

**ISLAMIC CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN RAJPUR
MUNICIPALITY OF RAUTAHAT DISTRICT**



A Thesis Submitted to

APF Command and Staff College

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University

In Partial Fulfillment of Master Degree in

Security, Development and Peace Studies

Submitted By

Pramod Kumar Bharati

Sixth Batch (2077-2079)

TU Registration No.: 3560-95

Roll No.: 4007

APF Command and Staff College

Sanogaucharan, Kathmandu, Nepal

September 2022

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare the paper entitled "**Islamic Culture and Society in Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat District**" submitted to the Armed Police Force Command and Staff College, has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been copied, submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my research paper.

Signature:

Name: Pramod Kumar Bharati

APF Command and Staff College

Date: 31/08/ 2022

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This thesis entitled **“Islamic Culture and Society in Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat District”** was prepared by Mr. Pramod Kumar Bharati under my supervision. The researcher has fulfilled the criteria prescribed by Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University. I hereby forward this for final evaluation and approval.

.....

Prof. Dr. Ramesh Raj Kunwar

Thesis Supervisor

Date: 31/08/2022



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LETTER OF APPROVAL

This thesis entitled “**Islamic Culture and Society in Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat District**” submitted by Pramod Kumar Bharati to APF Command and Staff College, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in Partial Fulfillment of Master Degree in Security, Development and Peace Studies has been approved by the undersigned members of the Evaluation Committee.

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ABSTRACT

Culture is about the social behavior, values, norms, beliefs and customs of the individual. Different groups have different culture and beliefs. Islam is followed by Muslim which is rich in cultural practice. This study was conducted to examine the cultural values of Islam communities and find the current livelihood challenges faced by the people of Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat district of Nepal.

The study is based on the document analysis, field visit and interviews from elected representatives and government officials along with the local residents of the municipality. This study is first of its kind to find the in-depth details about the social and cultural status of Muslims community of Rautahat district. An ethnographic study was conducted with interviews undertaken from households, municipality officials, community leaders, schools and Madarsha representatives.

It was found that the livelihood strategies of people of Rajpur are different as they are involved in different occupations. Despite being the majority population, Muslims have very good harmony and social engagements with people from other religion. After analyzing the livelihood strategies of Muslim people of Rajpur, it was found that people have been involved in various works from agriculture to bag making, sewing and selling bangles. There was common perception that when one has money, they can maintain good social relationship, develop infrastructures and easily fulfill all their needs. It was found the Madarsah system was important for the people of Rajpur to learn urdu language. The education system has already shifted from particular urdu based Madarsah to multidisciplinary Islamic school in Rajpur. But, the local government has been facing challenges to integrate Madarsah with the normal schools.

This study recommends conducting a detail survey of Muslim people throughout Nepal due to the huge variation of culture and socio-economic practices in order to understand the overview of traditional beliefs and modern systems.

Key Words: Culture, Islam, Muslim, Society, Quran

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBS	Central bureau of Statistics
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GoN	Government of Nepal
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Caste is regarded as the basic structural feature which individuals enter only by birth (Olcott, 1944). Caste is intergenerational which is based on birth while the religion comes from common divine worship and ethical issues. Religion is also a part of social structure which provides things that are good for health, including social support, belief and sharing among individuals (Eckersley, 2007).

Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity and also one of the fastest growing religion in the world (Campbell & Guiao, 2010). Muslims are the people who follow the Islam religion. The majority of Muslim lives in Asia and Africa. Allah is regarded as the found of Islam religion. The term "Muslim" and "Islam" have been used interchangeably in this study.

Nepal is a country located in South Asia. The population of Nepal is 2,91,92,480 with annual exponential growth rate of 0.93% (CBS, 2021, p.1). Nepal is rich in culture and has harmony among religious groups. There are 126 caste/ethnic groups with around 12 language spoken in Nepal (MoFA, 2019). There are ten religions in Nepal with Hindu occupying the highest population, followed by Buddhism, Islam, Kirat, Christianity, Prakriti, Bon, Jainism, Bahai and Sikhism (MoFA, 2019). This shows that the Islam has the third highest population in Nepal.

