

**THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (MHS)**



**THESIS TOPIC:**

**HINDU MARRIAGE SYSTEM: TRADITIONAL RITUALS AND THE  
IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NEPALESE  
MIGRANTS**

**THESIS FOR**

**MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES**

**SUBMITTED BY CANDIDATE:**

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## **DEDICATION**

**To My Loving Son AdarshaBikram G. C.**

## **Abstract**

. In this study, I study the perception of Nepalese migrants who are living in Norway. This is the age of globalization. In this globalized world, people from different cultures, religious background encounter each other on a greater scale than ever before. This creates opportunities for intercultural and interreligious meeting places and encounters where knowledge, practices and experiences are shared and often transformed and changed.

According to traditional marriage rituals, in Nepal, child marriages, polygamy, arrange marriage without previous consent of the boy and girl, who are about to get married, have been common practice for centuries. Further, inter- caste marriages, love marriages, and divorces have been taken as social, cultural and religious taboo. Due to globalization and modernization, Nepalese have changed their perception towards Hindu traditional marriage rituals and interpreted it more similar to what is common in their host society. The preferred age for marriage has been raised both in legal and social terms, the consent of boys and girls in the choice of their life partner has become of utmost importance, love, respect and equality between a boy and a girl is considered as a must in a sound relation, divorce has got legal acceptance and polygamy has been prohibited. However, although there have been many changes in perception, behavior, and interpretation of old marriage rituals, my findings demonstrated modern rituals are not completely accepted. To some extent, young generations, have broadened thinking about Hindu marriage rituals, at the same time, old and traditional rituals are going side by side.

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Pratiksha KCGC

Stavanger, Norway

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

I grew up in Nepal, south- Asia where religion, cultures and different ritual activities plays vital role in the life of people. I had generally enjoyable and pleasant childhood with fulfillment of every desire. In my childhood, I had attended many marriage ceremonies and enjoyed those ceremonies as a childhood festival. In those days I was totally unaware about the meaning of marriage and religion. I just took part in the ceremonies and enjoyed with my relatives, friends and family. Our whole society was totally ‘Hindu’ and every ritual was performed according to Hinduism. I didn’t see any differences in marriage rituals because of my ignorance towards other religions and rituals. And yet, as I grew older, I became aware of meaning and value of marriage rituals. I had attended many marriage rituals of my own relatives, friends and neighbors. As I participated in different marriage ceremonies, I realized that there were some differences in how they were conducted.

Globalization ‘refers to social links between people located at points anywhere on the earth’ (Scholte, 2005: 61). A tide of globalization and migration of people around the earth have changed the marriage rituals, norms, values and attitudes. The worldwide spread of internet, mass media and improvement in education and status of women has directly affected those norms and values. The younger generation has got the right to choose their life partner and they have the tendency to post pone or avoid initial family formation (Yang and Lu, 2010: 131).

The changes in marriage ritual have created a kind of inner motivation to learn more about the diversities in marriage rituals in Hinduism, and to understand how and why rituals and the interpretation of them change, I asked my elders, grandparents, parents and other people of the societies. I tried to know more about the marriage rituals, how marriage rituals change due to globalization with the help of Nepalese migrants and their perception towards traditional marriage rituals and modern marriage rituals, holy books, television and other sources like internet and books. I wanted to know how they perceive those Hindu marriage rituals and how much they are involved and what is the significance of marriage rituals in their lice. It has created a kind of inner enthusiasm in me and I chose this topic as my research. I found different kinds of marriage rituals inside Hinduism: “Brahma marriage, Daiba marriage, Arsha Marriage,



Prajaptya Marriage, AsuhraMarriage,Gandharb Marriage, Rakshsa Marriage and Paishach Marriage” (Subedi, 2010: 9,10). In addition, I have tried to understand the essence of marriage in Hinduism. ‘Marriage is considered to have been divinely ordained as a pious and sacred duty’ (Majupurias, 2009: 6). Further, I have been especially interested in trying to learn more about what is Hindu marriage ritual in Nepal and among Nepalese Migrants? I have found some differences and changes in the marriage ritual and peoples’ perception about the marriage rituals which seems to be connected with the time and places changes.

Nepal is a patriarchal country where Hinduism is the main religion. Now it has become secular but the main religion is still Hinduism. In Nepal, I had interacted with so many people from different cultures, societies and religion and came to know some new and common objectives about the marriage and married life among educated and uneducated people. When I came to Norway, I have interacted with so many people who have same and different nationalities, religions and cultures. As a Nepali, I have a unique view of my own culture and religion as well as rituals beyond the borders. Here, I become more interested and attracted to know the diversities in religion, cultures and ritual activities with the diversities in nationalities.

Among multicultural and multi - religious as well as multi-nationalities of people, my main concern of research is Nepalese Hindu people who are living in Norway. I am interested in studying the perception of Nepalese Hindu about the traditional and modern marriage rituals and the changes they are undergoing in this globalized world.

Through this introduction, I just want to give some important glimpse of Nepal, Nepalese society, religion and marriage rituals in traditional and modern way. In this chapter I want to introduce my research problem, its relevance, the research situation and my research design.

## **1.2 Research Overview**

There are a lot of researches have been done about marriage in Hinduism like; ‘Developmental Idealism and Changing models of marriage’ byJulie A. J. de Jong, Dirgha J. Ghimire, ArlandThornton,University of Michigan and Lisa D. Pearce University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and ‘Negotiating marriage in Nepal and Brideprice and Untouchable Women’s Work’ by Mary Cameron. In those researches, the main focus is about the whole marriage system of Nepalese society. But my research has different purpose where I want to explore the

perception towards Hindu marriage rituals in both (traditional and modern) way of Nepalese Migrants who are living in Norway. This research will provide the information about Hindu traditional marriage rituals are changing with the wide spread of globalization and how those changes are perceived by Nepalese migrants and how they interpreted those changes with the proper findings which can be helpful for further research in this subject matter.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Today's world is getting more globalized day by day and its effects are seeing in every culture, religion and ritual activities. The main concern of this research writing is to find out the changes in marriage rituals and how people perceive and interpret the meaning of these rituals and change in significance. This research aims to analyze and discuss the contemporary changes in traditional marriage rituals and its significance with the help of different Nepalese migrants who are living in Norway and are from Hindu background. In order to address this overarching problem, my research writing is aimed to answer the following research questions:

- ❖ What is Hindu Traditional marriage?
- ❖ What are the major determinants for Hindu marriage rituals?
- ❖ What kinds of changes are underway in the traditional marriage rituals among the Hindus? What are the reasons for the changes?
- ❖ How do Nepalese migrants perceive the changes in marriage rituals and interpret the meaning and significance of marriage rituals?

### **1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This research reflects the different viewpoints of Nepalese migrants who are living in Norway towards the Hindu marriage rituals and the changes which are undergoing with the encounter of different cultures and religions. Changes in Hindu marriage rituals are comprehensive issue and I am trying to get the perception of Nepalese migrants about the changes. This research doesn't reveal the complex and broader issues like interplay of gender, sexuality, etc. which can impress negatively upon the traditional rituals and the people who are not in favor of changes according to the time. The impact of cultural globalization and modernization for the change of traditional

marriage rituals is considered. I expect this research will reveal both, positive and negative, aspects of globalization. In this research I put some factors about the changes in Hindu marriage in the context of Nepalese migrants. This study is fully focused towards Nepalese migrant's ideas, actions, and perceptions, how someone is reacting and interpreting the significance of marriage rituals with the changes that are occurring in contemporary time.

### **1.5 Research Design and Organization of Thesis**

The main target of this research is to highlight and explore the changes in traditional Hindu marriage rituals due to globalization. Primary and Secondary data are applied to give the answer of research questions. Out of many research methods within qualitative research method, I chose interviews, and more specifically semi-structured interviews and group interviews. Primary data was collected through the fieldwork in Stavanger and Oslo by interviews, some observation and through group discussion about the subject matter with Nepalese migrants, both married and unmarried people. Secondary data used are relevant books, texts, documents, journals, documents and internet resources. All the data will be analyzed and evaluated thoroughly and the new outcome will be presented.

In this research writing, the main purpose is to know how Hindu people perceive marriage with the encounter of other culture and religions. This research will be of total six chapters. I will elaborate on my methodological framework and main method in chapter 2. In chapter 3, I elaborate on the main theoretical perspectives used in the thesis. In this chapter I introduce ritual theory, globalization theory and modernization theory. I will put forward the concept of social relation, dialogues to the concept of theoretical approaches. In chapter 4, I will give an introduction to Hinduism, the significance of marriage ritual in Nepalese context and the perception towards the meaning and significance of marriage rituals in traditional and modern context. In chapter 5, I will present the data collected through interviews and I will interpret and analysis critically In chapter 6, I will discuss the construction of society, religion and values about the marriage rituals as well as the construction of identity. The last chapter will be of conclusion where I summarize my findings, and suggest avenues for the further research.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of globalization and modernization in the traditional and modern Hindu marriage rituals among Nepalese migrants- attitudes, behaviors, way of life, experiences. To explore such things, this study requires qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research method is a suitable method for researching about people, organizations, institutions and their feeling, emotions, behavior and lived experiences. It gives the perception and interpretation of informants about the subject matter and helps the researcher to find out own finding and creates a new way for further research. Patton (2002) says that qualitative research method uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in content specific settings where the researcher becomes unable to manipulate the phenomenon. In this section of my research includes brief description of the methodological tool, research sites, informants and research ethics, reliability and validity of research.

### **2.2 Choice of Qualitative Research Method:**

The choice of method in any research writing depends upon the subject matter of the research writing, its purpose and what kind of information that the researcher wants to generate through the research writing.

I have mentioned earlier that qualitative research emphasizes the investigation of natural setting and human attitude, behavior, value, their thoughts, action and so on. In this method, detailed data are gathered through the direct interaction with people through the open-ended questions. Though it doesn't have statistical representation of the phenomenon, it has richness in understanding of the informants about the subject matter. It is flexible and opens possibilities to go deeper into the subject matter to highlight and explore the questions/ the issues under discussion. It opens up many different perspectives on the same issue with the help of different informants.

Qualitative research method is unique in its nature because of its powerful and sensitive method to record the real experience and meaning of subjects in this real world with real people. The major purpose of this research method is capturing the perspectives of participants in the field.

This research also covers the social, cultural, religious, institutional and environmental condition of the informants which they perceived in their day to day lives (Yin 2011: 8).

Qualitative research method may help the researcher to develop new concept with the help of different informants in one society or n different societies with different cultures and religious perspectives. Miller G. and Dingwall R. states ‘its quality lies in the power of its language to display a picture of the world in which we discover something about ourselves and our common humanity’ (9). This statement shows that qualitative research has the potential to disclose the hidden reality in the society or the world with the help of different participants and researchers. Qualitative research method helps to understand the meaning of phenomenon and to generate the hypothesis.

In this research, I want to understand the views of Nepalese migrants, how they feel about the marriage ritual in Hinduism and how they perceive those things living in another context. I want to explore what is the most important thing for them and why as well as how they perceive the meaning and significance of marriage rituals the traditional values and modern values. To explore the reality of this change in marriage rituals, I need to study the human behavior, their perception about the subject of research. This qualitative research method digs the deeper reality in the different fields and generates deeper meaning and understanding of previous human experiences. Therefore this is the best method to provide opportunity to the Nepalese Migrants to express their view, perceptions, values and total experience of married and unmarried life in other country. By considering above all qualities of qualitative research method, I have employed this method as a basic tool to collect primary data collection for my research writing. According to Catherine and Gretchen (2011), ‘Qualitative research methodologies have become increasingly important modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied field such as education, regional planning, health science, community development, and management’ (1). This statement shows that the importance and use of qualitative research method in different fields of study.

