, which ultimately helped me to build up the confidence to go ahead.

The interviews were conducted in coffee shops and their apartments. At the time of interview, my informants were ensured that their real names and provided information would not be disclosed without their permission. All the respondents tried their level best to answer the interview questions. As a result, I believed that they were open and honest during the interviews. Because of their kind cooperation, there did not occur any big problems at all. More interestingly, I got a better chance to learn more about the Hindu religion and culture in terms of rituals, practices, and perception abroad.

2.8 Reliability and Validity of the Research

"We can never be absolutely sure that we understand all the idiosyncratic cultural implications of anything, but the sensitive, intelligent fieldworker armed with a good theoretical orientation and good rapport over a long period of time is the best check we can make."³³ Credibility internal validity ensures that a researcher has studied what he or she has intended for the research. "Credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement with participants; persistent observation in the field; the use of peer de-briefers or peer researchers; negative case analysis; researcher reflexivity; and participant check, validation, or co-analysis."³⁴ Regarding validity, Kitchin and Tate (2000) explain that it concerns about the soundness, legitimacy, and relevance of a research theory along with its investigation. While doing research, the researcher needs to make sure that the study is trustworthy. In this respect, Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that the researcher should consider with credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to make the research reliable. In the sense, the researcher must be responsible not to let the same research happen again. "Although some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, they have realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research."³⁵

This study has employed a background data to ensure reliability in qualitative research where trustworthiness plays a vital role. From the very beginning of my research, I have emphasized on

³³ Kirk and Miller 1986:32

³⁴ Morrow 2005:252

³⁵ Golafshani 2003:602

the prime goal of my findings. Therefore, I have solely focused on the project to excavate something unexplored before. In doing so, I have constantly insisted on the significance and reliability of data throughout the interview. I have honestly noted down the same what the informants said during the conversation. And while analyzing the data, I have logically interpreted and examined whether the meaning and sense are accurate or not. So, I have tried my level best to avoid the risk of being biased.

2.9 Ethical Reflection on the Project

Research ethics helps to establish the moral philosophy for conducting the research. Ethics are codes and rules that seek to govern the practices of a profession. For exploring truth, honoring human rights, building public supports, and making the research successful, research ethics have to be followed. The research process can sometimes create a tension between the target of the researcher and the right of the participant while maintaining privacy. "We shall consider them fewer than five headings: informed consent, privacy, harm, exploitation, and consequences for future research."³⁶

From the beginning point, I have valued research ethics since I am aware of the fact that the negligence of research ethics ruins the dignity of a work along with the researcher. The major moral qualities I have followed in the research are informed consent and anonymity of the informants. In the process of research, the researcher has replaced the original names of the participants with the fictive names in order to protect their identities and respect their feelings. Truly, all the participants involved in the research have been assured that all data shall be destroyed after the completion of the thesis. No other persons have an access to the collected data. Similarly, I have tried hard to respect their choices, individual rights, freedom and attributes in each step.

2.10 Overview

This section gives an idea about the methodology chapter. It is mostly related with the research design along with its following components. It justifies why and how qualitative research method is useful and helpful for the research. Furthermore, it says about the data collection method for instance, semi-structured interview, snowball sampling method, primary data, and secondary

³⁶ Hammersley and Atkinson 2007:209

data sources. Fieldwork is another important portion of this section. All in all, it is importantly connected with the research ethics which is the prime focus of the research

Chapter Three

Conceptual Tools Discussion

3.1 Introduction

Conceptual tools are regarded as the lens of the texts without which the texts are incomplete especially in research projects. Conceptual tools are also known as the theories. Without applying the theories a researcher can neither produce a thesis nor can a reader understand it. So, theories seriously matter in both, text studies and field studies. In this regard, I have applied three theories propounded by different scholars to look and analyse the thesis which are as follows: theory of cultural hybridism, multiculturalism and diasporas, and globalization. And all of them are resourceful to tackle the issues in the research problem.

3.2 Cultural Hybridism

The constant change in human nature is a natural process which is affected depending on time, situation, circumstances, experiences, and choices, compulsions, learning, and visiting. Those who are abroad, always remain in between regarding their religion, culture, and practices even if they want to stick to their own ones and ignore the others' and vice versa. Human culture is never stable; one can easily adopt another's culture but cannot totally forget your own culture. Rather, there can occur an idea of cultural hybridism. The statement, "Hybridity is almost a good idea but not quite" is applicable as a theory for this thesis which was originally propounded by Nicholas Thomas and is found in the book, *Hybridity OR the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Furthermore, hybridity is an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other. A hybrid is something that is mixed. Hybridity basically refers to mixture. It is therefore imperative situate every analysis of hybridity in a specific context where the conditions that shape hybridities are addressed.³⁷ "Hybridity itself, however, is often treated as a specifically postcolonial phenomenon and discussions have rarely overcome the narrow boundaries within this narrow field of study."³⁸ And in most other disciplines, the terms hybridity and hybridization are used to characterize phenomena which are easily and finely

³⁷ Kraidy 2007:vi

³⁸ Stockhammer 2012:1

detected as somehow 'borderline' but not so much easily explained and understood.³⁹ In regard to this, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) is found with the below mentioned sayings in the reprinted book, *Bhabha The Location of Culture*. "The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation." And the inscription of the borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive image at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

Identity is something important by which every individual is known clearly in the society. A same person might have more than a single identity according to time and context. For instance, a boy may be known as a son of somebody else and the same boy might be indicated as a student in the school. So, it is both relational and contextual. "In the case of cultural identities, hybridity refers to the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness."⁴⁰ Cultural identity is the identity of a particular group or culture. These can be created due to various reasons such as gender, nationality, language, ethnicity, and religious belief. These identities are mostly noticed where there are ethnically diverse population. Hybridity is assumed to involve the fusion of two existing relatively distinct forms or identities. And thus, it can be broadly understood as an intercultural mixture. In this way, the project insists on the mixture of cultures where Nepalese Hindu culture is focused and judged on the basis of multi-cultures in the context of Stavanger, Norway.

3.2.1 Multiculturalism and Diasporas

Since this project is supported by the theory of cultural hybridism, it is explicitly associated with multiculturalism. "If multiculturalism is such a heterogeneous affair, what, then, should multicultural theory be about? First of all, it should be about learning how to tolerate difference, ambiguity and ambivalence."⁴¹ And multiculturalism is now linked with diasporas. Particularly, the people from the same land, culture, tradition, belief, religion, environment, language, and

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Huddart 2006:4

⁴¹ Fludernik 2003:157

ethnicity in a foreign land meet in diaspora communities. "A diaspora is always liable to constitute one or several communities focussing on its specific historic and cultural characteristics."⁴² Traditionally, 'diaspora' refers to the dispersion of the Jews among the gentiles and their belief in a subsequent return to the lost homeland. But in current multicultural theory, the term has been applied to all expatriate groups who chose, or were forced, to leave their native lands for a variety of reasons including indentured labour and higher education. In their new countries, these diasporic subjects form ethnic or cultural minorities while still retaining strong affiliations with their or, more often, their ancestors.⁴³ At present, diaspora is often described in terms of multiculturalism. And this theory is helpful to get a deeper understanding about the Nepalese Hindus abroad. "Scholars who define a diaspora by its social consciousness refer to individuals who live in a variety of societies and cultures and who emphasize their sense of belonging or exclusion, their states of mind, and their sense of identity."⁴⁴

"Diaspora, it has been said, represent 'the leading edge of globalization' because they are not merely minority communities; their members have moved around-that is, have emigrated from their native countries to other countries."⁴⁵ It is somehow related to globalization. People being abroad miss homeland in terms of family, society, culture, festival, and native language but at the same time, they try to be adjusted according to the foreign culture, language, life style, and festivals because of which they might feel as if they are strangers. Diaspora membership is a matter both of status and identity, and identity is relational, contextual, and time-bound. More generally, the tag diaspora has come to be used rather freely, because multiple identities are now acceptable than they were before.⁴⁶

3.2.2 Globalization

Globalization is the catchword of the day. It emerged in the 1990s as the preferred term for encompassing the multiplicity of supranational forces that have imprinted themselves on the contemporary world. And it seems likely to remain in use, and potentially in overuse, in the

⁴² Ben-Rafael and Sternberg 2009:145

⁴³ Ibid p. 159

⁴⁴ Agnew 2005:5

⁴⁵ Alfonso, Kokot and Tololyan 2004:10

⁴⁶ Ibid

upcoming future.⁴⁷ Many scholars define globalization differently among themselves. Ted Lewellen is more comprehensive one, who writes,

Globalization is the increasing flow of trade, finance, culture, ideas, and people brought about by sophisticated technology of communications and travel and the worldwide spread of neoliberal capitalism, and it is the local and regional adaptations to and resistances against these flows.⁴⁸

"Globalization refers to processes that are usually designated as cultural, that are, concerned with the attribution of meaning in the global arena. The global arena is the precondition for globalization."⁴⁹ It is, for instance, the precondition for the formation of local identities such as nation states, third and fourth worlds, ethnicities and the religious activities. Moreover, there are numerous cultural processes that are directly generated in global systems.⁵⁰

Roland Robertson (1992) is found writing about the process and action of globalization in the reprinted book *Globalization Social Theory and Global Culture*. According to him, "The processes and actions to which the concept of globalization now refers have been proceeding, with some interruptions, for many centuries, but the main focus of the discussion of globalization is on relatively recent times." Crucially, my project focuses the point of view of cultural globalization.