Though there hundreds of castes, there is always unity among diversity. Every individuals respects one another culture and traditions. Culture is about the social behaviour, values, norms, beliefs and customs of the individual. Different groups have different culture and beliefs. It varies as per the religion and even within the religion. The cultural rituals and traditions are prevalent from ancient times and are diverse among different communities. Nepal is a country with multiple castes, ethnic groups, religion and language. Islam has its own unique culture.

Islam is followed by Muslim and the Muslim is derived from Arabic which means "submitter". Muslims have their own unique culture and traditions. Though Muslims

around the world don't share the same cultural trait but all of them are guided by the similar principles as prescribed by Islam (Nurullah, 2008). The Muslims in Nepal are Indian migrants and their descendants with most of them living in the southern Terai region (Thapa, 2000).

The Muslims in Nepal are divided into five groups namely Kashmiri Muslims, Indian Muslims, Tibetan Muslims, Terai Muslims and Hill Muslims. Another study has divided the Muslims of Nepal into two cultural groups (Bhusal, 2014). One of the commonly used term and known by majority of people is 'Musalman'. The number of 'Musalman' is highest in Terai region of Nepal. Churoute is second cultural group in Muslims who lives in the western hilly region of Nepal. Also Muslims have been categorized as Sunni and Shias (Ojha, 2021). The number of Islams have been increasing by 4.8% per year (Yadav & Prakash, 2016). Islam has their own festival, food, art, literature and calendar (Yasmin, 2020). Nepal has highest number of Hinduism followers and yet Muslims have been living together in the same society. The religious and cultural education can be gained from society and community an individual live and the education institution that they study. Though there is significant number of Muslims in the country, they are accepted as the low caste people with lower rank in social hierarchy (Yadav & Prakash, 2016).

Kashmiri traders were the first Muslim to enter Nepal during the period of Ratna Malla who used to trade rock salt, carpet and woolen goods (Bista, 1997). Kashmiris used to go to Tibet (Lhasa) via Kathmandu. Most of the Muslim in western Terai speaks Urdu but in other part of the country, the language is influenced by the local society that they live in. Most of the Muslims living in Terai are farmers with few of them are tailors and bangle sellers. However, the Muslims living in Kathmandu are economically advanced as they are involved in trading and shop keeping.

Majority of the Muslims communities have weak economic condition due to lesser livelihood opportunities. For sustaining proper livelihood, an individual should have access to human, social, economic, physical and natural capitals (DFID, 2000). The constitution of Nepal has also categorized Muslims as a minority and asked the authority to provide special provision to increase their participation at decision making level (UNHRC, 2012, p.1). This study seeks to enlighten the issue by examining cultural values of Islam communities and find the current livelihood challenges faced by the people.

Madarsah: In this paper, the word Madarsah is used to denote the Muslim school. Madarsah is a arabic word which is used to denote educational institutions.

Mosque: The word mosque has been used to denote a building made for religious activities and workshop by Islamic community. There is particular people in the Mosque who leads the Muslims prayers in Mosque called Mosque leader.

1.2 Muslim culture and society

Muslims are rich in culture and the practices have been developed around the religion of Islam (Yasmin, 2020). For Muslims, the creator of all mankind is Allah. They pray five times a day towards the direction of Ka'aba which is the center and starting point of Islam in Mecca. The culture of Muslims people are highly influenced by the Muslims of India (Gurung et al., 2014). There is similarity in their dress, language, occupation and other economic activities. The author also mentions that the Muslims in Hills are different than those living in Terai region of Nepal. The Muslims living in Hilly region of Nepal are mainly in selling of Bangles. However, there is social, economic difference among the Muslims living in different parts of Nepal (Budhathoki, 2015). In most cases, the Muslims of Terai region of Nepal are excluded from the economic and social facilities.

1.3 Livelihoods and livelihood strategies

The sustainable livelihood idea was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development expanded the concept, advocating for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication (Krantz, 2001).

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (DFID, 1999).