### **2.3 The Informants/ Respondents**

In this study, I had interviewed 5 couples and 7 single informants as Nepalese Hindu marriage rituals, their role in marriage system and the difference in traditional Hindu marriages and

modern marriage structures. All the informants have been coded and kept anonymous for their security. I have selected married and unmarried people for the interview because I wanted to know the perception of married people and unmarried people about the traditional and modern Hindu marriage rituals. Not only the perception but I wanted to know how they interpret those rituals according to the time and what the significance of marriage in their lives is, how they feel to be married and unmarried. I recruit them through the cultural functions held in Stavanger and had personal relation as well as friendly relation.

## **2.4 Data Collection Methods:**

Qualitative research method is not only about what people say and do rather it is an opportunity to the researcher to see, hear and find out how the people live out their daily lives and what they do in reality (Tracy 2013:5). Data collection is a process in qualitative research method where a researcher gathers the information as much as possible about the subject of interest and measures it to test the hypothesis and discovers an outcome with the help of research questions, interviews, participant observation, focus group discussion etc. Qualitative data provide insight into the cultural activities that might be missed in other structured research methods. This research is the way to uncover some salient features that can be useful and studied in other structured methods (Tracy 2013:5). The selection of suitable data collection depends upon the purpose and field of the study. Considering all the implications and usefulness of data collection, I have applied semi-structured interview and group discussion as primary data collection method for my research writing. These data that I have collected with the help of respondents give the information about informants' perception towards the marriage rituals and how they describe the changes in the contemporary time.

### *2.4.1 Semi Structured Interview*

Qualitative research interview requires an extensive knowledge of the theme of the subject matter where the interviewer becomes sensitive to the minor distinction of meanings expressed by the participants in different contexts into which the meaning may enter (Kvale 1996:49). This is a conversation between and among the researcher and participants in to the field. The questionnaires are open- ended and semi structured where the informants are free to put their views and perceptions about the subject matter. Miller and Dingwall state, "An interview is a

point at which order is deliberately put under stress. It is a situation in which respondents are required to demonstrate their competence in the role in which the interview casts them” (Miller and Dingwall, :58). In an interview the interviewer choose the informants and gathers information for the help of research writing. There are a lot of interview processes such as structures, not structured/unstructured, snowball, semi-structured methods of data collection. Among them, I have selected semi-structured interview as a primary source of data collection. The reason for this is that I could get the information that is required for my findings of my research writing.

Semi-structured interviews are open and more flexible towards the informants. It allows the informants to contribute their ideas and viewpoints about the subject matter. It is a way of informal conversation between the researcher and the participants with open-ended questions. To get the insight into Hindu marriage rituals and its changes according to the process of globalization and modernization, I, as a researcher, had used mainly ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions in the field work.

To capture the views, opinions, feelings, and experiences of the informants, I had prepared an interview guide consisting of 18, and 13 questions for two different groups, respectively; married women/men and unmarried women/men. Almost all the questions were open-ended and addressed Nepalese’s biographies (Name, age, sex), faith, culture, experiences and perceptions about the culture and the religion within Hinduism, with a special focus on marriage rituals (traditional and modern). What they had experience before and interpreted the meaning and significance of marriage rituals and how they are taking in contemporary time with the encounter of different cultures and religious activities. In some cases, I had to reformulate the questions and clarify them, because the informants did not understand what I meant with the original question.

#### *2.4.2 Group Discussion*

Group discussion (GD) means talking about some or different topics in a group. It is a methodology or an interview process or a group activity where a group of candidates talk about a topic or a situation and the interviewer makes comparative study by taking their viewpoints (<http://www.freshersworld.com/interview/group-discussion>). Group discussion is a method from

where the interviewer gets so many ideas from many and different informants with comparative study and make a report which helps to get conclusion for the research writing. I tried to collect the perception and interpretation of marriage and significance and the meaning of marriage with the help of group discussion among the Nepalese migrants who are Hindu. From the group discussion, I have gathered more information about the marriage rituals of Hinduism. The group discussion had been conducted as an informal talking where every candidate could give his/her experiences and perspectives freely. In the group discussion, 5 boys and 1 girl (all Married) were the participants. All had some experience about marriage rituals with their childhood and they perceived the changes in rituals through the recall of past weddings. The group discussion was interesting and informative where I got chance to know more about Hindu marriage rituals in traditional as well as modern with the different perceptions of participants.

## **2.5 Secondary Data Sources**

Primary data are directly collected by the researcher through interviews, questionnaires, observation, focus groups, and many other methods to examine the research problems. Only primary data are not enough to examine those research problems of my research writing and to find a relevant finding and create a predicate conclusion. Therefore secondary data sources are also needed. Secondary data are generally collected by books, journals; internet sources to support the research and find the outcome of the research. These data are more useful to provide deeper insight towards the subject matter of the research writing.

The secondary data are used to support the data collected by the semi- structured interviews with Nepalese migrants. I also use the secondary data sources to learn more about marriage rituals and globalization. The previous researches and the theory of globalization and modernity for the changes of marriage rituals will support to find out the proper and valiant outcome in this research writing. To support the research, pictures and other needed sources are taken from internet sources and other previous research.

## **2.6 Reliability and Validity of Research**

While doing qualitative research, the researcher should strive to create valid and reliable data and give valid analysis in his or her writings. To make a reliable research, every researcher should



made the research process 'transparent' through the description of the research strategy and with sufficient and detailed manner of data analysis method. The researcher also should pay attention towards the 'theoretical transparency' by making explicit the theoretical stance with the interpretation and show how this produces particular interpretations (Silverman 2011:360).

Kvale and Brinkmann argue about the meaning of reliability and validity of research, 'validity refers to the truth; the correctness and strength of the statement while reliability refers to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings' (2009: 241-243). The researcher must be aware about authenticity of data from the field as well as other sources to reach a proper and trustworthy research finding.

Some researchers argue about the high reliability and validity in qualitative research method. Kirk and Miller argue,

Qualitative researchers can no longer afford to beg the issue of reliability. While the forte of the field research will always lie in its capability to sort out the validity of propositions, its results will (reasonably) go ignored minus attention to reliability. For reliability to be calculated, it is incumbent on the scientific investigator to document his or her procedure.

(1986: 72)

To make a trustworthy analysis of research writing, the researcher must be considered the elements like credibility, validity and reliability of the data which he or she collects through different ways of data collection. The researcher should always be careful to create an accurate, valid and reliable result from his or her research writing.

In this research writing also, I as a researcher have manipulated the elements of reliability and validity to minimize the risk of getting low reliable and valid data to get the accurate findings to my research writing from the created hypothesis and research problems. The data from interviews, group discussion, journals and other secondary materials have been used to support the validity and reliability of research. I am totally aware towards the transparency, consistency,

authenticity and accuracy of data collection. I am open about method and way to analysis to get the proper and equivalent finding of this research writing.

## **2.7 Data Analysis and Translation**

To get the proper and correct conclusion, data analysis plays a vital role in qualitative research method. Auerbach and Silverstein state, “Qualitative research is research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon” (2003: 4). For this research writing, primary data are collected through the field research and the secondary data will be collected through the journals, books and internet which are connected with my research writing. First of all, I have to identify the important and common themes which I had collected through the interview. After this, I have located and highlighted the fundamental parts of the interviews which are directly connected to my research questions through which I could generate the expected result of my research. There are so many researches are done about Hindu marriages and those researches will help me to get the proper and reliable information to analysis my research problems. The information from my respondents will help me to know the perception and their interpretation about the significance of rituals towards the traditional rituals and modern rituals which are changing with the wide spread of globalization and modernity throughout the world.

Generally, Data transcription is an important part of research writing. In my research writing, data translation is also an important. After collection the audio, video recordings and taking formal and informal interviews, the researcher should translate the data for the support of research writing. I, as a researcher, take the interviews mostly in my native language that is Nepali and I translated into English as much as honestly. While translating the data, I have located the important quotes of the informants in my own native language. In some cases, I couldn't get the exact English words and phrases and I tried to make some synonyms words and phrases for the support. Though, translation of data was challenging, I have completed it successfully as much as I could do.

## **2.8 Research Ethics**

Research ethics helps to establish the moral standard for the conduct of research. Ethics is defined as ‘method, procedure or perspective for deciding how to act and for analyzing complex

problems and issues'.<sup>1</sup> Ethics talks about the rights and responsibilities of researcher and moral decision about what is good and what is bad for the research writing as well as about the informants. To avoid the errors, explore the truth, respect the social responsibility, build public support and honor the human rights and values of society, research ethics must be followed. If the researcher neglects the research ethics, ruins the value and dignity of a research work. The researcher should know the language of right and wrong about his/her research writing. As a researcher, I valued research ethics and try to go according those rules.

Before interviewing, I gave complete information about my research writing and its purpose with every participant. A written agreement was done with those participants by signing the consent form with the detail about the confidentiality, researcher's right to publish the interview as a whole, informant's right etc.

Secondly, respecting about the anonymity of the informants, I agreed to protect the identities in my research writing. I assured that all the data that are collected from different informants will be stored in my personal computer which no one can excess. All the data are anonymous and will be deleted after the completion of research writing in August 2014. I have respected about the feelings of every informant at the time of interview. I try to present the collected material as fruitful as possible and in analysis, I will do careful analysis with the anonymity of informants.

## **2.9 My Role as a Researcher**

A researcher is a person who takes the responsibility to find something new in a research through the interaction with the informants in the field. In qualitative research method, the researcher collects primary data and secondary data through the field and books and addresses through his writing. The role of a researcher is defined through the relationship he/she plays in the field according to the subject. For the effective findings, the researcher agrees to the subject matter and organized the meetings with the participants to get more and valuable information. The researcher collects as much as information from the field through the recordings, highlighting actions and capturing words directly from the informants (Yin, 2011:159).

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<sup>1</sup>Resnik, David "What is Ethics in Research and why is it Important?" accessed on January 20, 2014 at [http:// www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis)

I had collected my research data in two different cities of Norway with both married and unmarried men/women who were Hindu with their religion. I am a Hindu and of Kshetri caste from Nepal. I am studying Master Level in Misjonshogskolen, Stavanger, Norway. I am living here for one year and I met Nepalese migrants and found changes according to the place. I feel some difference in the understanding and with different participants who were from different caste and from different level of education. Therefore, I picked the informants using snowball method from different caste with different level of education. Some informants were from Brahman caste (the upper level caste), some were from Kshetri (second level caste) and some were from lower level. All the caste level has their own dignity and prestige in the society. The old generation had some low educational level and most of the new generation had the higher educational level. I am living in Norway only for one year and I had a relation with the Nepalese as a Nepali means as an outsider. To get proper information, I need to develop a personal relation with the participants as an open, honest, and I should clarify about my purpose of research. As a researcher, I made an influence in the mind of participants which was positive through the trust and openness with them. Besides this, I shared my personal experience to make a cozy environment and tried to know the experience of those participants with informal talk also. I tried my best in the field work to collect more valid and reliable data from the participants.

As a researcher, I found a lot of positive and negative things about the Hindu marriage systems and the effects of globalization in new generations. I found the positive influence of globalization in the low level educated people and orthodox viewpoints on the higher level educated people.

The informants whom I have interviewed were mostly graduate, job holders as well as students. Some of them are from high caste that is Brahman and some are from other caste like Chhetri and some are from indigenous group. These informants are from different caste system and different educational level and have different perception towards the changes in marriage rituals. I have interviewed mostly the males and they feel some difficulties to talk to me because I am a female. After some informal conversation they feel better and give the information in open way. One female was newly married and she became shy while I asked about the feeling of marriage. Some informants who was middle aged got confused about my questions and I elaborate the question in simple and easier way. After that she gave her perception in open way.

## Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspective

### 3.1 Introduction

In order to understand any changes in the society, culture, religions and other sectors ,the researcher should know the factors that are affecting the society, culture, religion, identity, religious ideologies etc.

Religious ideologies however ‘other worldly’ they appear, inform social practices and have a mobilizing ‘practical’ impact on society. They organize men and women into action, win ‘hearts and minds’... religious ideologies are *both* the medium in which collective ideological social solidarities are constructed and the means through which ideological conflict and difference is pursued.