Cultures are constantly changing, and these changes often lead to changes in worldviews, which tend to change more slowly because they are at the subconscious level. When the worldviews change, the world itself does not change, but people live in a perceptually different world after the transformation. Certainly, in larger societies there is not only one worldview but rather many competing worldviews. For instance, the introduction of television alters the way people view reality by opening up worlds not seen before. In the sense, worldviews are constantly changing in response to changes at the levels of surface culture.⁵¹ Globalization has encouraged a dissociation of many notions of nationhood from existing states. It has advanced a number of

⁴⁷ Hopkins 2002:1

⁴⁸ Hiebert 2009:242

⁴⁹ Friedman 1994:199

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Hiebert 2009:316-17

other, non-territorial constructions of identity, for instance, connected to faith, class, gender, or humankind as a whole. Overall, globalization has stimulated a pluralisation of identities, with a host of various national and non-territorial frameworks of being and belonging.⁵² One common notion has perceived of globalization in terms of internationalization wherein global is simply another adjective to describe cross-border relations between countries, and globalization designates a growth of international exchange and interdependence.⁵³

3.3 Overview

This chapter talks about the usage and utility of theories. People can leave the homeland for new land due to various reasons but cannot totally forget the native language, accustomed culture, religion, ethnic identity, custom, and belief even if they pretend to forget. And if they try to adapt the language, culture, religion, and tradition of foreigners' in the foreign land, they cannot do so exactly the same because of which they happen to be in between. Regarding these issues, the theories of cultural hybridism, multiculturalism and diasporas, and globalization have been explained in a deeper level for understanding the text.

⁵² Scholte 2005:5

⁵³ Ibid p. 16

Chapter Four

Concerned Religion and Culture

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deeply deals with the Hindu religion along with the Hindu culture, traditions, belief, and its origin, the concept of God, the sacred scripture, marriage system, and caste system within Hindu culture in a multicultural context. In a sense, it is more important to be explained in detail since the thesis is directly connected with Hinduism and supported by the theories of cultural hybridism, prejudice, diasporas, and globalization. In short, it emphasizes on multiculturalism in regard to Nepalese Hindus.

4.2 Hinduism in General

"The word Hinduism comes from the name of the River Indus. The river is in the north-west of the Indian sub-continent. Some people say that Hinduism has its earliest roots here."⁵⁴ Hinduism is believed as one of the oldest and major religions in the world and it is also believed that Hinduism was originated from India. "Hinduism has no known founder and its beginning point to prehistoric roots. It is unquestionably the oldest living major religious tradition."⁵⁵ It is understood as: a political program, a profound philosophy, a way of life, a life of asceticism, a dip in the Ganges, a sermon on the *Bhagavadgita*. It was not easy to become a Hindu until some years ago as Klostermaier states, "Until recently one could not become a Hindu - one had to be born a Hindu."⁵⁶ According to him, only someone belonging to a recognized *jati*,⁵⁷ with a Hindu mother and father, who had undergone the prescribed rituals and had not committed a breach of the traditional way of life, could be a member of the Hindu community. Originally this religion was confined to India but nowadays there are an estimated forty-five million Hindus living outside India, of whom about eighteen million live in Nepal.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Mercier 1998:4

⁵⁵ Klostermaier 1998:1

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ It means caste

⁵⁸ Klostermaier 1998:1

Hindu religion believes in multiple manifestations, path of righteousness and the cycle of births and deaths. It has its own beliefs, traditions, social system, rituals, philosophy, and theology. "Doctrines regarding the eternal self and the cycle of rebirth have become nearly universal in Hinduism."⁵⁹ Many scholars define Hinduism differently; Coward also believes that Hinduism does not have a human founder like Jesus Christ in Christianity or any other founder or a specific origin in history.⁶⁰ In the sense, it has an anonymous truth in the religious history. It has a long history that tells how the term *sindhu* became Hindu. "In Persian this term became 'hindu', and this was used as a designation for the river that is now known as the Indus, which flows through the northwest of the subcontinent, in present-day Pakistan."⁶¹ It is further said that Hinduism is diverse. "The reason for this claim of radical diversity is that Hinduism has no founder figure or foundational event, no universally accepted canon of texts, no credal statement and overarching institutional structure."⁶² It can be assumed that Hinduism is a diverse religion since the followers perceive and practice it differently. It can be followed whether being religious by action. Any follower of this faith can claim as being a Hindu whether he/she goes for the rituals or not in practical life. In the sense, it does not necessarily demand to visit any temple and do *puja* practices. It is therefore often said that Hinduism is a flexible religion.

Hindus are found not only in Nepal and India rather throughout the world. For example, in the 2001 British census 558,000 people identified themselves as being Hindu. In 2001 there were over 800 million Hindus in India and figures of up to 900 million Hindus worldwide.⁶³ Based on this, it can be mentioned that the Hindus are found throughout the world and might have differences in practices according to country and condition. "Although Hinduism has its origin in India, it is now a world faith. Its influence has spread."⁶⁴ Moreover, Hinduism is known as Sanatan Dharma which means the eternal dharma. "Dharma is one of those words that are virtually untranslatable because of the large number of meanings they have in their original context. It only partly overlaps with the Western notion of religion."⁶⁵ The word *dharma* can be understood and explained in many ways. "It is also common to hear Hindus suggest that the term

⁵⁹ Brockington 1996:5

⁶⁰ Coward 2005:1

⁶¹ Jacobs 2010:5

⁶² Ibid p. 6

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Mercier 1998:5

⁶⁵ Klostermaier 1998:5

Sanatan Dharma, which can be roughly translated as the eternal truth, is a much more appropriate term than Hinduism."⁶⁶ Similarly, Hinduism is a perfect combination of diverse beliefs and traditions in which the sole themes *Dharma*,⁶⁷ *Samsara*⁶⁸ and *Karma*⁶⁹ are included.

4.2.1 Holy Scriptures

Hinduism has been enriched with the contributions made by numerous sages, scholars, priests and devotees since immemorial time to present time. And even if there are a number of texts available about Hinduism *Veda* is the most ancient and well known scripture. "Hindus generally trace their tradition back to the *Veda*, a beginningless scriptural revelation that governs everything spoken by rsis or seers at the start of each cycle of the universe."⁷⁰ Although the *Veda* is regarded as the canonical scripture of Hinduism, actually this canon is not read by the vast majority of Hindus, most of whom - the lower castes and all women - were in due course forbidden to read it. And this very inaccessibility has caused an almost reinterpretation of doctrine, for an appeal to the authority of the *Veda* might be used to lend respectability to any innovation.⁷¹ It is said that orthodox Hindu scholars divide their scriptures into two classes, *sruti* and *smrti*. *Sruti*, literally, is that which is 'seen' or 'heard' by the rsis at the start of each cycle of creation and then spoken for the benefit of the people as *Veda* - scriptural ladder to release moksa⁷².⁷³ But there is a second category of Hindu scripture, *smrti*, literally, 'that which is remembered.' And *smrti* is used to designate all other sacred literature, principally in Sanskrit, which is considered to be secondary to *sruti* (the *Veda*).The role of *smrti* is to bring out the hidden meanings of the Vedic revelation.⁷⁴ In the sense, *sruti* is revelation and *smrti* is tradition. Besides revelation and tradition, Hindus have always used rational examination as means to arrive at religiously relevant truth wherein logical examination was needed to clarify obscure passages in revelation, to harmonize contradiction in tradition and to extend the application of revelation and tradition to new areas. After all, over the course of the centuries three such

⁶⁶ Jacobs 2010:6

⁶⁷ It more or less denotes ethics and duties

⁶⁸ It is the cycle of rebirth

⁶⁹ Karma is mostly described in terms of right action

⁷⁰ Coward 2005:1

⁷¹ Brockington 1996:6

⁷² release from the cycle

⁷³ Coward 2005:9

⁷⁴ Ibid p. 11

scriptures were selected as most authoritative: the (principal) *Upanisads*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and the *Brahmasutras*.⁷⁵

4.2.2 Veda

As it is said earlier, Hinduism is without a proper beginning but it has some scriptures which are major sources of the faith. Among them *Veda* is regarded as one of the Holiest scriptures in Hinduism on which the whole religion is based like Christianity and Islam are based on *Bible* and *Quran* accordingly. Klostermaier further explains that Hindus believe the *Veda* proper to be without beginning. It was allegedly revealed thousands of years ago to the seers whose names appear in the texts. There are different schools of thought concerning the source of the revelation. According to him, majority of the orthodox would maintain that the *Veda* is 'impersonal', i.e. not 'Word of God' in the sense in which the *Bible* is to Jews and Christians, pre-existent, an embodiment of the eternal law that exists beyond any personal law-giver. But he again says that some Hindus, however, would perceive the *Veda* as personal communication from God to chosen seers.⁷⁶ Like other scholars, Regmi also categorizes this Hindu Holy Scripture. "There are four Vedas: (1) The Rig-Veda, (2) The Sam-Veda, (3) The Yojur Veda, and (4) The Atharva Veda."⁷⁷ Most modern scholars consider the *Rgveda* to be the oldest, dating from about 1300 B.C.E.; the *Yajurveda* and the *Samveda* were developed before 1000 B.C.E.; and the *Atharvaveda* was formed by 1200 B.C.E. And each of these collections will contain older materials e.g., original hymns as well as more recent materials such as *Upanisads*. Actually, the language of the *Veda* is Sanskrit, and in this language each particular collection or school passes on its texts in oral form - the student memorizing from the teacher and then passing the same oral *Veda* on to his students in turn.⁷⁸ Regarding the originality of language, Regmi further clarifies, "Hindu scriptures are written in Sanskrit."⁷⁹

4.2.3 The Concept of God

Substantially, Hindus believe in one supreme God but it has several forms in religious practices that are known as the minor deities. Chandra in *Encyclopaedia of Hindu Gods and Goddesses* defines the several forms of minor gods. For instance, Kama Deva is the God of Kama or Love.