1.4 Rajpur Municipality

Rajpur Municipality lies in Rautahat district of Madhesh Pradesh of Nepal. The Rajpur Municipality was formed in 2016 by occupying different nine wards from earlier nine VDCs of the district. The total population of Rajpur is 42,574. The Rautahat district has highest number of Muslim population in Nepal. Majority of people speak Bajjika followed by Urdu, Nepali and Bhojpuri. There are eighteen municipalities in Rautahat with sixteen categorized as urban municipalities and two as rural municipalities. One of the urban municipalities is Rajpur where this study was conducted.

Table 1.1:

Ward wise population distribution of Rajpur Municipality

Ward Number	Total population
1	7844
2	2842
3	5293
4	4689
5	4521
6	4353
7	3995
8	3235
9	5802
Total	42574

Note. The data of ward-wise population in Rajpur Municipality. Source: Rajpur (2022)

Table1.2:*Household division in Rajpur, Rautahat*

Caste	Household number
Bramin/Chhetri – Hilly	10
Bramin/Chhetri – Terai	35
Aadibasi/Janajati – Hilly	0
Aadibasi/Janajati – Terai	550
Dalit Hilly	3
Dalit Terai	605
Muslim	5744
Hilly others	482
Terai Others	1007
Total	8436

Note. Population of people belonging to different caste. Source: Rajpur Municipality, (2022)

1.5 Statement of the problem

The culture and religious aspects of Islam is totally different than that of other religions. As Nepal is the inhabitant of highest number of Hinduism, this religious has overshadowed other religious from long period of time. Muslims allow polygamous marriage where it is prohibited by the Constitution of Nepal. In this way, it's difficult to follow religious practice being different from the dominant culture and practices. About 78% of Muslims women in Terai lack education (ADB, 2010, p. 22). In one hand, the Muslim's religious book teaches one custom and tradition which is not accepted by the other culture. However, the Muslims have been living together following their own culture and religious beliefs. Several authors have shared about the condition of the Muslims community but have failed to find the reasons of such discrimination in the society. The Muslim community has weak economic condition with poor livelihood strategies. The Muslim are also from ethnic and marginalized community are socially discriminated in Nepal. With this regard, this study finds the cultural practices of Muslim community along with the livelihood status of the Muslims of Rajpur Municipality.

1.6 Research questions

The study was focused to answer the following research questions:

- a. What are the socio-cultural systems prevalent in Islamic community of Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat district?
- b. What are the livelihood strategies of Islam people in Rajpur Municipality?
- c. What are the socio-economic constraints (challenges) of Islam people in Rajpur Municipality?

1.7 Objectives of the study

The major objective of the study was to explore the culture of the Islamic community of Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat district of Nepal. However, the study was guided by the following sub objectives:

- a. To explore the livelihood strategies and challenges faced by the Islamic people in Rajpur
- b. To identify the social, economic constraints of people and youth representation in decision making level

1.8 Significance of the study

There are limited literatures available to understand the Muslim culture and society. Most of the studies have mentioned about the weak economic condition and social exclusion but fails to find the reasons of social dominance in the society. This study is first of its kind to find the indepth details about the social and cultural status of Muslims community of Rautahat district. The study also finds the reasons of social dominance of Muslim community. The study included wards of Rajpur Municipality having highest number of Muslim population.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

The study was purposively conducted in the ward that had highest number of Muslims family. This study also acts as the sample study of Muslims for the particular ward of the Rajapur rather than collecting the voice of all the Muslims of Rajpur.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Islam

Dastider (2000) mentioned that the population of Muslim is not fair. The exact figure as mentioned in Census is higher than shown and is located in all the district of Nepal. Writing about the history, the paper mentioned that the Muslims were invited by Rana for their zamindari skills from Awadh region neighboring to Kapilbastu.

Bista (1997) shared that Kashmiri traders were the first Muslim to enter Nepal during the period of Ratna Malla who used to trade rock salt, carpet and woolen goods. Kashmiris used to go to Lhasa via Kathmandu. Most of the Muslim in western Terai speaks Urdu but in other part of the country, the language is influenced by the local society that they live in. Most of the Muslims living in Terai are farmers with few of them are tailors and bangle sellers. However, the Muslims living in Kathmandu are economically advanced as they are involved in trading and shop keeping.