(Hindu Diaspora: 66)

In this theory chapter, I, as a researcher, am going to talk about the ritual theory and its effect in Hindu marriage system (traditional and modern). How ritual is perceived and performed in different land by the immigrants. I also have applied globalization theory in relation to transnationalism and migration of this contemporary society. The theoretical perspectives that I have chosen for this research are portraying the subtle expression of ritual perspectives of migrants toward the traditional and modern marriage activities. The theories illustrate the interconnected nature between Nepalese society and foreign society where they migrated and give a closer look towards the changing processes in the contemporary time. To support the ritual theory I will take the help of Catherine bell’s book *Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions* and to support the globalization theory I will take Arjun Apadhurai’s *Modernity at Large* as well as Steven Vertovec’s *Transnationalism* as the main writers as well as I will take the help of other theorists.

### 3.2 Ritual Theory

In this section I will give the introduction to what a ritual is, the significance of rituals and the relationship between ritual and meaning. Ritual is taken ‘as a category of human experience, coming to see it a more basic than beliefs and integral to the social dimensions of religion’ (Bell, 1992:15). Ritual helps to hold the religion, society and culture together. It ties the society and

culture with the religion which remains in the society. Ritual includes the integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos. Ritual is defined as a feature of enthusiasm towards the society, culture, and religion. “Ritual is consistently depicted as mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of socio- cultural integration, appropriation, or transformation” (Bell, 1992: 16). Ritual brings transformation in the society, culture and religion with cultural integration. Ritual means the tradition of religious communities which have different worships, rites and sacraments. Different religious communities have their own rituals and those rituals are changing faster and gradually according to the change in time. Ritual is such a thing which is interconnected with human, society and culture. Human has some beliefs and ritual according to the culture and society and may not accept both at a same time. Catherine Bell takes the argument of Edward Shils who argues, “Beliefs could exist without rituals; rituals, however, couldn’t exist without beliefs” (Bell, 1992:19). This statement shows that one might accept the beliefs of the society, culture rather it is not necessary he/she should accept the rituals associated with that society and culture. Religious belief and rituals are two parts of society. Religious beliefs are representations that express the nature of sacred things and rituals are ‘rules of conduct’ which governs the human and teaches how they should act in the presence of sacred objects (Bell, 1997: 24).

Modern people are taking rituals as harmless process or takes as meaningless performances. Though modern people have such opinion about rituals, in most of the societies, rituals play a central role. Rituals ‘are multilayered transactions in which speech and behavior are socially prescribed’ (Paul, 2009: 82). Rituals are the sources which try to maintain the social order in human communities with the help of social and religious norms and maintain relationship among the people to form families, and communities. “Rituals give visible expression to the deep cultural norms that order the way people think, feel, and evaluate their worlds. They give public expression to the moral orders that people believe was created by gods, defined by the ancestors, or instituted by the culture’s heroes when they taught people to be civilized and human” (Ibid). In any human communities rituals remains in different social ceremonies because it is a kind of deep beliefs, feelings and values of society and culture where the people grow and remain.

### *3.2.1 Marriage as Ritual*

The rituals and ceremonies surrounding marriage in most cultures are associated primarily with fecundity and validate the importance of marriage for the continuation of a clan, people, or society. They also assert a familial or communal sanction of the mutual choice and an understanding of the difficulties and sacrifices involved in making what is considered, in most cases, to be a lifelong commitment to and responsibility for the welfare of spouse and children (<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/366152/marriage/4638/Marriage-rituals>).

Marriage ceremonies are taken as a religious order which include symbolic rites which are thought to compare the good fortune for the couple for their further life as well as child rearing and offer of gifts to the married couple are the significant part of the marriage rituals (Ibid).

‘Certainly the most obvious rituals are those activities that form part of a tradition or cannon of rites, be it religious or secular’ (Bell, 1997: 91). Ritual activities are not always same because it changes according to the circumstances and becomes situational that depends upon itself. Rituals are not fixed and a matter of what is selected to be done and how it is done in particular situations (Ibid). Ritual is dependent upon the system how that cultural notion acts. The degree of ritualization that one invokes and the degree to which one does so by appealing the tradition of formality, among other features, reveals some of the strategies by which such actions work in their world (Bell: 1997: 92).

Catherine Bell mentions that in many cultures, marriage ceremonies are the procedure of adulthood or even first intercourse (94). In most of the cultures and religions there remain minor and major ritual events which give them identity among other cultures and religions. In the following, I am going to talk only about Hinduism and marriage as a ritual. In Hinduism, rites are known as samskaras (purification) and it varies with geographic, linguistic, or caste differences. Samskara does not mean only purify rather it means transform and progressive refine of actions for the better rebirth and final release from the cycle of life (Bell, 1997: 99).

Marriage in Hinduism is considered as the most important samskara (ritual) in the family as well as in the society. It is thought as the important transformation in persons who are involved in this samskara. It is said that marriage ‘completes the body of male’ that brings the male into the formal status in house holding activities. For a girl it is a transformation in her physical identity,

remaking her into a member of her husband's family as well as 'half body' of her husband. Marriage samskara joins two separate bodies into a single (Ibid).

Marriage rituals differ from one local to another in Nepal. Though it has differences, all localities include a Brahman priest who guides the couple and hymns through the whole ceremony and builds a sacred fire for the marriage process. The bride and bridegroom take each other's hand and make circle seven times around the fire. Each circle have different vow for the better future, such as fertility, wealth, and devotion of bride and bridegroom. The groom puts vermilion powder (sindur) and necklace (mangalsutra) around her neck that signifies a married woman (Bell: 1997: 99,100).

Catherine Bell mentions, "the power of traditionalism is rooted in the dominance of certain social classes, the symbolic power of cultural ideals, or even the need in modern life for the means to render contradictory experiences coherent" (1997:148). Traditionalism is already rooted in those rituals that it affects directly or indirectly to the ritual activities that are taking place in the societies.

### *3.2.2 Role of Religion in Marriage Ritual*

This research is mainly related to Hindu marriage system traditional as well as modern. That is why, the main concern is on Hindu marriage rituals and I am giving focus on Hindu religion and its role in marriage ritual. "Hindu marriage is a combination of rituals and traditions that not only joins the lives of the bride and the groom but also creates a strong bond between two families" (Onedera, p-120). Marriage is not only union between two persons but also the connection between two families of same religion, caste, and same egalitarian society which creates a good network of relationship on the society. According to the Hindu scripture, marriage is such a sacred duty that performs a religious duty (dharma) and contributes to the family and lineage. Marriage is a kind of lifelong commitment between bride and groom as well as two families. To make a successful, prestigious and healthy married life, the person is expected to compromise and adjust in the married life (Onedera, 2008: 119, 120).

Hindu marriage (Vivah) is a very important ritual activity as well as formality through which an individual has to go in his or life and start of Grihasthasram (householder's life). Marriage is taken as sacred union between a man and a woman through the journey of life. It is an obligatory



process for every individual and a way to continue the family for future. Among the south Asian societies, arrange marriages are considered as pious and sacramental ritual unions and customary norm in the societies for centuries. Parents have the lead role in the societies for the marriages. According to the culture, education, caste of family, freedom for selection of life partner is considered (ibid).

### **3.3 Globalization and Glocalization**

#### *3.3.1 Introduction*

Globalization is the most focused topic in contemporary world. The world is becoming more globalized day by day and the changes are taking place in every field. With the changes in social activities, marriage ceremonies are also changing and taking new form. The old and traditional identities of rituals are also changing which have some negative as well as positive effect in the societies, culture and religion.

‘Globalization is the intensification of worldwide social relation which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens, 1990: 64). Globalization affects the culture, religion of one locality because this modern world is interconnected. One change in one culture and religion and other activities directly affects the other through the widespread of mass media and internet.

Because of globalized world in every field, every society is trying to produce their own version of myths, rituals and legends as well as expressions that the traditional activities are disappearing which were the soul of the ordinary social life. Arjun Apadhurai argues,

“Individuals even in the most simple societies have found the space to refigure their social lives, live out proscribed emotional states and sensations, and see things that have then spilled over into their sense of ordinary life” (5).

Globalization is the outcome of this modern world. Modern society is connected to every culture, religion, ritual because of globalized world. Simple and ordinary societies, rituals, are also coming towards the mainline from the margin. They are creating own identity and space in this modern globalized world. Arjun Apadhurai states, ‘Modernity belongs to that small family of theories that both declares and desires universal applicability for itself’ (Apadhurai, 1996: 1).

Modernity is a social phenomenon. Modernization affects the culture, religion and creates new identities in relation to other cultures and religions.

Glocalization is a mixture of globalization and localization. It combines the idea of globalization in relation to local consideration. It is the adaptation of a product or service in local culture. It refers to 'a concept to describe individual, group, organization, product or service that reflects not only global standard but also local one' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glocalization>).

### *3.3.2 The Role of Globalization in Religion and Rituals*

Today's world is globalized in every way and what happens in one part of world could potentially affect the whole world. Because of mass media information is spread immediately, globalization has challenged every notion of religion, rituals and other activities happening in the society. Contemporary world is becoming secular day by day and it has taken changes in the social and cultural values as well as rituals and creating a kind of bond all over the world. In the 'traditional' societies, religion has a strong and central place, but in these modern 'secular' societies, religion has become marginal and weaker. Secularization has created a kind of relation towards the dominance of moral-ethical values of divine powers and ritual with the emergence of 'lay authority over clerical authority' and 'the privatization of spirituality' (Bell 1997: 198). Otnes and Lowrey takes the notion of Bell and say that globalization 'has challenged the notion that the wedding rituals are unchanging traditions where people see themselves as transmitting or responding to local customs' (Otnes and Lowrey, 2011: 126).

In this globalized world, mostly western culture is directly and indirectly affecting other rituals of the world. People try to copy other's religion, culture and marriage ceremonies. In this globalized world, people encounter with different cultures, religions and attend different ritual ceremonies. From such gathering, an individual learns new thing and tries to compare and differentiate with own tradition and rituals. From such activities he/she tries to catch something new and apply in their own religion and culture which brings a kind of movement in that religion and rituals. Because of globalization, we can see the growth in number of mixed marriages worldwide (Ibid). Globalization has challenged the traditional marriages and generating new marriage systems with the changes in this modern society. Globalization can be taken as the westernization in cultures and religions also. People are trying to copy and create change in their

ritual and religious activities because of western cultures. ‘Spreading westernization and increased individualism have contributed to racial, religious, and ethnic tolerance, which also results in diversity in marital relationship’ (Ibid).

### **3.4 Religion and Migration**

Migration is one of the most important aspects of globalization. “Growing multidimensional diversity, increasing social complexity and migrant transnationalism are being broadly acknowledged as ordinary, or at least unavoidable, facets of contemporary, globalized society” (Vertovec 2009:158). This contemporary society is globalized in such a way that people are migrating for the sake of education, living styles, for the jobs and many other facilities and for the better future of themselves and for their upcoming generations. Such transformations are substantial in the developing ‘south’ towards the developed ‘west’, ‘north’ and ‘east’ (Ibid).

Many migrants feel that they live like in a diaspora in a foreign land. To get out of diasporic feeling, many find help in religion (Ibid). Religion and culture becomes their main tool to create the identity in the community where they live. Here, ritual activities such as marriage become important. Religion is one of the salient features for migrants. Religious gathering gives homely environment to the migrants and get relief from the diasporic feeling about the culture and religious practices. This helps to create a kind of religious environment in other’s country which reinforces the migrants to share their experiences and their history. Migrants feel some changes in their ritual activities and other day to day activities in other’s country and they suffer from pluralism with ‘migration’, ‘minority’ and ‘transnationalism’ which has dynamics of religious transformation (Vertovec 2009:128).