⁷⁵ Klostermaier 1998:23

⁷⁶ Ibid p. 16

⁷⁷ Regmi 1999:98

⁷⁸ Coward 2005:11

⁷⁹ Regmi 1999:109

Kama means the 'desire for sexual gratification'. As per mythology, Kama Deva is a god with a bow and arrow and when he strikes someone with his arrow, that person will develop sexual desires in him or her. The most important Kama literature is *Kama Sutra*, written by Sage Vatsyayana around 4th century A.D. Similarly, Kamdhenu, the sacred cow, is a part of Hindu mythology. She is the cow which grants all wishes and desires. And she is also regarded as the mother of all cows.⁸⁰ But more significantly, the followers of the faith believe in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Although there are several minor gods in it, the followers believe in one God. "In the Hindu religion, the Trinity, or three gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, is very important. Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer."⁸¹ And the Holy formulae or mantras are chanted to summon the god in Hinduism. These consist of ordinary words, syllables, and sound which have to be uttered in a special order, at a special pitch and in a special rhythm. The Vedic syllable, OM, is considered the holiest mantra of all.⁸² After all, these gods are regarded as the Supreme Being in Hinduism.

Hindus usually worship the god mostly in the morning and evening. An image of god is required to worship. For doing so, a *murti*⁸³ is treated like an honored royal guest. In homes, early in the morning it is awakened through clapping of hands and playing of soft religious music; it is washed, dressed, garlanded. Incense is burned before it. Hymns are recited for it. The most conspicuous ceremony in the evening is *arati*, the weaving of lights before the image. But in temples there can be loud shouting of the god's names, singing and dancing before the image. There are many local customs and variations in the ritual of the image worship, but the central idea is the same. Hindus do believe that God is present in the image, and they consider it important to visit the *murtis* of famous religious places in the expectation of material and spiritual achievement.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Chandra 2001:168-69

⁸¹ Regmi 1999:117

⁸² Jansen 2003:10

⁸³ statue of a god

⁸⁴ Klostermaier 1998:63

4.3 Marriage System

On a more general basis, it can be said that marriage is important for all human beings. Contextually, marriage is an agreement between two opposite genders to live together and have children in relation to society. In Hinduism, it is the religious and social high point in a Hindu's life and is celebrated with extravagant feasts. The marriage ceremony can vary from place to place in its forms but it contains many ancient Vedic mantras and rituals. The role of the marriage ceremonies is to ensure fidelity, happiness, affinity, and progeny. If something goes wrong people often search for flaws in the marriage ritual and blame it on those. Marriage ritual underlines the importance of a woman of the house and she is called 'half of man'. It is also common to have a perception that the domestic rituals cannot be performed without her.⁸⁵ According to the religious myth, it is said that the husband and wife are pre-destined before they were born.

4.4 Caste system within Nepalese Hindus

Unlike in other world religions, caste is discussed and brought forward to distinguish the people on the basis of their birth in Hinduism. It is a kind of tag in Hinduism which is given and used by the society to indicate the people as high caste or low caste. A caste system is a complex social taboo which combines the elements of occupation, culture, social class, and tribe affiliation. "Caste is perhaps the most widely misunderstood aspect of Hinduism."⁸⁶ It is said that the term caste is derived from the Portuguese term *casta*, which roughly translates as race or tribe. However, the Portuguese '*casta*' does not correspond with the social structures of Hindu society. Clearly, caste stands for two distinct systems of social structure: *varna* and *jati*. *Varna* refers to a system that divides society into four hierarchically arranged groups: the priests (*Brahmins*); warriors and rulers (*Ksatriyas*); artisans, farmers and traders (*Vaisyas*); and those who serve the other groups (*Sudras*), whereas *jati* refers to thousands of groups that were originally determined by occupation.⁸⁷ It sometimes seems that the word *varna* is confused with *jati* (castes), but in fact, both have separate sociological meanings. "For example, the caste is determined on the basis of the birth, which is not true with the *Varnas*. The *Varnas*, since time immemorial, are

⁸⁵ Ibid p. 39

⁸⁶ Jacobs 2010:58

⁸⁷ Ibid

determined on the basis of their *karma* and *guna*."⁸⁸ It is now said that the *varnas* can be changed, but the caste cannot be changed. The *varnas* are no longer valid and accepted in the present social system and are regarded as 'cultural fossils' of the Hindu social system in Nepal.⁸⁹ There are hundreds of *jatis* within which each *varna* and the local ranking is not always the same. With each *jati* having its own restrictions on intermarrying and sharing food, social relationships in Hindu society are anything but simple. Even though one's *jati* is determined by birth, a certain step of upward and downward mobility is possible. Marrying a partner from another caste surely implies that the children belong to the lower caste of the two.⁹⁰

Regarding the caste system among the Nepalese society, people inherit caste from their parents and pass it on to their children orderly. There are other ethnic indigenous groups as well who do not come under the caste system. Particularly, Kathmandu is the capital city of Nepal where a large number of people live with the different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur are the neighboring districts. One can easily find more temples in these districts. But Kathmandu is most famous for its temples. So, it is also known as 'the city of temples'. So is Bhaktapur. "Dense, compact, stratified, Bhaktapur is not just a city, built of bricks and timbers alone; it is a sacred city, Hindu city, a city of caste-built of rituals and religious meaning within an encompassing social hierarchy."⁹¹

4.5 A Human Relationship in a Multicultural context

Since marriage is a social relationship, it is broadly a human relationship. And every relationship is meaningful according to concern and context. In the context, it tries to generalize every religious, cultural, ethnic, lingual, and social relationship on the basis of a human relationship in a multicultural context.

Lately, culture is seen to include implicit and symbolic meaning. About the interest and protection of culture, *Our Creative Diversity*, presents the statement as the UNESCO report in the book, *Cultural Integrity And World Community*. And it is useful to be mentioned here in the context to support the arguments. "The UNESCO report recognizes that individuals have a

⁸⁸ Regmi 1999:99

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Klostermaier 1998:34

⁹¹ Mines and Lamb 2002:174

strong interest in culture and in protecting one's culture against rapid change."⁹² Some authors hold that minority rights regarding culture and religious practices should be institutionalized as universal human rights. The culture is always complex not static, especially when one culture itself gets involved along with many cultures.⁹³ Consisting of people from different countries, religions and cultures form a multicultural society wherein every single individual may have a unique perspective of experiencing, expecting, understanding, and behaving the atmosphere around him or her.

To be in a common friendship with other people in a multicultural city might sometimes be quite difficult for some people due to the variation in cultural, ethnic and religious perception, perspective, and practices. "Multiculturalism tends to become a form of identity politics, in which the concept of culture becomes merged with that of ethnic identity."⁹⁴ And Turner affirms the multicultural necessity of constantly challenging, revising and relativizing basic notions and principles common to dominant and minority cultures alike, so as to construct a more vital, open, and democratic common culture.⁹⁵ The differences are characterized between individuals' cultures and these differences can bring rewards of intercultural relationship. Such kinds of challenges are usually occurred due to the various meaning systems that an individual might have.

In the context, we must have some better sense of what 'culture' really means. The UNESCO report talks of culture as 'ways of living together,' as patterns of daily behavior. According to the report, culture shapes all our thinking, imagining and behavior and cultural factors shape the way in which societies conceive their own futures and choose the means to attain these futures. Moreover, it is widely believed that culture gives meaning to our existence.⁹⁶

4.6 Overview

This chapter is a brief summary of the Hindu religion and the culture associated with it. It tries to communicate about its values, history, practices, traditions, and importance. More significantly, it talks about the caste system in Hinduism and intercultural relationship. It insists that if an

⁹² UNESCO report; in Hughes and Hudson 2000:9

⁹³ Hughes and Hudson 2000:9

⁹⁴ Turner 1993; in Baumann 1999:105

⁹⁵ Ibid p. 105-6

⁹⁶ Hughes and Hudson 2000:9

individual happens to be in a new environment, company, and country with different cultural, religious, ethnic, political, and sociological background, he or she should not feel disintegrated rather should develop an idea to respect, accept, and understand the differences.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, qualitative data on "Being a Hindu in a Multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway" are presented in a descriptive way. The prime purpose of the study is to observe and analyze the condition of the Nepalese Hindus concentrating on the social, cultural, and religious diversity in Stavanger.

As it is mentioned earlier, the collected data are about the Nepalese Hindus but they cover many more related research questions which have been presented in the introductory part like; what does the Hindu religion say to practice and how they do it here? What changes do they see in *Puja* practices? Why is temple the main centre for worshipping the God? How do they feel in a very different atmosphere, and also other questions will be raised and analyzed.

The chapter also introduces the age group, gender, academic qualification, and present status of the informants in general. More significantly, it presents the information on behalf of the respondents as a primary data, and the researcher tries to do this as sincerely and respectfully as possible.

5.2 Background Information

All the Nepalese Hindus, whom I interviewed, have already completed their Bachelor's and Master's Degree from different universities in Nepal. For more details, some have already completed their Master's Degree and are looking for a job, some of them are about to complete their second Master's Degree, some are studying the first Master's Degree in the University of Stavanger and the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger. Among the eleven informants, one is a PhD candidate in the University of Stavanger, in Stavanger. And one informant is working as an Engineer in the Statoil Company in Stavanger. Undoubtedly, all the respondents live in Stavanger.