Ojha (2021) has shared the history of Muslims in Nepal, social status and their relationships with other religion and castes. The author has mentioned as how the Muslims groups have been living together in same community together with the Hindus. The paper has highlighted that the Muslims in Nepal have open opportunities to be part of the government bodies, engage in political activities.

Bhusal (2014) has divided the Muslims of Nepal into five groups namely Kashmiri Muslims, Indian Muslims, Tibetan Muslims, Terai Muslims and Hill Muslims. The common word used for Muslim in Nepal is 'Musalman'. There is majority of Muslims in Terai region of Nepal. Churoute is second cultural group in Muslims who lives in the western hilly region of Nepal. The Muslims have been divided into either Sunni or Shias. Shias are calm, quiet and the majority population holder in Nepal. Islam is very rich in culture and tradition with their unique language, festival, food, art, literature and calendar.

Majority of the Muslims communities have weak economic condition due to lesser livelihood opportunities. For sustaining proper livelihood, an individual should have access to human, social, economic, physical and natural capitals (DFID, 2000). The

constitution of Nepal has also categorized Muslims as a minority and asked the authority to provide special provision to increase their participation at decision making level (UNHRC, 2012, p.1). This study seeks to enlighten the issue by examining cultural values of Islam communities and find the current livelihood challenges faced by the people.

Muslims in Nepal are from marginalized minority community who has poor health outcomes. The study (Buggy et al., 2020) on “Physical Barriers and Attitudes towards Accessing Healthcare in a Rural Muslim Population in Nepal” has recommended to further study the physical, economic, social and cultural barriers experienced by the Muslim communities in Nepal.

Muslims communities have poor economic conditions with more than 74% Muslims lives in Terai region of Nepal and working as farmers and agricultural laborers (Yasmin, 2020, p. 5). The author also highlighted that there is limited research papers related to Muslims of Nepal and need of further in-depth study (p. 12).

2.2 Culture

Culture is about how we think, act and live our life. The culture of the person includes the custom and tradition that is prevalent in earlier times and has been passed from one generation to another. It includes our festivals, language, living style, knowledge and behavior towards the society. A paper (Haque, 2013) entitled “Muslims Cultural and Religious Practices as a Minority Group in Nepal” described as how Muslims are restricted to perform their cultures and tradition in Nepal. The Muslims need permission from the local authorities for doing gatherings with religious and traditional purposes. Muslims of Nepal have high illiteracy rate, are poor and have very low standard of living.

Campbell & Guiao (2010) highlights about Islamic culture and belief. The author mentions that the Prophet Muhammad founded Islam in the early seventh century and Muhammad's teaching is found in a book called Koran.

Yasmin (2020), the Muslim cultural practices have been mentioned which shares that Muslims are the people who follows or practice Islam. The author says that the meaning of Muslim is "submitter" (to God) believed that “Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that revealed many times before through prophets including

Adam, Islam teaches that.” In Islam culture, people have high belief on Allah and considers Allah is one and incomparable with him. Hazraat Mohammad is known as the messenger or prophet of Allah.

Ojha (2012), claims that in the history of 500 years, Muslims have been living together with the people of other religion in Nepal. This overall situation is important on the study of religious harmony which shows communities can live in peace and harmony without conflict and tension. It is accepted that the unity and solidarity among religious groups is very much important to form a harmonious society. It is necessary to initiate inter-religious harmony with full trust and mutual respect among multi-religious groups.

Muslims have their own culture and tradition. Nepal has highest number of Hinduism followers and yet Muslims have been living together in the same society. The religious and cultural education can be gained from society and community an individual live and the education institution that they study. Madarsah is identified as the most trusted institution by Muslims for providing cultural education (CERID, 2008). As they belong to minority groups in Nepal, there would be several challenges faced by them. This study will be focused on the Muslims of Rautahat district to identify the cultural, religious and social challenges faced by these people.