“Globalization is not viewed as essentially economic or political or socio-cultural or environmental. Rather, it is viewed as all of these, taking the form of multiple, complex, messy proximities and interconnections’ (Vervotec 2009:2).” Globalization is the way through which the perception towards the other cultures, religions, and rituals can be changed. Transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization and it preceded ‘the nation’ (vervotec 2009:3).

## Chapter Four: Background of Hinduism, Hindu Marriages in Nepal

### 4.1 A Brief Introduction to Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. 'Hinduism is often characterized as belief in reincarnation (Samsara) determined by the law that all actions have effects (karma), and that salvation is freedom from this cycle' (Flood, 1996: 6). It is known for its plethora of gods and goddesses as well as polytheistic religious tradition. Polytheistic religious tradition means worship and belief in more than one god. There are multiple gods and goddesses; more than 3000 million and many Hindus adhere these multiple gods and goddesses. Multiplicity and diversity in gods and goddess are found in Hindu scriptures.

Now, in modern times, Hinduism is known as *Sanatan Dharma*, which means eternal or imperishable religion. Hinduism is mostly based on divine laws where god is truth as well as at the center. Though there are diversities in the belief towards multiple gods and goddesses, the Hindus have some common beliefs towards the scriptures. Hinduism is rich in its scriptures like 'Vedas', 'Upanisads', 'Bhagwat Gita', 'Ramayan' etc. These scriptures are the collection of ancient writings where we can find the values, rites and rituals of Hinduism (Narayanan, 2010).

Many Hindu holy texts and practices are intended to provide the devotee with spiritual paths to liberation from the repeated cycle of life and death, many other aspects of Hindu life and ritual do not lead directly to such transformation, but are perceived to enhance one's quality of life on earth.

(Narayanan, Vasudha, 2010:9)

The diversity in Hinduism is not similar to other religious traditions.

The reason for this claim of diversity is that Hinduism has no founder figure or fundamental event, no universally accepted canon of texts, no credal statement and no overarching institutional structure. There is no single source of authority that universally applies to all Hindus for all times.

(Jacob, 2010:6)

There are thousands of gods and goddesses in Hinduism and they are worshipped for different purposes. Hinduism has its various cultures and traditions with diversities in roots and it has no single founder. The central founder of this 'Brahmanda' (Universe) is 'Trinity' in Hinduism. Trinity includes Bramha, Vishnu and Maheswora (Shiva) – the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer respectively.

'Dharma' and 'Moksha' are the two most important concepts in Hinduism. Dharma is connotation of righteousness, law, duty, justice, morality and religion. 'Dharma indicates all the things that sustain and hold together creation at cosmological, social and individual levels, adharma implies chaos' (Jacobs, Stephen, 2010: 15). The literal meaning of 'Moksha' is liberation from the cycle of life and death that every soul of Hindu believers should undergo and repeated endlessly until the soul gets liberation from this physical world to the state of bliss (Nayaran, 2010: 9).

Hinduism has been flourished all over the world. In Hinduism 'Brahman', an upper caste, takes the place of 'god' and Brahman is the way to reach and worship for gods and goddesses. All the old scriptures about Hinduism are composed in 'sanskrit' language and in contemporary time, all those scriptures are translated into different languages like English, Nepali, Hindi etc and people from different religions and parts of the world can easily read the texts and know about Hinduism. The symbol of Hindu religion is **AUM (ॐ)**. This is the sacred sound for Hindus and every prayer and worships towards gods and ritual activities start with this sound (Sue, 1995:6, 7).

#### **4.2 Nepal and Hinduism**

Nepal is a country with diversity in religion, culture and atmosphere. It is divided into three secrions: Himalayas (Mountains), Pahad (Hills), and Terai (Plain). Nepal was a Hindu kingdom until 2006. Hinduism is the major and dominant religion of Nepal. According to the 2011 census, near about 81.3% Nepalese people were identified as Hindus ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism\\_in\\_Nepal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism_in_Nepal)). On the may 18, 2006, after the king restored parliament, the government of Nepal announced Nepal as a secular state rather than a Hindu Kingdom. All the citizens and religion has got equal right all over the country (<http://atheism.about.com/b/2006/09/01/nepal-now-a-secular-state-not-hindu-kingdom.htm>).

This shows the changes not only one thing but in every aspects of life with the wide spread of globalization and modernization.

### **4.3 Hindu Marriages in Nepal**

Nepal was a Hindu kingdom until 2006. Hinduism is the major religion of Nepal. Even though, the majority of Nepalese in Nepal are Hindus, marriage rituals differ. There is a diversity of rituals in same religion. Though the essence of marriage is same all over the country, the rituals, systems are different according to caste, places in the same country. Symbolically, Hindu marriage is very significant. 'Marriage is not a temporary contract for having the company of one's partner for sometime only to lapse into oblivion at the slightest mental shock and inconvenience to life. It is the union of life undaunted in spirit in readiness to brave the vicissitudes of life' (Majupurias, 2009: 8, 10). This statement shows that marriage is a life time contract for a boy and girl of Hindu community. The boy and girl should be committed for life long journey on the same path, whether they experience happiness or sadness, or not. According to the change in time the marriage rituals are also changing gradually and slowly.

In Hinduism marriage is regarded as an essential ritual to familial/ancestral obligations to move their life. It is believed that by performing rightful marriage one can free oneself from one's debts to gods, ancestors, and suffering humanities (Regmi, 2009: 82). Marriage ceremonies are taken as colorful and attractive ritual activities. Traditional marriages last for several days with fun and feasts among the relatives, neighbors. Those marriages are performed in different phases with wise decision of elders. For example, horoscope matching, rendezvous and preparations (fixing date and time for marriage ceremony), swayamber (self-election), janti procession (groom party with his relatives and friends), barani (ceremonial reception), jagya (a place where bride and groom sit for marriage ceremony), and kanyadaan (gifting bride to groom by her father), seven step ceremony where bride and groom takes vow for their future life, anmaunabela (bride's departure from father's house to groom's house) and blessings ceremony (Regmi, 2009: 83-88). These processes of marriage ceremonies take several days and it's the ceremony of joy where two different souls meet and goes not for one life rather at least seven lives.

Symbolically, Hindu marriage is very significant. According to traditional Hindu rituals, 'Marriage is not a temporary contract for having the company of one's partner for sometime only

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According Hindu religion and culture, marriage is the most important ritual (Sanskar) which every Hindu observes in his or her lifetime. This ritual helps to hold the religion, culture and society together. As already mentioned in chapter 3, marriage is considered as the most important samskara in the family, culture and religion. Marriage is also known as *Vivah Sanskar*.

The marriage or Vivah Sanskara is the transition from the first stage of life, devoted to education and learning, to the second stage of life, devoted to building a household and raising children. The married couple pursues 'Dharma', performing the righteous duty, 'Artha', the acquisition of wealth and 'Kama', the enjoyment of natural desires. They lead a productive life of work, service and enjoyment fulfilling various duties and obligations towards themselves, their families and society at large.

(<http://www.hinduwedding.info/marriage-ceremony.html> accessed on 30 March 2014)

Through marriage ceremony, not only bride and groom unite together and become one soul and spirit but it unites the two families in one. Through marriage, every couple does their good deeds and duty towards the further life and the couple leads the prosperous life with themselves, their families and the whole society. According traditional rituals, 'The Hindu Marriage ceremony is primarily based on the marriage of Surya, the daughter of Savita (The Sun) to Ashwinikumar, as described in the Rig-Veda, one of the oldest scriptures. After Ashwinikumar wins the chariot race, Savita gives away the bride in a splendid ceremony' (ibid). From the ancient period marriage is taken as most important religious tradition till the contemporary time. The value of marriage lies in the bond between the couples and the family as well as society.

The main goals of Hindu marriage are:

*Fulfillment of Dharma:* marriage is taken as pious religious activities and it is necessary for every Hindu.

*Procreation:* To get rid of his parental (Paitrik) debt (Rin), a man should have son. It is the traditional thinking about Hindu marriage.

*Sexual Pleasure:* Before marriage, the sexual relation between boy and girl is taken as illegal relation. According to Hindu scriptures, sexual pleasure after marriage is a divine bliss. It is regarded as one's duty towards nature (Regmi, 1999: 90).

Figure 1:



Putting Vermilion Powder on the Forehead of Bride

*Source: Provided by participant in field visit*

Hindu society in Nepal has its unique originality which is based on races and castes. ‘Creation of races, kinds, classes, and castes is due to the marriage’ (Subedi 2010:7). The marriage status of a person is determined through the racial state and status of the person in the society. High class people with upper caste marry with the same categories and lower class with the low class. These kinds of marriages play the important role in traditional marriage systems. There are eight kinds of marriages in Hindu community. They are as follows:

1. Paisacha or brutish



This kind of marriage is done against the will of girl either done by rape where a girl is forcibly taken away on a false pretext or she is stolen when she is asleep or intoxicated or unconscious. This type of marriage is not accepted. However, the girl gets the legal status of a wife in the society (Majupurias, 2009: 46).

2. Rakshasa or heroic

This kind of marriage is done in kshatriyas who won wife in the war. Girl is married without her and her father's consent by her captor (Ibid).

3. Gandharva or going by mutual acceptance

In this marriage both partners get chance for free will and free choice. This kind of marriage is the result of spontaneous feeling of love between boy and girl. Wedding rites are performed according to hindu rituals and it becomes a marriage of the highest order. 'Swayambara'<sup>2</sup> where a bride herself chooses her husband from among several suitors is clearly a variation of Gandharva marriage' (Ibid).

4. Asura or devilish

In this type of marriage, bride is bought or price is paid for bride. Saint manu said that this kind of marriage ritual develops immorality and encourage veshyas (prostitutes) in the society (Majupurias 2009: 48).

5. Prajaptya or like a deity

In this type of marriage, 'conditions of marriage are fixed and the father gives away the daughter on a clear understanding that the husband and wife will perform religious and civil duties together' (Ibid).

6. Arsha or saint like

This marriage ritual takes place in priest's families (Ibid).

7. Daiva or divine like

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<sup>2</sup>Swayambara means choosing husband own self by girl.

Girl is given to a priest as a gift for s sacrificial fee but this kind of marriage ritual is not in vogue (Ibid)

#### 8. Brahmya or Brahaman like

The last type of marriage is open for the high caste, the Brahmins, but it is adopted by other castes too. This kind of marriage is arranged by parents to perform religious ceremonies. It is taken as the purest form of marriage (Ibid).

It's very difficult to create a systemic list of the typical types of Hindu marriages in Nepal because of its wide variation in formal marriage rites among the different castes and classes. Though we can find eight types of marriages in Hinduism, only three types of marriages, Bramhya, Rakshasa and Asura, are in vogue. Brahmya marriage is found in high caste people and the other two are found in lower castes people. In Nepal, marriage is taken as the most pious relation between a man and a woman. Both play a great role to create a perfect conjugal life for further life. 'Any beach of moral code in the conjugal life is a sin against god' (Majupurias- 49).

Figure 2:



*Source: Provided by participant in field visit*

In ancient time, the marriages like child marriages, polygamy, forced marriages were in practice in Nepal. But now, laws for marriage are made for the sound marriage. According to the marriage act 1971, the age of girl should be 18, and 21 for the boy to get married. Marriage should be also legally registered either in government offices or in the court. The age difference between boy and girl shouldn't be more than 20 years. The boy and girl can choose their life partner. Love marriages, intercaste marriages are also legally approved if the girl and boy are in their eligible age (Subedi, 2010: 44-46).