Primarily, all of them belong to the Hindu religion but a few of them do believe in Buddhism as well. Those who believe in both Hinduism and Buddhism said they are impressed by the Buddhist teachings since it directs to be practical, straightforward, kind, and nonviolent. So, they

view both religions are alike to some extent regarding the teachings and beliefs. And they do not see many differences either between these religions in the context of Nepal. According to them, they equally love and respect the other religions as well even if they originally belong to Hinduism and are born into Hindu families. Many of my informants are students and they have a part time job as well in Stavanger. Many of the total informants used to get involved in the religious activities when they were in Nepal and they would like to do the same here in Stavanger as well. And a few of them used not to believe in such activities when they were in Nepal and they still do the same in Stavanger as well. But they are still Hindus and claim to be Hindus.

Nepal, according to the informants, is a naturally beautiful country having rich cultures, traditions, festivals, languages, and arts. They would like to carry on many of them here in Stavanger as well, if possible. This is the reason why they sometimes organize cultural programs and celebrate the festivals gathering in a certain place. And during the celebration, they mostly speak Nepali language, make Nepali food, and play Nepali songs and dance. Concerning their daily lives, they feel the difference between Nepal and Stavanger regarding the religious practices and cultural aspects. They feel freer like in Nepal to talk and follow the religion even if they do not find a Hindu temple here. It does not mean that they are not paying any attention towards the religion, culture, traditions, customs, and their native language, rather they do carry on these values as much as possible but only the way they do it is different. My informants belong to different ethnic groups and castes.

Table No. 1

No. of Participants	Age Groups		Gender		Qualifications	
	11	24-30	5	Females	4	Graduate
				Post Graduate		7
30-35		6	Males	7	PhD	1

5.3 Religion as a Personal Perception

Every interviewee understands the importance of religion, this is why, they follow their religion freely and willingly but at the same time, they have a greater respect towards other people's religions. Every religion is unique and significant in the daily lives of people of faith. It governs their daily lives of the people through different means like duty and responsibility, morality, honesty, and right activity. People have the concept of God who is unseen but has a larger effect in their mentality. Most religions have their Holy Scriptures which guides the devotees. So, the followers of each religion rely on it and try their level best to practice the religion in the daily lives. Talking about the practical aspects of Hinduism, there are various ways to follow and practice it. In this respect, every follower has conceived it in his or her own way and tries to define it in their own way. The way of worshipping of *Bhagawan*⁹⁷ may be changed due to many reasons among which migration is one. I have asked my informant Arpana what the religion says to practice and how she does it here. As a response, she said this:

There are different ways to practice Hinduism. Some focus on Bhaktimarga i.e. devotion to gods' sculptures and images. Some focus on Gyanamarga i.e. the path of knowledge and philosophy and some focus on Karmamarga i.e. the path of work and action. I usually follow Karmamarga. So, I follow it by carrying out my words and actions.

On the contrary, almost all the interviewees focused on the importance of a Hindu temple. They have a central idea in common about practicing the Hindu religion here in Stavanger. So, they more or less stick on to the idea of a temple regarding the religion and its practices. They feel easier and more comfortable to follow the religion if they find a Hindu temple in the city. This idea is revealed when my informant Sriram expressed his views:

Hinduism is devotion towards gods like Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva usually taking the sculptures and images in home and temples taking Tika⁹⁸ in forehead. But here in Stavanger, I am devoting only by my heart because I could not find any Hindu temples. Temple is a pre-condition for me to follow and practice Hinduism sincerely.

⁹⁷ Bhagawan is known as God among Nepalese Hindus

⁹⁸ A red mark

Based on the interviews, we assume that the same religion is understood and practiced differently. Among the eleven interviewees, Sarimaya defined it in this way: *Hinduism is a way of practice to worship the gods. And I do attempt to remember gods through other means like pictures, hymns, and You Tube videos.*

5.3.1 Differences in Puja Practices

As the Hindu religion is perceived individually everywhere, there occur some similarities as well as some differences while practicing it. These differences and changes occur because of the change in location and life style. Regarding the *Puja*⁹⁹ practices, different ways are sought to practice inside and outside the homeland which came to be known after the interviews were completed. Actually, in the Hindu tradition, *Puja* is mostly considered as one of daily rituals. Everyone may not have the same sort of thought and behavior about *Puja* practices. But average Hindus organize *Puja* specially to please the gods. They believe that they find an easy way to gods through it. And it is practiced in both homes and temples, by both *Pujari*¹⁰⁰ and common people. In the temple, it is generally performed by the *Pujari* on behalf of the devotees.

In my curiosity about the changes in *Puja* practices in comparison to his homeland and Stavanger, Amrit answered in this way:

Of course, there are a lot of changes in Puja between practices here in Stavanger and in our homeland, Nepal. This is due to cultural differences and also the nation being a Christian community. And people here are ignorant about others' religion, festivals. So, the main reason is cultural differences.

With his views and my observations what I have noticed is, he is culturally shocked. He misses his culture and festivals mostly in regard to practices. In my experience, he focuses more on the cultural aspects wherein Hindu festivals are at the centre. Based on my observation, it can be said that Nepal has lots of festivals as the major parts of its culture and tradition. *Teej*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, and *Holi* are regarded as the major Hindu festivals in the context of Nepal.

On the other hand, another respondent Rupa opined in a little bit different way:

⁹⁹ A way to worship the God

¹⁰⁰ Priest

I see the changes in Puja practices due to the unavailability of sacred idols, priests, Holy Scriptures, Murti, and free time. And whenever I try to do Puja practice, I miss the above mentioned things as well as the religious environment. So, I refresh myself and follow the practices through You Tube videos in the lack of temple.

With her experience, it can be said that she is interested in following and practicing the religion. Since it is a flexible religion, everyone is free to practice it freely, independently, occasionally, and regularly. In the sense, Rupa is using an alternative way named you tube videos to practice the *puja* as the Hindu ritual which depicts the importance of a digital world.

5.3.2 Temple in Hinduism

Generally, Hinduism is perceived on the basis of a temple, Holy Scriptures, priests, and devotees. Among them, temple is regarded as one of the necessary elements which could be accepted as the centre for worshipping the gods. So, whenever one thinks about this religion, normally the image of a temple is visualized in the mind. And each temple mostly has the *Murti* of the deities, statue of their vehicles, *Trishul*,¹⁰¹ clean areas, religious atmosphere, incense, and flowers. And the images of the gods might usually be carved out of stone, wood, and bronze.

Even if Nepal is a secular country, it is abruptly known for having a large number of Hindu believers. There are also a lot of temples in each part of the country. In this regard, Nepalese Hindus are basically accustomed to practice the religion by visiting temples. It is common among the people of this faith but it might be quite uncommon for those to practice the religion without having a temple here in the city. In the context, I again asked Sriram to know his views about the importance and existence of a temple. According to him:

Temple is the best place to find a way to the Divinity. Everyone visits temple by enforcing and devoting their mind and heart towards gods. And in the temple, I find Pujari, other devotees, the idols of many gods, saints, helpless people, older people, children, and adults around it. Because of temple, we are united religiously and it is important for me. But sadly, I do not find any temples here in Stavanger and I cannot visit any other cities looking for it due to busy schedule and financial problem.

On the contrary, Prayas expressed his views differently:

¹⁰¹ Trident is a long, three-pronged weapon

Hinduism essentially doesn't require a temple to follow it. There are many rituals like nwaran,¹⁰² pasni,¹⁰³ bratabandha,¹⁰⁴ marriage, death to which we call Karma. And Karma need religious books, materials and pandit,¹⁰⁵. Unavailability of such things leads to death of such practices.

In the same question Krishna came up with this view:

Temple is not important for me. Although I am a Hindu by birth I do not practice it in my everyday life. But I highly respect my religion like other religions. I think to do good and help others is more important. And I am always ready to help the needy people if I can. So, visiting temple does not signify and allure me so much.

As a response to my second question, "How often did you use to visit the temple during a week in Nepal", Tej Bahadur said:

I used to visit the temple once or twice a month not a week because I believe more in meditation and yoga as well as the self realization technique of Gautam Buddha than the older view of worshipping the gods in the temple . So, I often used to go to the meditation centre twice a week.

In my same query, Amrit told his feelings in this way:

I visited the temple a very few times only to worship God. More generally, I used to go to the temple to see the older arts, and creations. In my view, we don't need to visit the temple every day, every week or every month to worship the gods. God dwells everywhere and we can pray anywhere in the name of God. Doing good is worshipping the gods. So, I prefer more to do the right actions rather than visiting the temples.

My experience based on the interviews allows me to say that every individual is guided by the society around him or her and learns the same what he or she is used to practice from that society. Every individual is influenced by the society to some extent. And since Hinduism is a flexible religion, it came to be known that temple matters more for someone and *karma* matters

¹⁰² Nwaran is a name giving ceremony

¹⁰³ Pasni is a first time rice feeding ceremony to a baby

¹⁰⁴ Bratabandha is that ceremony which declares a Hindu boy becomes young adult and accepts the cultural traits

¹⁰⁵ Pandit is a Brahman scholar

more for somebody. After all, they are Hindus and described as Hindus and follow the religion in their own ways regardless of temple and karma but only the way is different.

5.3.3 A probability to Conversion

Conversion is widely known as the process of changing or causing something to change from one form to another. It can also be said that somebody can persuade another person to change their religion or beliefs or someone willingly changes the religion or beliefs. For instance, one can be born a Hindu and later, he or she can be a Christian or a Muslim by converting to another religion and vice-versa. The one who is born in a family will automatically belong to the religion which is followed by the parents.