2.3 Religion

A study conducted by Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2010) stated that Muslims have been given low social status and have been considered as impure (low caste) and called as "Pani Na Chalne" (p. 2). There are limited studies conducted on cultural and religious practices of Muslims in Nepal with Government giving less focus to these groups (Thapa, 2000).

An article by Shah (2019) entitled “Secularism - An Impractical Idea” shared that Karl Marx, father of communism, was the strong opponent of religious system. According to the Marx, the religion is created to exploit the people. He argued that the abolition of religion is very much necessary to end the domination among the people. Several researchers have said that the religious suffering is difficult to bear.

Caste is based on the specific occupation they are involved in. In Nepalese society, Brahman are said to be from priest category, Kshatriya warriors, Vaisya merchants and

Sudras are categorized as untouchables (Subedi, 2010). The current Constitution of Nepal doesn't entertain the caste differentiation but the social cases are still prevalent.

The culture and religious aspects of Islam is totally different than that of other religions. As Nepal is the inhabitant of highest number of Hinduism, this religious has overshadowed other religious from long period of time. One cultural difference that has observed is the sacrifice of cows during Eid-ul-Azha which is strictly prohibited in Nepal. The Nepal government provides week long holidays on Dashain while the case is different for other groups of people including Muslims main festival Eid-ul-Azha (Bakri Id) (Salam, 2007). Muslims allow polygamous marriage where it is prohibited by the Constitution of Nepal. In this way, it's difficult to follow religious practice being different from the dominant culture and practices. In one hand, the Muslim's religious book teaches one custom and tradition which is not accepted by the other culture. However, the Muslims have been living together following their own culture and religious beliefs.

The Muslims came in Nepal in different times for different purposes and settled in different part of the country. However the Muslims have been living together with different religion causing high impact in their culture, social behavior, attitude, understanding and co-operation to promote the religious harmony. Ojha (2021) argues that Muslims, Tibetan and Kashmiri Muslims of Kathmandu Valley are very liberal in socio-religious matter whereas Terai Muslims and Indian immigrants are orthodox and rigid with their Hindu and other religious neighbours.

According to Yasmin (2012), the Muslims claim Urdu as their cultural language as all the literatures and Islamic codes are written in the Urdu language. The study also shared that the Kashmiri Muslim used the mixture of Nepali and Urdu and are even fluent in Newari language. It is seen that Muslim adopts the language where they live along with speaking the Urdu language. The common used language by Muslim are Nepali, Newari, Tibetan, Awadhi, Bhojपुरी, Hindi and Maithali. With regard to literature, Quran is widely used by Muslim and these Islamic books are even available now in local language. The Mosque, Tomb, palace and fort have been widely used by Muslim from ancient times. Currently as well, there are Mosques in the communities where the Muslims live.

In a study conducted among the Muslim communities in Rautahat and Bara districts of Nepal, it was found that the people had a feeling that their culture, religion and language

have been hampered by the elite Hindus of the society (UNHRC, 2012, p. 2). The study has highlighted various issues faced by Muslims communities such as social discrimination, lack of land ownerships, and lack of livelihood opportunities, early marriage, polygamy and poor education.