Muluki Ain<sup>3</sup> has some legal procedure for divorce procedure between husband and wife. 'If a wife stays separately from her husband for 3 years or more continuously without her husband's consent or if she is found to be engaged in acts that can take her husband's life, can cripple him or can cause him any other tremendous physical pain or if she is found to be engaged in tricks against her husband, the husband will have the right to get a divorce from such wife. If a husband brings another wife or keeps or drives the wife out of home or does not provide her with food and clothing or stays separately from his wife for 3 years or more continuously without taking care of his wife or if he is found to be engaged in acts that can take his wife's life, can cripple her or can cause her any other tremendous physical pain or if she is found to be engaged in tricks against her husband, the wife will have the right to get a divorce from such a husband' (<http://www.asianlii.org/np/legis/laws/marhawc12357/>). According to law, 'Polygamy is restricted if the wife is alive or not yet divorced' (Subedi, 2010: 45). However in certain circumstances, man can get second wife like; if wife is fatally diseased, has incurable sexual disease, incurable madness, remains unproductive within ten years of marriage etc. Same provision is available for women too (Ibid). Widow marriage is also legalized if she consents (Ibid).

Modern marriages got so many changes according to the time and all the ceremonies are not necessary. People want short marriages as well as marriage is not so compulsion. Many taboos of marriage are broken now such as child marriages, polygamy, permission of widow marriages etc which I will elaborate in analysis chapter.

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<sup>3</sup>Code of the country which was promulgated in 1963. It has been amended many times.

#### 4.4 Perception and Interpretation of Marriages in Nepal

The traditional marriages are totally or partially conducted in Sanskrit language which is regarded as the language of holy ceremonies. The importance of marriage is the transition from the first stage of life, Brahmacharyashram, to the second stage of life that is grihasthashram. The marriage rituals are colorful and last for several days with lots of processes and rituals. Among them, Jaymala, Madhu- Parka, GauDaan and Kanyadaan, Vivaha- homa, saptapadi are informant was from Brahman family and he responds about thsoseprocesss in this way:

*The main stages of a Hindu wedding are:*

- *Jayamaala*
  - *Firstly, the bride's parents welcome the bridegroom and his family at the boundary of the house where the wedding is taking place.*
- *Madhu-Parka*
  - *The bridegroom is brought to a specially decorated altar called 'mandap' and offered a seat and a welcoming.*
- *GauDaan and KanyaPratigrahan*
  - *'Gau' means cow and 'Daan' means donation.*
- *Vivaha-homa*
  - *A sacred fire is lit and the Purohit (Priest) recites the sacred mantras in Sanskrit.*

Just slight changes are seen in modern Hindu wedding like shortening of rituals, gaudaan is not seen but instead different gift items are exchanged and love marriage are opted by many these days etc. modern marriages are not celebrating for several days. Now marriages are become short and less economical. The meaning of marriage is bondage, respect, love and mutual understanding between bride and groom. Marriages are not seen as hypocrite and gender discrimination is prohibited. Laws are in favor of women and they have also equal right as men have to choose their life partner and to live a happy and sound marriage (Vidya, 2008:168-172).

Figure 3: Kanyadaan Ceremony



*Source: Provided by participant in field visit*

The perception towards a marriage differs from person to person and they interpret it differently. It is a human nature. Marriage is such a process where two known or unknown person unites together and becomes one soul for the further life. It not only related to two persons only rather it is the union of two family and society where they belong to. There are multiple conceptions towards marriage by people at various stages of their life and according to the situated circumstances.

In traditional marriages, child marriages, polygamy were so common and easy. A male was allowed to marry several times and people interpreted it as manhood in that person. There was a correlation among the Hindu treatises in Rigved era that a male can keep the desired number of wives where as a female was totally restricted to only one. The kings, philosophers, thinkers and Brahmans were under the influence of polygamy (Majupurias 2009: 41). Female of that age had accepted this polygamy as their fate as well as the right of males. For a girl, Brahmic marriage was regarded as a religious deed and they accepted the domination from male easily. Polygamy is the feature in Hindu religion because it was the conception in people that the more sons the father had the more he was glorified. To make a status and manhood in the society, men needed

several wives from where they could get more sons. Women were compared to marketable commodities and exchanged with wealth (Subedi 2010- 20).

‘According to the strict moral laws, to ensure copulation in the first ritu it was binding on a man to get his daughter married before the puberty’ (Majupurias, 2009: 40). It was the perception that if a girl remained unmarried till her puberty, the father is a great failure toward his duties and people thought that the girl would go to hell after death. According to Hindu religion, to go to heaven after death is the salvation from the life. Even now, in some places child marriages are common. Some orthodox people have the belief that

If a daughter is given away before her first menstruation she is a cent percent virgin and giving away of a virgin or *kanyain* marriage at a ceremony called *kanyadan* or giving away by way of charity is really a great *punya* or religious merit.

(Ibid)

In traditional era; widows were taken as curse for the society. They were not allowed to talk frankly in the society and they had a hard life in the society. The society treated them more brutal than animals. They had no chance of remarriage as well as they were not allowed to wear red dresses, people had the thinking that the life of widow is colorless and they had to live alone for whole life though they were young.

In traditional time marriage was perceived as the primary goal of life. The people are becoming educated and they are changing their mind towards marriage. Modern people in Nepal also take marriage as important ritual activity but they don't have conservative thinking like polygamy, child marriage and widows are curse for the society. They are getting new knowledge from internet, mass media and encounter with other religions about marriage and they are changing the perception through education too. According to the national code (MulukiAin) of 1963, child marriages in Nepal are totally banned and no girl could be married before the age of 14 and boy 18 even with the consent of their guardians (Majupurias 2009: 41). But now the minimum age for marriage is 18 and 21 for a girl and boy respectively (Ibid). Modern people have the thinking that a widow also can live a good and prosperous life with respect in the society. If she wants, she can remarry and live a married life. In contemporary time, polygamy is totally prohibited but a divorced person can marry. Remarriage of widows, divorcees are allowed in Nepalese context

because modern people are educated and they don't blindly believe in religious things. Modern people have also faith towards Hindu religion and its laws but they are also aware about the happiness of people's lives. Some orthodox people don't accept it but the modern people's perception and interpretation towards marriage has changed. Modern people think that marriage is not the primary thing rather it's a secondary thing. They want to become independent with progress in life before the marriage from which they could handle the married life in their future. People have change in self. If people bring change in self, the whole society and country can change towards the perception.

## **Chapter Five: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will present the data collected from my fieldwork and analyze the informants' views and introduce my finding in relation to theories. I will give the perception and thinking of Nepalese migrants towards the traditional and modern marriage rituals and changes according to the contemporary time focusing on social, cultural and religious domain. I am going to discuss how migrants perceive the culture of Norway and the difference in the cultural and religious views, marriage ritual and understanding of marriage, and the role of religion in marriage ritual.

This is the age of globalization. Globalization doesn't mean only globalization of economic and technology rather it is the globalization of culture, religion and ritual activities (Scholte, 2005). Because of globalization, people can share their own rituals with other rituals all over the world. 'Each person develops a conception that corresponds to their particular experiences and aspirations' (Scholte, 2005: 53). With the help of globalization in technologies, people are moving from one place to another for different purposes and with such moving creates a kind of sharing and creating new cultures and changing in rituals activities like marriages. Marriage rituals are affected through the globalization and they are localized. The migrants are blending the foreign culture and own culture to create a new form. This is called glocalization (class lecture). Migrants are changing their perception towards marriage rituals and the marriage rituals are becoming the part of cultural hybridization.

The participants whom I interviewed explained that they are missing their own culture, tradition and religious ceremonies like marriage and going to temples to worship though sometimes they are celebrating some religious and cultural activities. They were explaining that though Nepal is a developing country, it has richness in culture, traditions and ritual activities and celebrating different festivals. Some participants were taking marriage is a kind of burden in life because they saw more freedom here in Norway. The married life is different from their home country within Hindu religion. It doesn't mean they were totally against Hindu marriage system rather they want to create new perception towards marriage by comparing the life here and there (Nepal). Nepal has diversity in its culture as well as ethnic groups and castes. The participants whom I had interviewed were from different castes. Most of them are from upper caste that is



Brahmin, some are from Chhetri and some are from indigenous group like Magar. As already presented in chapter 2, in this study, I had interviewed near about 5 couples and 7 single informants about Nepalese Hindu marriage rituals, marriage system and the difference in traditional Hindu marriages and modern marriage structures. All the informants have been coded and kept anonymous for their security.

## **5.2 Nepalese Migrant's Perception about Norway**

Mostly Nepalese migrants have migrated here in Norway for higher education and later they got settlement through job opportunities. Migration is not so easy. After migrating to another country, a person has to compromise and face different challenges to create own identity. Norway is a country where Nepalese migrants encounter and interact with different people from different culture, country and religion. There are 49 Nepalese migrants in Stavanger and some are post graduate, some are universities students, some are doing jobs and some are enjoying with their family.

The culture, society of Norway is different from Nepal. When a migrant migrates to another country, it is natural to get some challenges and do adjust in different culture and society. The perception differs from one person to another because every individual develops own conceptions according to the experience which he or she encounters (Scholte, 2005:53). Informant N1 perceives the Norway as a country of friendly environment:

*Speaking for myself, I have to say that there are more plus sides than minus being in Norway as a Nepalese. Norway is a beautiful country with nice nature and not to forget nice people. I can relate Nepalese and Norwegian people to some extent regarding the honest and hardworking nature they have. I experienced some difficulties in the beginning when I came to Norway as I got a feeling that, Norwegian people are not proactive in coming forward and talking to people or making friends. So my first impression was that it is going to be difficult to make Norwegian friends. However, it took by my surprise to see that once you approach them they are the best people to be friends with. They are so honest and helpful. It just worked out very well. The other advantage was coming to a country as a student with so good education system was very nice though the living cost was too high. The working environment is very good and has a*

*very flat structure where everyone has the right to put forward their opinion. So this is also a great advantage to me as a Nepalese where I am used to working in an autocratic work environment.*

Every Nepalese migrant doesn't have the same perception because of diversity in their viewpoints and nature. Some people have their adaptation capacity towards other culture and environment and some don't have such capacity and they see everything negative but they try to compromise to get something either for themselves or to get a better life for their future generation. Most Nepalese migrants feel economical challenges in Norway because though it is economically developed country living expense is higher and they have to struggle to get the proper job and the life style is different from Nepal. Informant N2 feels the same:

*The lifestyle and culture is very different compared to Nepal but can be taken as an opportunity to learn new culture and new lifestyle than we are used to.*

It is obvious to feel the cultural difference in Norway for Nepalese migrants because Nepal is a Hindu domain country and Norway Christian. The religious view points are different among these two religions. Though there are vast different in two religions, migrants are trying to adopt the new culture to live a good life and fulfill their dream. Informant N3 perceps this way:

*Well, I miss my country because I am adapted to different culture and environment. But now I am used to it. Pros of being here is that I fulfilled my dreams and came to learn European culture and part of it to some extent. Since Norway is not English speaking country, language is a great challenge for me.*

Mostly Nepalese migrants are migrated in Norway for the purpose of higher education. After completing university degrees, some are settled down through the permanent resident permit and some are doing post graduate to get secure in the job in Norway. The informants whom I interviewed were Hindu. They all belong to Hindu and they have totally faith towards their religion and they are creating religious environment to their children to save their religious identity. It is natural to miss the homeland when someone leave their own country and live in another country. Geographically, to some extent Norway gives some glimpse of Nepal but it has different religious pattern and marriage rituals are also differ than Nepal. Nepalese migrants feel isolated from their community and miss the home environment about the ritual activities and

festivals which are celebrating in Nepal like; marriage rituals, Nepali New Year, dashain festival, dipawali and so on. Informant N5 recalls the childhood memory of festivals and marriage ceremony:

*When I was child I had attended so many marriages happened in our society according to Hindu culture and customs. At that time, there was the tradition of panchebaja (five musical instruments) and we all enjoyed that music with dancing and marriage ceremonies were for happiness in the whole family, society. After migrating here I am missing those things because the culture, society and religious background is totally different from Nepal. I am not only missing marriage ceremony rather I am missing every festival which are the happening in Hindu religion in Nepalese context.*

Hindu religion is mixture of so many religious festivals where all Hindu Nepalese share their happiness, feelings in a social way and becomes happy and joyful life. Being in others' country as a migrant, all those things become minor things because of different religion, culture, society. It is not only the matter of culture, and religious differences but also the globalized world where people are bound in time limit. They don't have time for other things and they are becoming toys in the name of technological advance. Technological progress also helps those migrants to connect with their country and to their ritual activities. Informant N11 responds:

*Two month before my brother in Nepal had conducted marriage ceremony. He did in religious way with full ritual activities and I couldn't attend that ceremony because I am here and didn't get leave. I missed the marriage ceremony and the reunion of our family and became sad. But though I missed the ceremony at that time I viewed it through internet. My brother has sent me the full video of whole ceremony and I enjoyed here watching it but physically I couldn't be part of that ceremony which makes me sad.*

### **5.3 Marriage Ritual and Understanding of Marriage**

Though Nepal is a secular country, Hindu religion is the main religion. More than 81% people of Nepal are belonged to Hindu. Mostly Hinduism is inherited from their ancestors and the new generation also taking positive. The society and culture and religious pattern of Nepalese society is directed through the principles of Hinduism. The informants whom I had interviewed have their different opinion towards traditional and modern marriage rituals. Some migrants are totally

orthodox towards the Hinduism and some are liberal and some are flexible according to the time change. Mostly new generations of migrants in Norway are thinking positive towards other religions and they are taking some good aspects of other religion and ritual activities like marriage and other ceremonies.