The present context centrally describes whether a Hindu is satisfied of being a Hindu. And what they think about the conversion. In the course of interview Kushal said:

Yes, I am very much satisfied as a Hindu. And I am proud to be a Hindu. I respect my religion much because it has many great festivals like Teej, Dashain, Tihar, Holi, Krishna Janmashtami,¹⁰⁶ and Maha Shivaratri. I am fond of celebrating the festivals which really makes me feel culturally united, committed, devoted, and integrated towards my religion.

Figure1. Integration religious program: *Dashain* festival in Stavanger 2013



Photo: Collected during the participant observation 2013

¹⁰⁶ Krishna janmashtami is also known as Krishnashtami which is an annual commemoration of the birth of the deity Krishna

On the contrary, Anamika said this:

First of all I am satisfied being a human being. Every religion teaches the same in essence. Not any religion is harmful and against the human beings. Since Hinduism includes all the moral philosophies and guides us morally I am satisfied to be known as a Hindu. This is why; there is not any reason to convert to another religion. And I do not think that converting a religion changes the human nature.

Most of my respondents said that they are satisfied as a Hindu. According to them, Hinduism is an older religion in the world so they respect it much and are proud of it. According to the observed data and their expressions, most of the Nepalese in Stavanger celebrate the festivals and organize the cultural functions without affecting their work life and study hours. Nepalese people in Stavanger manage many of their events in the hall of SiS Bolig in Ugleveien. The figure 1 above shows the importance and integration of the *Dashain* festival. They manage to celebrate this festival every year being gathered in a certain place with a jolly mood.

In my observation, no one is unhappy as a Hindu and is not ready to think about converting the religion either. They are satisfied what they have learned and inherited. Even if all of them say that they are satisfied and happy to be Hindu I do not think that they are all so much religious by heart. But one thing is that they respect all religions like their religion.

5.3.4 Nepalese perspectives in the context

According to my informants, Nepal is a more beautiful country with the natural sceneries, different cultural backgrounds, some major religions, arts, and obviously several Hindu temples. In fact, even if Hinduism is the biggest religion in Nepal, there are some other major religions as well, for instance, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. But most of the cultural activities are tied to the Hindu festivals and are governed by the Hindu practices such as *Dashain*, *Tihar*, and *Maghe Sakranti* which are usually celebrated with the family members.

Based on my participant observation, it can be said that *Dashain* celebration 2013 was awesome wherein I noted that such festivals are not only for showing their respect towards their religion and culture but also open up the ways to each other to be closer to each other, friendlier, cooperative, sharing, and caring. Some said that such sort of events help them not to feel lonely and feel like being in their own community. From this, it can be said that such events have a

positive impact in their busy lives. Many of them said that they miss their family most during the major festival celebrations and they felt lonely. And they feel like talking to each other in Nepali language being informal about the life in Norway, job, study, and many more topics because of which they might feel that they are in their homeland at least for some hours.

Since Stavanger is a multicultural city there are explicitly many people with different ethnic, religious, sociological, cultural, political, economic, and lingual backgrounds among them Nepalese Hindus are focused in regard to other groups of people as well. In the context, Bipul responded:

For me, human being is a social animal and I like to be as much sociable as possible. I am in contact with other groups of people among them some are Christians, some are Muslims and some are even Buddhists. I always look for a unity and harmony in the society where I live in and which is possible through intercultural communication as well as social interaction.

Every single individual in a democracy is always free to speak whatever he or she likes until and unless the talk harms others. In the context, both Nepal and Norway practice democracy as a political system. Under this system people have many fundamental rights like; right to religion, right to education, right to property, right to speech, right to freedom and so on. Based on their fundamental rights, every individual is always free to choose not to choose, free to be atheist, theist or secular. In it, every religion is treated equally by the state. But in practice people might be guided and influenced by the certain faiths, thoughts, and feelings. A person can pronounce the same what he or she has seen, learnt, practiced, followed, and experienced in the society.

In the same regard, Tej Bahadur expressed:

I am in a regular contact with other non-Hindus in Stavanger. It is normal for me to be in contact with other people who come from different religious backgrounds. I am habituated to be adjusted mostly with the Christians because I have finished my schooling from a missionary school named Suryodaya English School, Jhapa, Nepal. So, I have many Christian friends both in Nepal and Stavanger. And I prefer more to make Christian friends.

In my view, almost all the informants have some knowledge about other religions and cultures around them in Stavanger. Many of them said that they undoubtedly see more people here with different religious and cultural backgrounds in comparison to Nepal. But some said it is more difficult to see many Hindus in the lack of temple.

Every informant is very glad and excited to answer my query about whether they live their lives respecting non-Hindus and their cultures in the context. In this regard, all the informants said that they shall live their lives respecting non-Hindus and their cultures as honestly and gladly as possible. Nobody has a different view about respecting others and their cultures but Krishna came up with this view:

Yes, I respect non-Hindus and their cultures by heart as my own. I see there are differences between my religion and culture and their religion and culture. I celebrate Dashain, Tihar but Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter. I eat food with the hands but they eat food with the fork and knife. I try to learn their cultures to feel better and adjusted. This is why, I celebrate Christmas in Norway. I believe that when you live in a country where the majority of the people follow Christianity you should also respect their festivals.

On the contrary, Anamika had a different perspective:

I do not think that anyone travels to another country thinking there would be people of his or her religion and culture only. Moving to another country means you respect your own views, beliefs, and customs and give respect to the people and country where you are, in terms of their traditions, cultures, practices, foods, and religions. There is a good saying, 'respect others to be respected'. Wherever I go, I shall be a Hindu and respect all other religions and cultures as my own.

Based on their views, it can be said that they know the difference and importance between the long practiced religion, culture, and tradition in terms of a different situation. But it can be assumed that everyone is happy to be in touch with the people from different backgrounds and get to know the difference between Nepalese culture and foreign culture. Some said that they are eager to learn to eat the foods with the fork and knife and at the same time wish to teach the friends to eat the food with the hands. This is what they learn to fit inter-culturally.

5.3.5 A Perception about Region and Human Nature

On a more general basis, it can be said that every individual is born freely and remains free to live a life according to his or her desire, if possible. Every individual is unique regarding their life style, thought, action, behavior, and relationship. In the course of life, an individual happens to travel to many parts of the world and might settle down there in a foreign land. Even if a person is physically farther, he or she is easily touched in terms of geography, native language, culture, and human behavior. A person is normally guided and influenced by the atmosphere, religion, culture, behavior, and geography around him or her. A Norwegian is obviously different from a Nepalese because of a culture, tradition, behavior, geography, and thought.

Anyone can describe differently about the life in Norway and Nepal stressing upon the human behavior and nature according to the time and circumstances. But as a researcher, I can say that my informants find it comfortable to live in context which has diversity in cultures, religions, traditions, and practices. In my query about the cultural and religious differences caused by geography, Krishna, responded:

I have been working in a Norwegian multinational company for eight years with the vast diversity in culture, religion, and life style. I had already imagined that the new place would have new and exciting culture to follow before I came and joined the company. So, I have not felt any horrible religious and cultural differences just because of the geography.

What I could observe from him is that he is not worried and feeling disintegrated either, due to geographical distance. Concerning his views, it can be said that he was already mentally prepared to face the new situation and challenges, which indeed helped him to overcome the strange situation. In the same asking, Amrit replied:

I think we miss everything even if we are in Nepal and might have no one to share happiness and sorrow if we are unkind and unfriendly. But if we are social, friendly, helpful, and generous other members of the society won't let us miss anything. So, our behaviors and qualities matter more than the geography.

Regarding the nature of people, anyone can define it differently since everyone is unique and free. People, in general, might be shy, open-minded, reserved, frank, religious, furious,

conservative, and self-centered by nature where culture and continent can be the main determinants. In my query, 'What type of people do you mostly meet around you', Anamika responded:

There is a saying in Norwegian 'like barnaleke best' which means people with same opinions and views match together. Although you find different types of people around you, you obviously notice those who are alike you by nature. Talking about me, I am an open-minded person; so of course, my friends would be definitely open-minded, frank, and sociable.

Even though almost all the interviewees said that they usually meet the people of different natures as mentioned in the question, Tej Bahadur had this perspective in the context.

The local people in Stavanger seem to be reserved and shy. But international students are open, sociable, co-operative, and sharing. I had hoped the locals to be very much open, frank, and collective. The reality here is just the opposite of my previous thinking which is not my expectation.

Since it is a multicultural city, one can easily find different kinds of people with different kinds of backgrounds, thoughts, and characteristics. Norwegians can be reserved and shy because of their culture and practices but it might not necessarily be all the Norwegians are same by nature. The people from the north can be culturally and dialectically quite different from the people of the south even in Norway.

Nevertheless, the people here are quite reserved and shy, they are very honest, trustworthy, and polite and this characteristic is quickly accepted by all the interviewees. Some informants might have realized the Norwegian language as a bottom line to be frank and close with the locals. Language definitely plays a vital role in daily life. But even if the international people do not speak or cannot speak Norwegian they are or can be very good friends with the Norwegians since most of them speak English as an international language.

5.3.6 The challenges

It is simply said that where there is a problem, there is a solution. One needs to face the difficulties to have a positive result. No any achievements are more easily obtained and

established. Everyone should undergo a hard time when there occurs a critical situation. Those who cannot understand and accept both positive and negative sides of anything or any status, they might be failures in the journey of their lives. But even if a person fails repeatedly he or she should not be hopeless because failure is a key to success. Therefore, you should never escape a problem rather have to face it happily. Most probably, a positive thought and mind always takes an individual towards a point of success. An individual with a positive thought and mind is always ready and should be ready to face the challenges in order to be able to define the existence of a life from different corners. In regard to challenges, it depends upon a person how he or she takes them, either positively or negatively. It is usually heard that a tactful person always changes the challenges into opportunities.