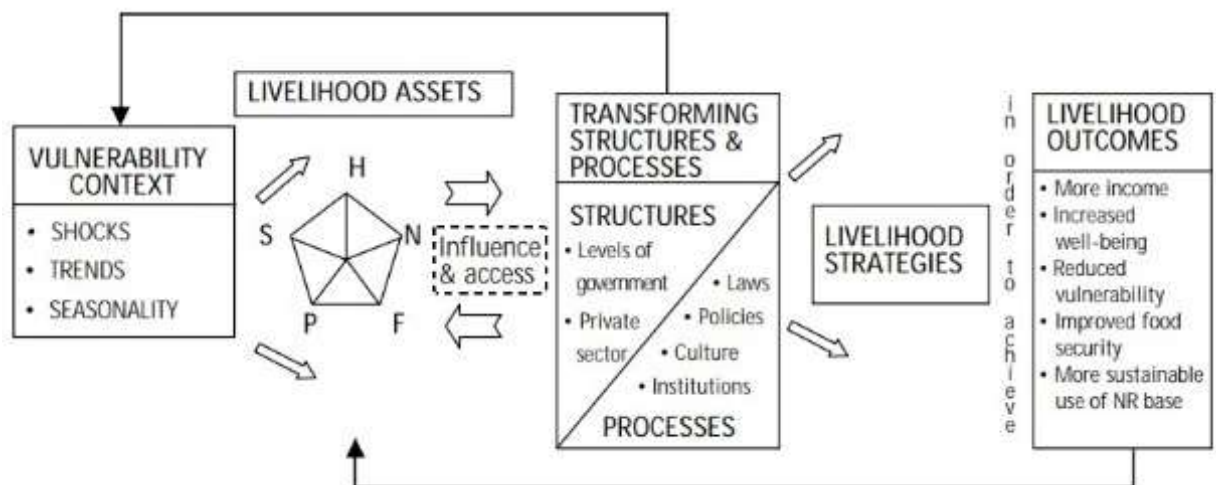
2.4 Livelihood

A study conducted in India (Mollah & Bera, 2018) to find the problems of Muslims highlighted the weak socio economic condition and recommended the minorities to be mainstreamed in social, political and economic spheres(p. 220).

A book entitled “The Muslim Communities of Nepal” has focused on the socio-cultural condition of Muslims in Nepal showing the beauty of their cultural traditions, beliefs and practices (Seddon, 2018).

Figure 2.1

Sustainable livelihood framework



Note. The framework for sustainable livelihood is from DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and its Framework. **Source:** DFID (1999)

The livelihood strategies of people can be understood by getting answers to two major questions. What are people doing to make a living and why are they doing what they are doing? (Levine, 2014). Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) is applied to assess the livelihood condition of people and evaluate their livelihood generation activities (Dasgupta, 2013). The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) has been implemented by

different bilateral, multilateral and international ngos (Hussein, 2002). The SLA is implemented by Department for International Development (DFID), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), World Bank, CARE and Oxfam. DFID, Oxfam, CARE and UNDP have their own livelihood approaches but all are linked with the ideas shared by Chambers and Conway in 1992 (Carney et al., 1999). Chambers and Conway had given the revised version of the sustainable livelihood of a report published by an Advisory Panel of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 (Chambers & Conway, 1992). WCED focused on income and security while defining sustainable livelihood. Sustainable livelihood has been defined as the livelihood comprising the capabilities, assets and activities required to sustain a living and it can be sustainable if it can cope and recover from stress and shocks (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The Sustainable Development Goals also talk about the livelihood opportunity for all the people. SDG 8 talks about decent work for all. Waste workers in poor economic conditions are paid less. It is even difficult to track the status of informal waste workers who need essential public services, health facilities and proper wages. Goal 8 has given emphasis on labour rights with securing a working environment.

Table 2.1*Chronology of the development of the sustainable livelihoods approach*

Date	Details
1987	Brundtland Commission report published
1992	IDS published a report on Sustainable Rural Livelihood
1993	Oxfam started to employ the SL approach in formulating overall aims, improving project strategies and staff training
1994	SLA implemented by CARE for household livelihood security as a programming framework in its relief and development work
1995	UNDP adopted Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods as one of top five priorities
1996	DFID implemented sustainable livelihood projects
1998	DFID's Natural Resources Department opened a consultation on sustainable livelihoods and establishes a Rural Livelihoods Advisory Group; Natural Resources Advisers annual conference took Sustainable Livelihoods as its theme and later published contributory papers: Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can We Make?; SID published The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, General Report of the Sustainable Livelihoods Project 1995–1997; UNDP published Policy Analysis and Formulation for Sustainable Livelihoods; DFID established the SL Virtual Resource Centre and the SL Theme Group; IDS published 'Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis'; The FAO/UNDP Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches and Methods to Support Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security met for the first time
1999	DFID created the Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office and appointed Jane Clark as its Head; DFID published the first Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets; Sustainable Livelihoods and Poverty Elimination and Livelihoods Approaches Compared
2000	DFID commissions and funds Livelihoods Connect, a website serving as a learning platform for SLA; FAO organised an Inter-agency Forum on Operationalising Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches, involving DFID, FAO, WFP, UNDP, and IFAD; DFID published Sustainable Livelihoods – Current thinking and practice; Sustainable Livelihoods – Building on Strengths (DFID); Achieving Sustainability: Poverty Elimination and the Environment; Oxfam published Environments and Livelihoods: Strategies for Sustainability
2001	DFID commissions researched on further development of the SLA framework; practical policy options to support sustainable livelihoods; DFID organised SLA review meeting of officials, researchers and practitioners