New generations are to some extent attracted towards western lifestyle because of globalized world. They are creating new concepts towards Hindu marriage rituals and perceiving them in a way that differs from their parents. It is not only individual act but also a social act which is going from ancient time. To a great extent, migrants in Norway confirm the traditional view of marriage. Informant N2 responds:

*Marriage is a natural process and to get a planned life one life partner is needed, so marriage ritual is must. Marriage is not only the bond between two people but it is also the relation between two families and the society where we belong to.*

People of Nepal have the concept that an individual is not only an individual rather he or she is a part of a society and culture where he or she belongs to. Society is interconnected with every act of an individual. Marriage is taken as most important ritual activity in Hindu community of Nepal. It affects the whole society. For this matter informant N1 further says:

*Marriage ritual is the combination of individual and social perspective. We, as Nepalese are very much influenced by the social phenomena. Personal decisions are also taken by keeping considerations to all social aspects. People are greatly worried by the way society thinks and reacts to a certain thing. So, marriage ritual is not purely individual phenomena rather it is affected by social context, setting and opinions of the people living in the society.*

Life partner is such a person, with whom either boy or girl wants to share his /her feelings, happiness, sadness without hesitation. Everybody wants their life partner whom they can share everything by soul and physical. In Nepalese context, life partner is a person, whom a boy or girl gets marriage and lives the rest of their life sharing the feelings and become happy forever. Everybody has some expectations from their life partner after marriage. Marriage is the only way where one can get life partner. The life partner can be chosen by their family or by themselves in

the contemporary time. According to traditional ritual, the life partner are chosen by elders of the family but in modern time the boy and girl can consent to choose the life partner for themselves.

Informant N2 responds in such a way:

*Marriage means bonding between two people along with their families. My life partner should understand whom I can trust fully and there should be believe between two and with helping nature to each other even in the bad time of life.*

Everybody wants such life partner whom they can trust, believe and share the bad and good aspects of life and understand the things and take as positive way. He further says: *life partner should be such a person where there is mutual understanding between two and helping nature not only physically but mentally and economically also.* This shows the life partner can help financially by doing not only household works rather official works also.

Informant N4 explains his experience from life partner:

*I got arrange marriage which was conducted as traditional Hindu marriage. My family has chosen my life partner with our consent. After marriage, we both got time to know each other and day after day we tried to understand each other. I was expected my life partner should be understandable and able to go with me side by side in every ups and downs of my life. When we knew each other, we knew that we are perfect to each other. Now we are living happy life and I found my life partner who is helping me in every aspects of my life.*

Marriage is not only the relation between boy and girl. It is connected to the two families as well as the two societies from where boy and girl come from. To save the prestige in the society and culture, the role of life partner plays a vital role. Informant N12 has some different feeling from the life partner:

*Marriage is the issue of both individual and social where both, husband and wife, find their life partners and live together according to the rules of society and culture that belongs to us. I want a life partner, who can understand and accept not only me but to my family, society, culture from where I belong to and respect the rules and laws of my society.*

Informant N1 responds in this way:

*Marriage is a commitment from two people to share their life together. It is a defined relation, where people come together to share the joy and happiness of life with their loved ones and to be there to support and be by his/her side throughout the life. My life partner should be loved one whom I give love of my life and make a happy life with believe, trust and understanding nature of both in every aspects of life which can make our lives easy.*

Through all these view points of informants, every Hindu Nepalese migrants want their life partner who can understand them and share the feelings either happy or sad with trust and belief in every step of lives. Without all these things a sound marriage is not possible. To maintain sound marriage, trust, believe, education in family, husband and wife is must. Not only trust, believe and educations are enough to have a sound marriage, to some extent, compromise from both side is necessary.

Informant N3 puts forwards his view about both traditional marriage system and modern marriage rituals and he sees changes in marriages:

*According to Hindu religion, traditional Hindu marriage is all about the agreement among different actors of the family and it is a certain process like a boy goes to a girl's house and there should agreement and dowry also comes as a demand from boy's side too but as far as I know modern marriage is all about the agreement between a girl and a boy and there is no any process of dowry.*

He has a view that in traditional marriage rituals dowry had played the important role. It was a culture and socially legal activities. There is no choice of boy and girl, the mail role is from families and they decide the future of boy and girl. But in modern time, the choice of boy and girl plays a vital role for marriage ceremony.

Some Hindu people are not satisfied with their own religious rituals like marriage ceremony. Informant N4 is totally negative towards traditional marriage rituals and frustrated too. He doesn't see any good thing in traditional marriage where love doesn't matter and he is influenced

by the western culture where there is freedom in choice of life partner and no religious bondage. Informant N4 has some extraordinary view towards traditional marriage systems:

*Traditional Hindu marriage rituals have some unwanted procedure which last for whole night, which make everyone tired and stressful. Due to unavailability of time, modern marriage rituals are shorter and fast. I believe in love and understanding between husband and wife to live further life and I will conduct love marriage in my future life.*

He sees traditional marriage rituals are stressful not only for the bride and groom but for the two families and the whole society who are connected with that marriage ritual and modern people are conscious towards time. Love is essential part for the marriage ritual.

Some people can change themselves according to time and some people have some old perception which they inherited from their ancestors, religion by birth though they say they are moving according to time. Informant N1 has positive thoughts towards the changes in marriage rituals according to the contemporary time but she sees not much difference in traditional marriage rituals and modern marriage rituals:

*From my perspective, there has not been lot of changes regarding the marriage rituals now than in the past. Even at present, people follow the rituals but in a modern way. The setting of the wedding and other things might have changed now but the rituals that are followed still continue to remain the same. However, there have been some changes regarding how people want to get married. Years before, people had to get married in front of the priest where the priest used to conduct the marriage ceremony according to Hindu religion. These days, people can choose to marry in a court or organize their wedding according to their choice. However, this is still not the common practice in rural areas.*

Mostly, traditional marriages had done arranged and in small age. But modern people have changed in their thought and they believe in love marriage as well as the age difference between the bride and groom shouldn't have much difference. Informant N5 has the same views:

*In traditional marriages we had seen the wide and vast age differences between boy and girl. Some marriages were held in the wide gap in age like boy of 50 and girl of 9, 10*

*years old. They seemed they are grandfather and daughter and the husband always felt superior to wife and tortured his wife by beating, scolding and so on. In modern marriages there are so many laws towards the marriages like no force marriages, the age different between husband and wife shouldn't be more than 15 years, and if the girl is not ready for marriage, she is allowed to reject and so on.*

Similarly, informant N6 responded toward the marriage rituals:

*There has not been a lot changes in Hindu traditional marriage. The ceremony is held on a day in the "bright half" of the northern course of the sun. Months before the wedding an engagement ceremony known as 'Mangni' is held. This is to bless the couple, who are then given gifts of jewelry and clothing by their new family.*

All the informants see some differences in traditional marriage and modern marriage rituals regarding time, age, force marriage and love marriages. They have some common views towards the positive changes and they want to follow for their future generation. Married people and unmarried people have different perspectives towards the marriage rituals with their experiences they got throughout their life.

#### **5.4 Role of Religion in Marriage**

Religion plays a great role in marriage ceremonies though they are traditional or modern rituals. Marriage is the important part of life where a boy and girl start their life becoming one soul. In Hindu religion girl (wife) is taken as 'ardhangini' (half part of body).

Migrants have also their own opinion towards the role of religion in marriage rituals. All religions have different process for marriage rituals and follow the religion. Informant N7 responds:

*Of course, different religion has different rituals and traditions for marriage. Christian marries in church, Hindu in temple and so on others.*

Informant N8 further responds:

*I am a religious person and I believe in Hindu religion. In my marriage, I did every function according to religion in front of god, family, society and according to the*



*culture. The priest hymned vivah mantra (Marriage hymns) and my wife and I became life partner for this whole life and for other future lives.*

Hinduism believes that the marriage is not for one live but it is the bondage between husband and wife life after life that means several lives.

Informant N8 views that religion is culturally and socially interconnected. We cannot escape from it though we are living in globalized and modern world. He responds:

*Living in a culture and society, we can't totally escape from religion and avoid it that we follow from years. Marriage rituals are based on religion and we have to follow and secure for our future generation and for the sake of Hindu religion that we belong to.*

In Nepal the main religion is Hindu and every Hindu wants their marriage has done according to Hindu religion either traditional way or modern way. Globalization has brought a lot of changes in ritual activities in contemporary time but some aspects in ritual activities are never change like religion in marriage ritual. To support this viewpoint informant no 9 responds like this:

*Obviously culture and rituals are guided by the religion though it has a lot of changes in ritual activities according to the globalized world. So religion is at the heart of every culture and ritual. I am still unmarried and I want my marriage ceremony in religious way which should support by my family, society and according to Hindu culture and religion.*

Some Nepalese migrants have done traditional marriages and some are unmarried and some have love marriages and court marriages. Though they have done different kinds of marriage ceremony, they believe in Hinduism by heart and they want their future generations (children) follow the same Hindu rituals not totally traditional way rather in modern way according to the time change.

Informant N10 says:

*I did traditional Hindu marriage in Nepal and the main role for our marriage was of our parents and we didn't know each other also. At that time I was 12 years old and my husband was 13 years. We were child and we didn't know the meaning of marriage also.*

*My parents in laws used to say to us go and play outside. But my son got married with my daughter-in-law in our choice but they both talked to each other and agreed for the marriage. Now they want our grand children got married according to Hindu marriage rituals though they choose their life partner themselves in near future.*

Marriage is considered as social and religious ties between two persons of same caste, religious background and same social status in Nepal. It is not only the relation between two, bride and groom rather it is an important relation between two families and two societies where elders chose the girl and boy for their children. The relation is not so easy to be separated though boy and girl are not satisfied with each other in traditional marriages. Marriage is taken as a pious relation in Hinduism. they have to compromise for the sake of society, culture, religion where they are living. But modern marriages are to some extent inspired by the western culture and if husband and wife are not happy they can separated to get their happiness. But old Hindu religious people are against such changes in marriages and divorce system.