There might be some challenges to be a Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, or Muslim but one need to find out the causes and try to solve them. One can adopt the principle of give and take to make something better and reformed. While doing so, one can avoid some weak points and move with the time and situation accepting the feelings and suggestions of majority of the people. In this postmodern age, there are found so many people who think that humanity is a better religion. Actually, there might be some challenges even to be a humanitarian, theist or atheist in the present context if one tries to figure out it.

Moreover, Hinduism is not followed by a huge number of people in Stavanger in comparison to Nepal. Those who follow this faith might have experienced or seen some weak points to be a Hindu. Many of my informants told that there are not any challenges to be a Hindu. Some said that they believe in humanity. Individually, every respondent tried to define that every religion teaches to be honest, hard working, disciplined, wise, kind, helpful, and friendly. Among them, Prayas came up with this view:

Hindu is one of the oldest religions in the world. It has been practiced from time immemorial. It is a flexible religion as well which indeed makes me feel proud. But caste system in Hinduism is a real challenging factor. No one is higher and no one is lower by birth. Hindu society should ignore this type of hierarchy between the people.

It is traditionally believed and practiced that beef should not be eaten being a Hindu since cow is worshipped at *Tihar* as the symbol of wealth and of goddess *Lakshmi*¹⁰⁷ but modern Hindus are not so much traditional, they might walk according to the demand of time. In this point, Tej Bahadur explained:

In my view, there are always some challenges in every religion. The concept of materialism is influencing the religions today. I also feel some challenges to remain a Hindu and have a strong belief in it since Hinduism is also influenced by materialism. The value of religious faith is decreasing day by day as the value of money and wealth is increasing time and again.

The devotees often visit the temple with some pieces of gold, silver, fruits, milk, flowers, and money according to their financial condition. Furthermore, some richer people sometimes donate much money in the name of temple as a charity, which might have been understood as a materialistic influence by Tej Bahadur in the context.

5.4 Overview

This chapter includes the views of interviewees who are the primary source for the thesis. Since it is a qualitative research project, it has presented the important and useful data from the field study. In the sense, the chapter has presented the fact about what the informants have shared. The chapter has focused on the questions that used mostly to begin with why, how, and what sort of. In a nutshell, it is a combination of data, some comments, and observations. Now I will delve deeper into this material and start analyzing and discussing the results of the data collection.

¹⁰⁷ Lakshmi is regarded as the goddess of wealth and prosperity as well as the wife of god Vishnu.

Chapter Six

Discussion on Findings

6.1 Introduction

The motif of the chapter is to analyze the data which have been presented in chapter five. It goes on exploring the impact of culture and religion in the life of a Nepalese Hindu in a multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway. Furthermore, data shall be discussed and analyzed on the basis of interviewees' perspectives and experiences. The responses from the participants illustrate what it means to be a Hindu in Stavanger and it prevails more when the informants share their views of not having even a single temple to follow and practice their religion. In the context, Nepalese Hindus get themselves marginalized from the religious perspective in the Norwegian public sphere. Not any Hindus have equal opportunities to go for rituals like Christians have.

Culture and religion are two main factors which mostly affect the identity of a person. In general, the cultural norms and religious values created by the society put one apart from another. A person generally has more than a single identity according to time, place, status, and cultural as well as religious practices. For instance, a citizen in Nepal studying in a university and belonging to Hindu religion is simply known as an immigrant Hindu in Stavanger, Norway. And then he or she might be judged by the outsiders on the basis of his or her behavior which is abruptly shaped by the culture and religion, he or she practices. Those who do not originally come from Stavanger and do not speak Norwegian are definitely different from the local people. Talking about the Nepalese, they have different attitudes, customs, and behaviors when one compares them with the people in Stavanger. As it is a multicultural city, there are mixed societies having several cultural backgrounds. Since being in a multicultural city, Nepalese Hindus try to practice their culture and religion like in Nepal and at the same time they also try to adapt the Norwegian culture to some extent which ultimately leads them towards cultural hybridism. They can neither be totally Nepalese nor Norwegians. Instead, they need to learn to be adjusted with the social environment and different people in Stavanger.

As mentioned by the interviewees in the data presentation chapter, there are different ways to continue the religion and its cultures. In Hinduism, followers understand, define, and practice the

religion differently. For many of them, right actions matter most. For them, to be punctual, honest, true to words, helpful, right, and generous generally matter. And for some, worshipping gods matter most. However, almost all the informants insist on the importance of a temple being a Hindu. Due to being in a multicultural city, they need to tolerate ambiguity, ambivalence, and difference. Besides this, prevailing culture limits them as a marginalized group. As opined by the respondents, they see some hindrances in the daily lives like unavailability of a temple to follow the religion, being in a small group, dominated by non-Hindus' cultures, inability of speaking Norwegian language, unavailability of shops to buy Nepalese cultural dresses, intense desire to use their hands to have meal and being without parents which subsequently deprive them from being familiar and affinitive. Familiarity and affinity always drag the people in their centre and make them feel proud to be in the society as its members.

6.2 Different Situations in Nepal and in Stavanger

Every single individual happens to face and feel the differences, ambiguities, struggle, challenges, and opportunities along with the course of time. In the present context, it seems that time is more powerful than anybody else. It is also said that no one can run faster than time and win the nature. But the human beings can come to a point for a mutual relationship and gaining an understanding where the different groups exist differently in a society. As it is a fact, there are billions of people in the world today who obviously do not come from the same land, root, religion, culture, tradition, belief, and ethnic group. Then there explicitly occurs the differences in many levels of realities.

Normally, an individual is compared and understood according to prevalent social environment, culture, religion, behavior, characteristic, belief, and practices. Anyone can have different feelings and experiences according to time, geography, and circumstances. So, what I would like to focus here is that how Nepalese Hindus are existing in this multicultural city and what type of feelings as well as differences they have noticed. More importantly, temple is regarded as one of the common centers in Hinduism to worship the gods but sadly there is no any temple in the city. This is a challenging issue for those who follow this faith. Going to temple with the flowers, fruits, incense, money, milk, and showing a great respect towards the images of the gods by bowing the heads and putting two palms together matter most in this religion. In Vertovec's view, individuals and their families make their way locally or through arduous pilgrimage to

temples in order to receive *darshan*, or direct 'vision' or presence of the deity, and subsequently; to show obeisance, *pranam*, especially through the gesture of bowing with hands pressed together or through prostrating themselves before the image; to demonstrate devotion through *puja*.¹⁰⁸ While doing so, every devotee needs to be neat and clean by taking a bath. Practically, how Hindus perceive Hindu religion and get themselves in a different situation, matter more in the context. Because of the wider knowledge, interaction, and globalized world; the meaning of older norms, thoughts, ethics, atmosphere, understanding, and behavior seem to be changed to some extent in an individual's life.

Religion, culture, and traditions often seem to include experiences, ideas, knowledge, performances, followers, goods, images, hopes, ideologies, and techniques. Based on the data presentation chapter, it can be said that Nepalese Hindus can continue the religion and practice the culture even when there is no any temple in the city according to time and situations. The positive aspects of their ability and capacity to be able to maintain, check and balance between the different situations and geography, are highly appreciated which have finally assisted them to be adjusted in a multicultural society more comfortably.

Looking at the data presentation chapter, the issues regarding the religious differences are found to have two main reasons. Firstly, the Hindus do not find a temple, priest, idol of gods, and religious atmosphere. Secondly, they are in a very few numbers which make them feel as a minority group. Nonetheless, they do not find the situation exactly the same like in Nepal, hence, they do follow the religion and worship the gods in a modified version. They try to define the religion differently and they do not have the same sort of perception either, regarding what the religion says to practice and how they do it here. Many of them insist on saying that *karma is dharma* which literally means 'to do the right actions is to worship the gods'. And some of them define that Hinduism is all about worshipping the gods going to temple.

All the devotees can utter the name of gods whenever they are in troubles but secular Hindus might not visit the temples to worship the gods and might not believe in rituals either. Here lie the differences according to situation and perception. But being a Hindu, he or she must be provided a common place to worship the gods as is the need of this faith and that common place

¹⁰⁸ Vertovec 2000:128

is known as temple where they can worship the idol of gods, see the priest, fellow devotees, saints, pigeons, and helpless people. Like mosque and church, temple is also highly valued and needed for conducting the rituals in Hinduism. In reality, the Nepalese Hindus manage to remember and worship the gods through hymns, photos, and You Tube videos since there is a different situation in the city. Instead, they learn to fit in a multicultural city where there are a large number of people with different cultures, religions, ethnicities, traditions, beliefs, thoughts, classes, and behaviors which can be regarded as a different situation than that of Nepal for them. Eventually, they are able to share love, respect, culture, happiness, experiences, sorrows, tradition, and beliefs to each other out of homeland as well, which can be considered as one of the important achievements.

6.3 Meaning of *Puja* Practices

The rituals in Hinduism include *puja* practices as its main function which should be performed daily either at home or in the temple being a Hindu. There might be minor differences in following the steps but the essence is the same and that is to figure out the way to gods. Generally, *puja* is performed after taking a bath, without having any breakfast and salty foods but tea with milk and sugar is accepted during *puja*. In Nepal, there are some temples located nearby rivers which are regarded as the holy rivers wherein the devotees usually go to take a bath and bring some water to offer to the deities in the temple.