Informant N12 who was near about 55 years old says:

*When I got married I was 9 years old and my husband was 40 years old. He was like my father and he tortured me a lot physically and mentally. When I told about that torture to my parents, they told me that you are a woman and you have to tolerate all these things for the sake of society, family prestige. I became pregnant in small age and I became mother of 6 children when I was 28. After that my husband died because of cancer and I got so many problems to rear my children. Now all my children are happy and they got married according to Hindu culture and I am happy with them. I accept love marriage and I can accept inter-caste marriage also. But, I saw so many people getting divorce in a petty small thing which is creating chaos in our society. These all bad things are happening in our culture and religion because of westernization and I am quite not satisfied with it.*

## 5.5 The Difference between Norway and Nepal

Nepal has patriarchal society. Mostly decisions for marriages are taken by the elders of the family. In previous time, all marriages happened with the consent of two families in same caste and same religion. There was no choice of life-partner for boy and girl. Mostly girls were taken as 'bojh'(burden) in the family. That's why the parents of girls were always in tension and afraid of blame in the society because if a girl was seen with any unknown boy, the girl's and her family's prestige in the society went ruin. It was the opinion that the prestige of family in the society depended upon all in the hand of daughter, wife. Now such things are changing due to education and many laws are made in favor of female. But still rural areas have such thinking and perception. In Nepal marriage is taken as a pious relation and it should last for whole life and life after life also. Though there are so many problems and complexities between husband and wife, they have to live together with a lot of compromise. Mostly the compromise should be done by girl's side. This compromise might be girls only or including her family. To support this thinking of Nepalese people informant N2 responds:

*I have attended so many marriages in Nepal and most of those marriages are conducted by bride and groom's family. One of my friends got married without his consent and girl was totally unknown to him. After marriage they found that they have different opinions. They had to compromise mostly from girl's side to save their marital life for the society, culture and family. Till now they are living together for the sake of their children. They are sacrificing their happiness for others. It is Nepali culture where marriage is taken as unbreakable relation though the partners are not happy with each other.*

In the name of sanskar (ritual), two people have to live together for lifetime and happiness and freedom doesn't matter. To get divorce not so easy in Nepal because the society, culture and religion doesn't give permission. In contemporary time, there are lots of laws in favor of women and if they are not happy they can divorce but to save the culture, to save the prestige of family and girl herself should compromise in her marital life and go on.

Norway's life style is different than Nepal. Here people are free to take their decision. Happiness for self is more important than the other things. Girls and boys have equal right to take decision for their life. Marriage is not taken as burden for a girl. They are allowed to be free after their

marriage also. There is no compromise in happiness. Informant N1 sees the vast difference in married life in Nepal and Norway. She responds like this:

*Most of the marriages in Nepal are conducted based on Hindu rituals. However, there is a big difference in how the marriages are conducted in Norway and in Nepal. In Norway the groom and the bride are the ones who are deciding on how the marriage is going to happen. They decide what kind of marriage, whom to invite and other activities in a marriage. They are the sole responsible person deciding on their marriages. Society does not play a role in marriages in Norway. Generally, marriages are not that big in Norway if we compare the number of people attending marriages in Norway and in Nepal. However, the number of people attending a marriage in Nepal can range from 300 up till 1000 people. Therefore, huge number of people is invited in the marriages in Nepal. Society has a big influence on the marriages that are conducted in Nepal. The groom's side has a big say in the way marriages are conducted in Nepal. Therefore, there are many factors that influence a marriage in Nepal. The parents from both sides have the decisive role than the Groom or the Bride in a Nepalese marriage.*

In Nepal marriage is taken as the big and important ritual which is conducted in front of whole society and the society becomes witness for the marriage and it becomes legal. After that the bride and groom can get the marriage certificate from the government office which is near their home. In Norway the marriage ceremony has conducted in the church in front of pastor and they become legal husband and wife with the witness of pastor.

## **Chapter six: Discussion**

The fundamental purpose of this research writing is to investigate the changes in traditional marriage rituals in Hinduism in global context. In order to answer the research questions broad interviews with 5 couples (married) and 7 single (unmarried) Nepalese migrants were conducted. This chapter will present a more deep and complete analysis of the results in reference to primary and secondary data sources. Result brought out the existence, significance of Hindu marriage rituals in traditional and modern time. The research also presents the result that the globalization has affected in the thinking of Nepalese migrants and has brought changes in marriage values and practice. This was recorded in the interview questionnaire.

### **6.1 Significance of Marriage**

Marriage is such a thing which has the great importance in every individual's life. It's a saying in Nepali, 'vivahvanekoyestokura ho jogarepanipachhutonagarepanipachhuto'. This means that marriage is such a thing that if a person got married he regrets and if a person doesn't get, he also regrets. In Hinduism, marriage is taken as necessity and promise for progeny. Without marriage it is not allowed to live together and have child in Nepalese context. 'The invocation to ancestors and the worship of gods and goddesses were primarily for blessings for an ever-lengthening chain to be obtained through marriage' (Majupurias, 2009: 7). Marriage is taken as the highest attention of the people. It's the only way to start a good life with the life partner and domestic happiness. Majupurias further describes, 'the popularization of marriage and its undeniable need can be ascribed partly to the gratification of innate and irrepressible sexual instinct in the man and the woman and partly to the irresistible urge to procreate' (Ibid).

Marriage is a permanent tie between boy and girl not for one life but for life after life. It's a lead towards future life. According to Hindu samskaras (ritual), 'marriage is a means of keeping men and women in track and preventing them from being savage and wayward' (Majupurias, 2009: 8). Marriage makes a person socialized and responsible in the life. In Hinduism, marriage has significant role. Marriage brings two different souls in one on spiritual levels. Marriage is not only social contract rather it is a sacrament and mystic halo to live a spiritual life. Majupurias further mention, 'a sensuous life without the sanction of marriage is sapless, monotonous and not enduring. Marriages are, as the saying goes, made in heaven' (Ibid).

In Nepalese context, traditional and modern marriage rituals are living side by side. Because of education, encounter with different religion, culture has some effect in marriage rituals. People are changing their perception towards marriage. Marriage is the transition period of a boy and girl from single life to dual life where the couple shares the sorrows and frustrations of life and brings happiness throughout life, produce children and rear them. The true meaning of vivah or marriage is to lift, support, hold and sustain each other for the whole life either in happiness or in sorrows. It's a responsibility which both the bride and groom should do to make a happy and joyful life. 'The sanctity of marriage reaches the climatic point of perfection only when it succeeds in generating the spirit of willing sacrifice, the inner spirit of marriage for the betterment of the partner, family, society and the world at large' (Ibid).

Though marriage is taken pious ritual in Hinduism in Nepal, it has lots of drawbacks. Every Nepali has multiple identities based on ethnicity, caste, clan or status. Caste system is the main constraint in Hindu marriages in Nepal. 'This caste system divides people by profession, separates them in matters of marriage and contact, and ranks them hierarchically' (David Reed 2002, Nepal: 502). The divide in caste system plays the vital role in marriage ceremonies. The work done in marriage rituals are also divided, the upper caste Brahman becomes priest in the ceremony. The lower castes become the labor for other activities. 'Society places the major hurdles in the way of inter-caste marriages, as the couple are likely to be cut of their families (a serious punishment, in a country where connections are everything) and cold-shouldered by others, and the high born of the two will have to accept the other's low caste' (Ibid). To support this thing I want take the information of informant N3:

*I have seen my friend (Chhetri) who got married (love) with a boy of another caste (Newar). But her family doesn't accept her and her husband as family members. They cut the all relations with her and said she is dead for us. It has been 7years of marriages and she is happy with her husband and son but her parents, brothers don't accept her till now. She is waiting for the call from her family but they are not positive towards her decision. They are in view that she didn't care of their prestige in society so they are neglecting her to protect their prestige in the society.*

It is not only one example. There are various examples about inter-caste marriages in Hindu religion. If a girl or a boy marries the person from different religion also, he or she is taken as

the villain of the society and religion. The social mobility in modern time is creating positive thinking in case of marriages. The education has made people aware not only about prestige in society but also happiness in their children. The society is accepting love marriages as well as inter-caste marriages. This is the impact of globalized society. People are becoming educated day by day and changing the old rules in marriages slowly and gradually.

In traditional marriages, marriages were totally arranged by the parents or elders of the family and there was no choice of girl and boy as well as making love before marriage. The marriages were held in small ages when boy and girl even didn't know the meaning of marriage. But, in these modern times, such customs are more relaxed and given away (mostly in city areas). The couple can decide whom to marry and let their parents arrange the union. In most of the rural areas of Nepal, the traditional marriages are still prevailing. Marriage ceremonies are performed according to the astrologer and priest who fixed the date of marriages after matching the zodiac sign of both, boy and girl (Bhattarai, Krishna P.,2009, Nepal: 55).

Dowry (Daijo) is taken as a gift from female side in marriage ceremony. In traditional marriages, dowry was compulsion. The families of groom were asked a big amount of dowry as money, as things from bride's family. They had to give the dowry though they were poor. Birth of a girl in poor family was taken as curse for the family and birth of son as blessing. To give the asked amount of dowry, the parents of girl used to sell their property and so on. It was the tradition, custom in the then society. But in modern times, dowry system is totally prohibited. There are laws by government against the dowry system. The social ceremonies (Reform) Act 1976: 470 section 5 Restriction Dowry Sub-section 1 runs as follows:

The bridegroom's side shall not compel the bride's side to offer any specific amount in cash or in kind as dowry, donation, or gift or farewell gift in any form to the bridegroom nor shall the two sides settle in advance the amount to be gifted. The bridegroom's side shall not cause any harassment or refuse to solemnize refused to take away the bride formally, or in case of persons among whom it is customary to take away the bride formally only after sometime, refuse to have the farewell rituals solemnized and take away the bride on the grounds that no dowry has been paid.

(Majupurias, 2009: 36, 37)

Modern marriages have not such compulsion in dowry system but the system still prevails in Nepalese society. The marriages is taken as the show off of property and own place in the society. The educated and high class people do grand marriages in party palaces by inviting as many people as they can. It directly hampers the bride's family. The whole expenditure should be paid by girl's parents though they are rich or poor. Though inter-caste marriages are happening in the society, if a girl of low caste and class fell in love with upper caste or class boy, the girl's family should pay for the whole marriage. This kind of marriage can bring the girl's family in debt. Informant N5 gives the experience about such marriages:

*When I was in class 10, my cousin was in love with a boy from rich family. We were of middle class family. They wanted to marry each other and they told to their parents about their love affair. Firstly the parents rejected their proposal but later the parents gave permission. The boy's family was rich and they had only one son. They wanted to marry their son according to their class and they told about it to girl's family. For the sake of daughter's happiness, they sold their property and did a grand marriage to keep the prestige of boy's family in the society. Now they are still in debt of that marriage and they left their home and living as paying guest. They are now in pathetic situation. After seeing their life, I want to do my marriage according to my parent's choice as traditional marriage system in same level.*

With the help of globalization and modernization in culture, religions and rituals, there can be seen a lot of changes in modern Hindu marriage systems in Nepalese contexts. In traditional marriages, the Hindu marriage system was provided by the religious texts and saints. But in modern times, such system has undergone many fundamental changes due to the influence of western culture and way of life as well as the needs of time. *Marriage is not compulsory now-* according to traditional marriage system marriage was essential for both men and women and it was compulsory for the performance of Dharma and Moksha. But in modern times men and women cherish the individualism, independence, and personal attainments and the girls are allowed to reject their marriages. Many taboos of marriage are broken now- the Hindu tradition has restrictions in the marriage of two people who belongs to same Gotra (clan) but now such restrictions are removed by laws. Child marriages are opposed and declared illegal- in the past, child marriage was common in Hindu society, but now child marriages are opposed legally,



socially and economically, now the legal marriage for girl is 18 and for boy is 21. These all changes are happening because of women's education and their struggle against suppression (Regmi, 1999: 88, 89).

## **6.2 Identity and Stability in marriage**

According to traditional viewpoint, marriage is such a thing which converts two strangers into relatives and extends towards cooperative relations beyond the immediate family and creates a wide- ranging networks of in- laws (Coontz, 2006). In traditional way, marriage was not fundamentally about love rather it was an economical and political institution to be entered into solely on the basis of something as irrational as love. "Marriage was too important a contract to be left up to the two individuals involved, kin, neighbors, and other outsiders, such as judges, priests, or government officials, were usually involved in negotiating a match" (Ibid). In traditional Hindu marriage also the meaning and essence of marriage is the same. But the only difference is that the whole society had become the witness for the marriage and the marriage used to be legal.

Marriage was essential for the future life of two people as well as the two families. It was the opinion that family life without marriage is remote possibility. The marriage was taken as parental duty. Majupurias describes, 'the need and search of a woman as a permanent companion in life for man and for protection of their children until they are grown up led man and woman to involve the institution of marriage suitable enough to meet their mutual demands' (7). Marriage was taken as domestic happiness and stability of relationship. Marriage was taken as lifelong relation between two strangers and love could happen after marriage. Compromise from girl's side made the relation stable. The silence of women in domestic violence and dowry system and the prestige of family in the society, women were suppressed. There were no such laws to get divorce from marital life and they had to live their life anyhow.

With the development in civilization and the modernization, the meaning of marriage has been changed. 'Marriage became a way through which elites could hoard or accumulate resources, shutting out unrelated individuals or even "illegitimate" family members. Propertied families consolidated wealth, merged resources, forged political alliances, and concluded peace treaties by strategically marrying of their sons and daughters' (Coontz, 2006). Informant N3 says:

*In ancient time, only women should respect their husband and regarded inferior to her husband but in this contemporary time, marriage is taken as respect to each other, helping in economic by both, mutual understanding, love and regarded equal to each other.*

In modern time, marriage has become more optional and fragile. The relation between men and women has undergone traumatic transformations rapidly. The transformation in marriages has not taken place suddenly rather it has happened according to the change in thinking of people and time. The radical change had been occurred in eighteenth century. People began to adopt the idea of love and love should be the most fundamental reason for marriage and young generation had the opinion about the freedom to choose their life partners on the basis of love (Ibid). Coontz further says, 'the sentimentalization of love- based marriage in the nineteenth century and its sexualization in the twentieth each represented a logical step in the evolution of this new approach to marriage' (Ibid).

In Nepalese context also, modern marriage has the essence. There is necessary of love and they have the right to choose their life partner. Marriage is not a play of doll; it's a lifelong relation between two strangers. There is a need of understanding and helping nature between two which can lead the pious relation further. The bond of understanding between two can balance and create order in life. 'The Hindu *samskaras*<sup>4</sup> suggest marriage as a means of keeping men and women in track and of preventing them from being savage and wayward' (Majupurias, 2009: 8).

The real essence of traditional and modern Hindu marriage is same rather modern marriages in Hinduism are becoming more fragile because of western impact as well as due to the wide spread of globalization. The education in women make women more powerful and women are becoming independent and they want to create own identity. The laws are also in favor of women. It shows the positive thinking about women in the so called patriarchal society where women are taken as the things and suppressed by the male. There are some drawbacks of globalization in marriage rituals in Nepalese society. Among them 'divorce' is the main reason. The law and power is used negatively in modern time. In a small reason also people are getting

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<sup>4</sup>Samskaras means a ritual process in Hinduism

divorce day by day and the system is going rapidly. Nobody wants to be suppressed and do compromise to save married life. Informant no 10 has the same view:

*In our times I was afraid to speak with my husband. It was not allowed to take his name either. I was shy and after the birth of my children, I began to speak little bit with him. As a woman, I had to compromise for all the things to save the married life. I was happy at that time because for me there was no fear of divorce and life was smooth and peaceful. But nowadays in a minor thing the people get divorce and such behavior is bringing chaos in the society. The copying culture is bringing a lot of destruction in rituals.*

### **6.3 Ways of Perceiving Marriages based on My Research**

Though Nepal is a secular country in modern time, the majority is Hinduism. Religion has its high place in its deep rooted traditional customs. According to Nepalese context especially in Hindu culture, “marriage is not simply the establishment of a marital bond between two partners but it is the representation of the eternal bondage attend by rituals and symbolism” (Majupurias, 2009: 61). Marriage is totally religious phenomena. If the two partners got marital bond, it becomes irrevocable and inseparable act not only for present life but of lives hereafter. People perceived marriage only through religious way. To get moksha from life, one should do marriage in same religious group in same caste. If a person did inter-caste marriage, he used to be punished from the family as well as from the whole society. Sometimes people were exiled from the societies too. The perception of people about marriage was only the compromise throughout the life though they were not happy with their marriage (Ibid). For the better life in marital life horoscopes of both, boy and girl, who were getting married, should be carefully examined and the compatibility of the horoscopes should be match. It was the opinion that if the horoscopes of boy and girl matched, their future life would be peaceful and happy with their children (Ibid).

In modern time, with the impact of globalization, some deviation has been undergone towards the perception about marriage. People have the opinion that love and understanding is necessary for the relation. The boy and girl can be of same clan, not too much age difference. People are become educated and they are influenced by the western cultures and they try to copy the other’s culture. The most priority is upon the love. There is no boundary of rich and poor, upper caste and lower caste and so on. People are migrating different countries and they perceive other’s

cultures and applying positive things in their own culture and religious activities. Informant N1 perceives marriage this way:

*I like most of things about how the marriage is conducted in Nepal. The negative thing is that people marry or try to arrange the function in the way the society wants it to be. It is not an individual choice or decision. There are always positive and negative sides in everything. The positive side is that the weddings are very colorful and happening event in Nepal. People try to include all their relatives, friends, neighbor by inviting them to the wedding to be a part of that joyful event. However, the negative side is that due to the culture and tradition people are burdened to conduct a large wedding even though they do not have resources/capacities to conduct that event in such a large scale. It is a reality that a large number of people are under debt when conducting the marriages and it takes time for them to pay that out. People do not have a choice of their own and cannot decide to just include few close families and friends and have the marriage rather marriage is a social affair than individual in Nepal.*

Marriage is not only the religious activity rather it is the activity of happiness, joy and colorful event. She is in favor of changing rituals according to the time. Marriage is a commitment from two people to share their life together. It is a defined relation, where people come together to share the joy and happiness of life with their loved ones and to be there to support and be by his/her side throughout the life. She further responds:

*I would very much like to have changes in the marriage rituals in Nepal and yes there should be changes according to the time as we go along. There should be a room for making individual decision in how one wants to conduct a marriage. This decision should not be influenced by the society. Marriage should largely be dependent on the couple choice how they want to organize it. Marriage is a joyful event for the couple and it should not be a burden to the parents in conducting it.*

In modern times, the educated people have individual perspectives for marriage rituals and want the changes in marriages and they have the opinion that we should walk according to the situation and time. It doesn't mean we should totally forget the traditional rituals rather we should bring positive transformation in marriage rituals.

#### **6.4 Change in self and values**

Self is a private thing that every individual have their personal thoughts, values,, emotions, desires and strivings. Social interaction and interpersonal relationship in day to day life can develop the interpretation of self (Elliott, 2008: 29, 31). In this globalized world, people are migrating different countries to get better opportunities and interact with different people who have different cultural, religious identity. To interact with them, language is must that creates a interpersonal relationship between society and people. By looking at our own thoughts, feelings and attitudes, we can interpret other's action. This means other's viewpoint, feeling and position creates their identification in our mind (Ibid).

Elliott says, 'the self is the agency through which individuals experience themselves in relation to others, but also an object or fact dealt with by its individual owner as he or she sees fit' (32). Marriage is also social phenomena and people interpret according to their self. The older generation and new generation are creating own feelings, thoughts, viewpoints towards the meaning and importance of marriage ceremony. 'Traditionally, the marriage tie was primarily structured as an economic arrangement: the husband used the marriage as a place from which to organize his activities in the public world, while the wife concentrated on children and the home' (45). In Nepalese context also women were uneducated and they were taught only for household works and their identity was either from father or from husband. The gender discrimination was prevailing at that time. According to the time change, women also become aware towards their self and education. Education is the main thing which helps women to revolt against suppression.

In modern time, marriage is taken as achievement of love, respect, intimacy, equality, self - integrity and so on. 'Marriage has been a key arena for the psychic development of the self, as this is organized through attitudes associates with childhood, adolescence and the nurturing of intimate sentiments within general social relations' (Elliott, 2008: 45). This impact of western thinking about meaning of marriage has been adopted in Hindu marriage rituals in Nepalese society. People became educated and they are creating new thinking towards the marriage rituals which can create a sound and intimate relation between a man and a woman. Marriage is not taken as burden for the society and individual. There is creating the sound environment where happiness, respect, and love exist. There are some drawbacks in marriage relations with the

spread of western culture. Marriage breakups, remarriage are creating chaos in the society and it is a sign of moral decay of the society (Elliott, 2008: 46).

People are changing their orthodox views towards marriage rituals through education, laws. Before marriage was taken as only social phenomena where women were suppressed by males and only focused towards household works. Marriage was held with full ritual activities for 3, 4 days. There was no possibility of inter-caste marriage, clan marriage, love marriages and boy and girl were not allowed to choose their life partners. Family and marriage are complementary to each other. It was not a contract rather a religious sacrament and spiritual bond. In modern time, the values are changing towards marriage. In one way, legal steps like prohibition of child marriages, permission for widow marriages, and concessions in the matter of one's life-partner are positive signs and on the other way, extramarital affairs, pre-marriage, divorce are making the pious sacrament towards sinful activities. Marriage is taken as a contract. It is losing its cultural and religious flavor. The familial relation is changing under the effect of westernization. Marriages are in so vulnerable situation; even a minor misunderstanding can break it up (Regmi, 1999: 91, 92). Though there are some drawbacks in modern perception of people about Hindu marriage rituals, its values, still exist a sort of durability to it. Hindu marriage still has strong semblance of sacraments and contract (Ibid).

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This study is concerned with the perception towards the traditional and modern Hindu marriage rituals among Nepalese migrants who are living in Norway (Stavanger and Oslo). I have argued that the meaning and significance of marriage rituals differ in traditional ritual and modern ritual. Nepalese People have changed their perception about meaning and significance of marriage rituals and interpret it in broad way in this modern globalized world. The stereotypical belief towards marriage is in the vogue of transition though to some extent heading side by side. In previous sections, I have argued that the significance of marriage rituals in ancient and contemporary time is concentrated on what kind of social, cultural and religious values they have, how the world views are changing about marriage rituals with the wide spread of modernity in globalized world, what keeps the ritual values and how those rituals are manifested in this contemporary society. Therefore this research consists of anthropological perspective in descriptive way.

Qualitative data collection method is used as a tool to collect the primary data for this research. Semi-structures interviews, group discussion were conducted among Nepalese migrants who are living in Oslo and Stavanger who provided the valuable data to answer the research questions. The secondary data are provided through different books, articles and internet. Similarly, ritual theory, globalization, modernization have been applied as theoretical tools to discuss and analyze the data.

As presented throughout this research, marriage is the most important ritual among the Nepalese Hindu culture. Marriage is a commitment between two people to share their joy, love, happiness, and ups and downs throughout the whole life. It is a bond of not only boy and girl but also their families. The traditional notion is totally refers the marriage is the only way to bring two souls in one spiritual level and a sacrament and mystic halo to live a spiritual life. Marriage not only an individual phenomenon rather it is a cultural, social and religious phenomenon. Because of modernity and globalization, the perception of people is getting changed in the encounter with other cultures and religions. Traditional marriage rituals are happening in Nepalese societies with or without consent of boy and girl. But, modern people are perceived the marriage rituals as love, respect, equality, and understanding with full consent of boy and girl. This does not mean that traditional marriage rituals are totally ignored by modern people rather some good aspects are

followed such as legal marriage, taking vow, putting vermilion powder, kanyadaan etc. Both rituals are going side by side in legal way where there is respect, love for each other.

Due to some drawbacks of modern marriages, some Hindu believers are taking modern marriages in negative way. They have belief that the traditional rituals are necessary to make a good relation with families and to keep prestige in the society. Divorces, extra marital affairs, no place for compromise are creating chaos in the society.

This research does not consist of a single caste in Hinduism. It's an overall research of Hindu marriage rituals (traditional and modern) among the Nepalese Migrants who are living in Norway. Future research could be done on a single caste in Hinduism, how society is taking divorce, inter-caste marriage and so on.



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