Regarding *puja*, there is a kind of discrimination between male and female and that is the period of menstruation which is regarded as the sign of impurity when females are not allowed to enter into the place or area where *puja* is being performed. This period normally lasts for four days among most of the Hindu families but there are some Hindus who do not take it as the sign of impurity rather a process of physical system. So, there occur some changes in the previous belief, system, and mentality as the people are more probably being influenced by medical knowledge. Because of the menstruation system and patriarchy society, it may not be possible to have any female priests in Hindu religion. Apart from this, there is a greater role of the females in *puja* practices. Females usually get up early in the morning, take a bath, sing hymns, light the incense, and make *prasada*, usually an edible food that is first offered to a deity and later shared with the devotees. This is seen as the preparation for *puja*. And *puja* is often performed by both males and females in the family. *Puja* can be performed both at home and temple. The one which is

performed by the family members, comes under the everyday rituals and the other type of *puja* which does not come under the everyday rituals basically includes a priest, devotees from within and outside home and needs a well preparation, wider space, religious books, more flowers, fruits, and varieties of *prasad* . This type of *puja* is generally performed by the priest or *pandit*. Therefore, almost all Hindus have knowledge of *puja* and practice it as a ritual anywhere in the world. Those who are in abroad always try to practice it as a daily ritual, if possible. But the geographical and unfavorable situation set boundaries for carrying out the rituals at its deeper level. To a Hindu, *puja* normally means a duty, daily ritual, fine way to please the gods, strong belief in Supreme Being, and being religious.

In the course of research, many of the participants shared that socio-cultural norms and hectic schedule obstruct them to act in an exact way like they did in homeland. According to them, the underlying causes of changes in *puja* practices are dependencies on different situation, different geography, different culture, busy life, and individualistic way of living, unavailability of temple, *pujari*, *murti*, holy rivers, and religious environment. Even if they know the differences and changes in *puja* practices, they might have internalized this fact as a natural and indisputable subject.

Most probably, everything is changeable in the world. Everyone accepts this bitter truth and has to accept it. This is the rule of nature. Those shall be regarded as successful and tactful who can make adjustments in life. Everything may not come true as one hopes either in homeland or abroad, so, it is better to have at least a minimum level of understanding and positive thoughts which can hopefully drive towards a normal life. It will be prudent to continue the *puja* practices respecting the situation then only the meaning and importance of it will be clearer. Honesty, continuity, and stability always matter in each and every sector. Therefore, if a Hindu is committed to carry on the established norms and values related with the religion, he or she can easily be happy and can contribute in the society and make happy the beings around him or her.

6.4 Cultural Diversities

As a researcher, I have previously mentioned about the various Nepalese cultures and religions. As it has been said before, Nepal is naturally a beautiful country having richer cultures, traditions, beliefs, and arts where there are different ethnic groups, different languages, different cultural dresses, and different cultural practices. Different ethnic groups have different cultural

patterns which are practiced by different castes. For example, *Rai*, *Limbu*, *Newar*,¹⁰⁹ *Tamang*, *Tharu*, *Magar*, *Gurung*, *Yadav*, *Rajbanshi* have different languages, different kind of cultural practices, and different types of cultural dresses. People from these castes have their own different languages with different alphabets. For instance, a *Rai* usually prefers to communicate in *Rai* language with another *Rai*. On the other side, *Dashnami*,¹¹⁰ *Kshetri*,¹¹¹ *Brahman*,¹¹² *Thakuri*,¹¹³ and *Dalit*¹¹⁴ have same kind of cultures, dresses, practices, traditions, and beliefs but they do not have any other different languages like *Rai*, *Yadav*, *Limbu*, and *Tharu* have. However, all the Nepalese have the common language Nepali to communicate. Hence, Nepali language is the official language in Nepal. Regarding the context, there are people from above mentioned different castes in Stavanger. Moreover, the Nepalese have a national costume in common which is named as *daura suruwal ani dhaka topi* for males and *chaubandi choli ra phariya* for females.

Figure 2: National costumes of Nepal



Source: Google photos

¹⁰⁹ Newar includes these castes Shrestha, Maharjan, Pradhan, Shakya etc.

¹¹⁰ Dashnami includes these castes Giri, Puri, Bharati, Ban, Parvat, Sagar, Saraswati, Tirtha, Ashram, and Aranya

¹¹¹ Kshetri includes these castes Karki, Khadka, Basnet, Rana, Bista etc.

¹¹² Brahman includes these castes Acharya, Koirala, Bhandari, Nepal, Aryal etc.

¹¹³ Thakuri includes Thakuri only

¹¹⁴ Dalit includes these castes Bishwakarma, Pariyar, Nepali, Musahar etc.

And in the context of Stavanger, there are mostly found people from *Brahman, Dashnami, Kshetri, Rai, Magar, and Newar* castes. The caste differences make Nepalese Hindus look different among them having various cultures, traditions, beliefs, and systems due to the fact of belonging to different ethnic groups. According to them, they can contribute to preserve their typical culture and language by talking in their own languages and wearing cultural dresses.

There might occur variations in the culture of people who even come from the same place because of the differences in caste, language, tradition, behavior, and thought. There are many scholars who have tried to define the term culture. According to the book *Understanding Cultural Diversity in Today's Complex World*,

Culture is comprised of those characteristics of human life that are different from place to place. The most apparent of all these characteristics are language, traditions, food, clothes, arts, dance, music, and sports. Other characteristics of culture are invisible such as concept of time, religion, political ideology, friendship, beauty, sin, and education to name a few.¹¹⁵

The culture is created by human beings, so it is obviously related with the human behaviors, practices, actions, and identities. But there lies the greater level of variations in each culture and sub-cultures in terms of its practices, understandings, and descriptions if one goes deeper and more thoroughly.

The project focuses more on the cultural differences in regard to Nepalese culture and the prevalent culture in Stavanger. Even if there are people from different castes having both main culture and sub-cultures, the writing gives priority to Nepalese Hindu culture as a whole. In the context of Stavanger, different groups have different way of greetings, welcoming, and behaving. Among many groups, Nepalese Hindus usually greet each other whenever they meet for the first time a day saying *namaste*, which is done by putting both palms together. Regarding the greetings, Nepalese Christians have a different way of greeting. They greet each other saying *jai Messiah*. Both ways of greetings are regarded as the respected way of greetings among the Nepalese. Here lie the religious differences.

¹¹⁵ Parvis and Leo 2013:2

Most of the Nepalese Hindus are habituated to live a collective way of lives. It is more common to visit any Hindu family without any information of your arrival. You can visit the Hindu family at any day and any time. One Hindu more often welcomes another by offering tea, coffee, snacks, meals, and lodging if you are there as a guest. Such type of trends is still carried on to some extent among the Hindus living in Stavanger and at the same time they try to adapt the Western European way of living as well. While doing so, they give priority to the individualistic way of life concentrating more on the personal activities. It seems that they are quite influenced by the norms, social relationship, cultures, values, way of living, and thoughts due to being in a multicultural city. Evaluating these activities, it can be said that the Nepalese Hindus have a positive perspective in looking at and internalizing the social atmosphere. As a result, they feel free to opine about being a Hindu and are happy to live in this multicultural city. Almost all people have good attitudes and unique experiences towards the people who come from diverse cultures. About the general understanding of local people and surrounding environment, Bibek expressed his views in this way:

In my experience, this is a more democratic country where people feel free, happy, and secured. Because of free education system, stronger economic condition, and great respect for human rights I was encouraged to come as a student. And surely I am happier to be in this multicultural city where I meet everyday more people from different parts of the world with different religious, cultural, social, economic, and political backgrounds. I see Christians go to church, Muslims go to mosque to practice the religion but I do not see any Hindus going to temple because there is no any temple in the city. And even if I try to carry on my Nepalese culture here I cannot do it hundred percent because I am highly influenced by this Western European culture. The local people here are very polite, honest, helpful, positive, and respectful towards other people, culture, and religion due to which I feel more comfortable to live and study.

Stavanger is often considered the center of oil industry in Norway and Scandinavia's largest company, Statoil, has its headquarter at Forus in Stavanger, and in addition, several international oil and gas companies' Norwegian offices are in the city. Stavanger is also home to several institutions of higher education, where the University of Stavanger is the largest. The university

offers several PhD programs including petroleum engineering and offshore technology.¹¹⁶ Since the city has such important international companies, renowned university, and Norwegian Petroleum Museum there are more people directly connected to these institutions having multicultural identities. Among them Bibek is one who enrolls as a student and tries to fit in the society hanging on both Nepalese and Norwegian culture at the same time. Considering his situation, it can be said that he is culturally in between. He loves both cultures but cannot completely carry on both at the same time. His attitude can be explained by the help of the theory of cultural hybridity.

6.5 A nexus between Hinduism and Devotees

A one-hundred kroner is just a piece of paper if there is no any utility of money and likewise Hinduism is just a vain concept if there is no any devotees to practice and follow it. The importance of every relationship will exist up to that time until both parties are involved and needed for each other. The major factor between the religion and the followers is the value and existence of each other. In this concern, it may be logical to introduce some stitching factors between Hinduism and devotees.

As one of the oldest religions, Hinduism is being followed by a huge number of people throughout the world which is possible because of firm belief, great respect, and devotion in God. The religion solely depends on daily rituals, common understanding, and *puja* practices. These activities need at least a temple, *pujari*, holy books, religious materials, images of the deities, and most importantly devotees. Fuglerud and Engebriksen (2006):

To a Hindu, on the other hand, temples constitute local centers. As noted by Jacobsen (2004 p. 142), Hinduism is a religion concerned with place. Places possess sacred power, the power to grant health and moral purity, to fulfill wishes or give *moksha* to those visiting. While most of the sacred places, for obvious historical reasons, are located in South Asia, this is not inherent in religious doctrine. New sacred spaces are still discovered or created, also outside South Asia.

¹¹⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stavanger>

This is why, the relationship between religion and devotees is just like the relationship of fish and water without the existence of one there is no existence of other. Emphasizing the temple McGilvray (1982) explains:

Furthermore, Hindu temples are mediums for creating wholes out of local hierarchical diversity. In religious thinking the different castes, in day-to-day life separated by strict rules, come together in providing separate but equally necessary services in temple ritual.¹¹⁷

Hinduism is often perceived in terms of social prestige, philanthropic activities, economic status, honesty, duty, and civilization. Like other world religions, it has also touched almost all parts of society. But some of my informants remark that there is a kind of discrimination within a Hindu community. They view that there is no one as higher and lower by birth. It seems that they are not ready to accept the concept of higher and lower caste rather they portray this so-called concept as a challenge to be a Hindu.

6.6 The role of *Karma* among the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger

In the multicultural context of Stavanger, some of my informants focus on *karma*. They conceive *karma* in terms of right action, truth, honesty, help, duty and responsibility. They give more priority to *karma* than visiting temples. According to them, it is possible to follow Hinduism even without having a temple since they perceive it as a flexible religion. In their views, God is omnipresent. So, God is there wherever we live and whatever we do. More interestingly, they seem to be influenced by a Nepalese proverb '*karma gare dharma hunchha*' which literally means '*karma* leads you towards *dharma*'. They express that one can trace the way to gods by following right action, truth, honesty, duty and helping out the helpless. On the basis of their understanding, it can be mentioned that there is no any meaning and significance of visiting religious places if one is oppressive, discriminatory, and mentally corrupted. In this regard, it seems that they are more concerned with practicality.

¹¹⁷ McGilvray 1982; in Fuglerud and Engebretsen 2006:1128

6.7 Online Hindus

Concerning the rituals, practices, and daily life it came to be known that they utilize the achievements of globalization to carry on religion. They use pictures and You Tube videos to conduct the religious activities. They are up to date about the events, news, changes, and religious practices through You Tube, Face book, e-mail, Skype , mobile, and online newspapers in regard to Nepal and their families. In the sense, globalization has a great impact on a general life, and religious as well as cultural practices of common people. Because of the easy access to internet, the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger get to know the rituals quickly and share among themselves. As the online Hindus, they get whatever they need in the internet, when they search through You Tube and Google. For instance, they can easily get the pictures of Hindu deities, ideas about rituals, religious videos, and hymns to practice their religion according to the demand of time today.

6.8 Findings

Like other academic studies, I will also underline the findings of this study. This particular discussion is based on qualitative research and field study. The Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger are at the heart of the project. Further, this study has been thoroughly concerned to figure out the deeper understanding of their life styles, opportunities, challenges, experiences, and differences in religious practices.

On a more general basis, it can be said that as a Hindu, one normally needs a temple to follow the rituals. In the present context, Hindus are able to live a general life holding the religious norms and values even without having a temple because they learn to adjust in a multicultural society. After discussing the data, it can be appropriate to use the word 'negotiate' in regard to the Nepalese Hindus. In Stavanger, they seem to negotiate with the different situation to move according to time and circumstances. Vividly, they come from a different country and society, and their religious as well as cultural background has changed from Nepal to the context of Stavanger. So, they do not have the same social atmosphere and understanding like they had in Nepal. They are quite changed now, and they are highly influenced by ideas and frameworks that we may call cultural hybridism, multiculturalism and diasporas, and globalization. In the sense, they are quite influenced by the individualistic way of living as a life style. In Stavanger, they

learn to live depending on themselves centering the personal wishes and notice no any discrimination between human beings in relation to religion, culture, behavior, and ethnic group.

For my informants, religion is a central point. Among the informants too, there are variations in identity, culture, ethnicity, language, practice, and religious activities which consist of different histories, narratives, and traditions. According to them, they call themselves to their Nepalese group as a native family in Stavanger. So, this native family can be their second family in the context. Simply, they hold a common Nepalese tradition, culture, language, religious beliefs, and identity.

Regarding the informants, there are mainly two types of interviewees having two different ideas about the same religion along with its practices. As it is discussed earlier, some solely focus temple and then *karma* to be a Hindu, but on the other hand, some even more emphasize *karma* and say that Hinduism essentially does not demand a temple to follow. They see *karma* as an important tool to follow Hinduism. Since Hinduism does not have any strict principles, it can be said that Hinduism is a flexible religion wherein, my informants also repeatedly stress on the flexibility of religion by understanding and practicing differently.

The Nepalese Hindus live, perceive, and practice their religion differently in the context of Stavanger. Even if they are adjusted culturally, socially, and religiously in this multicultural society, all of them come under the same basket of Hindu religion and its culture. In the context, Jan Hjärpe (1997) uses the term basket as a metaphor to express how religious traditions among Muslim migrants in Sweden exchange rituals and values in the majority society. This metaphor is very useful and relevant to apply on the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger, and it helps to understand and analyze the cultural, religious, and social values in the context. On the specific basis of their responses, it can be assumed that they are here with the physical body and at the same time, they are in the homeland with the mind set of Nepal. Being a Hindu, each of them is inspired by different artifacts, such as photos, You Tube videos, *karma*, and temple. Even though, they find the situation in Stavanger quite different in comparison to their homeland, they negotiate and need to negotiate among other members of the society as well as environment because they are in here for a certain period of time.

6.9 Overview

The chapter mainly consists descriptions of different and new situation and environment, religious components, meaning of *puja* practices, and relationship to the Hindu rituals and beliefs. Centrally, it attempts to examine the data on the basis of their information and researcher's participant observation. In the multicultural city, Nepalese Hindus live mutually among other members of the society. Therefore, there is both negotiation and then adjustment. In a nutshell, the chapter subtly discloses the fact that all of them find Stavanger as a better city to live, study, and work. Ultimately, it claims the finding which is "Being a Hindu in a multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway". Lastly, the next chapter will give the synopsis of the whole thesis.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

The research is principally and particularly intended to prioritize the Nepalese Hindus who are living as a minority group in Stavanger. It deals and presents some facts related to the Nepalese Hindus regarding their experiences, opportunities, challenges, understanding power, and religious as well as cultural practices in the context of multicultural Stavanger. As the context of Norway is geographically, culturally, socially, economically, and religiously different from the context of Nepal, there definitely occurs the differences in daily activities of the Nepalese people which have been thoroughly concerned in the thesis. The research objectives are directed to explore how Nepalese Hindus adjust in a multicultural city, what they think about the societal surroundings, how they interact with others, what they feel about cultural as well as religious diversities, how it is possible to practice the religion without having a temple, and how they perceive the religion among themselves. Nepalese Hindus seem to be treated as a minority group in the context of Stavanger. Therefore, the research was conducted within the Nepalese Hindu community respecting their views and interests.

In order to concretize the above mentioned research objectives, the following research questions were formulated which have been placed in the introduction chapter as well:

- How is Hinduism possible without a temple?
- How is Hinduism perceived among Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger?
- How do Hindus survive as a minority group in Stavanger?

The main answers to these questions may be formulated in the following way:

* *Karma* has been regarded as one of the workable ideas in Hinduism among the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger, which has eventually made possible to follow the religion in the lack of temple.

* All in all, Hinduism is perceived as a flexible religion among the Nepalese Hindus in Stavanger.

* And as a minority group, they are accompanied by *puja* practices, *dharma*, and annual rituals such as Dashain, fellowship, humanity, and native family in this multicultural Stavanger.

The research is descriptive by nature. And qualitative research method has been applied to gather the primary data. Both research and interview questionnaires had been carefully prepared and sent to NSD Norway to have a permission to run the research. Based on the individual interview, semi-structured interviews were conducted during the field study and field study was done in Stavanger. The interviews were conducted enthusiastically and successfully. Data were collected through participant observations and individual interviews attending different cultural festivals.

In the course of writing the thesis, theoretical approaches like cultural hybridism, multiculturalism and diasporas, and globalization have been employed to look at and analyze the data. In the same way, notes provided by the Professors at MHS and previous theses have been reviewed to gain a wider knowledge on methodological and theoretical chapters. Additionally, chapter four, 'Concerned Religion and Culture' deeply tries to describe the Hindu religion and its culture based on the reliable sources. Chronologically, the needed primary data have been presented in chapter five and then discussed thoroughly in chapter six. While presenting and discussing the data, personal views and comments have been put respectively to emphasize the issues. The information by the respondents is the primary sources for the thesis which have been verified under the relevant and reliable literature.

Regarding the findings, Nepalese Hindus have a positive perspective towards the life styles, opportunities, challenges, and religious as well as cultural differences in a multicultural city. As long as the followers have a firm belief, devotion, confidence, hope, and inclination towards unseen power, it is possible to follow Hinduism even without having a temple. Concerning the perception of religion, they have different attitudes about it. Some of them explain that they conduct rituals to continue the religion. Therefore, they feel that they are Hindus. And some of them do not look for temple and do not go for *puja* practices either, but they still feel that they are Hindus. Numerically, the Nepalese Hindus are a few, so they may feel themselves as a minority group. But outstandingly, they are found together because of Nepaliness, Nepali language, and Hindu religion.

Basically, this is the way every Nepalese Hindu individual lives a life in Stavanger. An interest and knowledge about other religion, culture, and ethnic group can make every member feel closer and better in the society. Hopefully, this thesis contributes to strengthen the society by letting know more about the Nepalese Hindus in the multicultural context of Stavanger, Norway.

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