Note. The table showing Sustainable Livelihoods Chronology is from Sustainable

Livelihoods: A Case Study of the Evolution of DFID Policy. **Source:** Solesbury (2003)

Table 2.2*SDGs and targets related to livelihood*

Sustainable Development Goals	Targets related to livelihood
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	8.3 Promote development oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium sized enterprises, including through access to financial services 8.8 Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

Note. The table showing the SDG and target is from Sustainable Development Solution Network from SDSN (2020)

CARE

The livelihoods approach of CARE suggests basic needs and right based approach. CARE defines livelihood strategy as the interaction between the human capabilities (education, skills, health, and psychological orientation), access to the assets and the associated economic activities (Carney et al., 1999). The livelihoods approach of CARE is mostly used in relief and development related activities (Carney et al., 1999). CARE has identified three fundamental attributes which households need to have for their livelihood strategy.

- One needs to have human capabilities such as education, skills, health
- Need to have access to tangible and intangible assets
- Involvement in economic activities

OXFAM

Oxfam adopted a sustainable livelihoods approach in the 1993 (Carney et al., 1999) and employed SLA in formulating its aims, improving its project strategies and training of the staffs (Morse, Mcnamara and Acholo, 2009). The approach divides people's assets into five categories namely human assets (skill, knowledge, good health), social assets (groups, relationships), physical assets (transportation, energy, housing), financial assets (income, pensions, savings) and public assets (libraries, local organizations) (May et al., 2009).

UNDP

UNDP livelihood approach is focused on improving the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups by strengthening the resilience of their coping and adaptive strategies (Krantz, 2001). UNDP has identified five assets as natural (land, water, vegetation, wildlife), social (community, family, social networks), political (participation), human (education, labor, health), physical (roads, health care clinics, schools), and economic (jobs, savings, credit opportunities) (Valdes-Rodriguez and Perez-Vazquez, 2011). UNDP has widely used SL approach in agricultural and natural resources work.

DFID

DFID sustainable livelihood approach was integrated in its program in 1997 (DFID, 2000). The sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) of DFID is based upon five livelihood assets namely human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital. The human capital of SLF deals with the abilities, experience, work skills and the good health of an individual (UNDP, 2017). The social capital focuses on network and connections among individuals and institutions and participation in more formal groups. DFID livelihood approach focuses on livelihood difference between various groups, public and private sectors (Carney et al., 1999). DFID focuses on macro-micro links with involvement of local people along with the national and international policies affecting the region (Valdes-Rodriguez and Perez-Vazquez, 2011).

In this chapter of literature review, it was found that all the researchers agree about the poor socio-economic condition of the Muslims. The Muslims have their own unique culture and beliefs, yet there are handful of literatures available to look about their daily challenges and strategies to cope with the situation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study includes the research design, study area and the respondents of my research. It was helpful to gather information from my study site leading to analyze and interpretation process. As discussed under this chapter, an ethnographic design has taken into consideration and the study was done in the natural setting in Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat district within the similar culture people valuing their perception.

3.1 Research design

This study used qualitative design. The qualitative interviews were conducted with the local Muslims of the Rajpur Municipality.

3.2 Study area

The area of this study was Rajpur Municipality of the Rautahat district. Rautahat district lies in Madhesh province of Nepal with its headquarter in Gaur. It covers an area of 1,126 sq km with 16 municipalities. One of the Municipality is Rajpur where the study was conducted. The Rajpur Municipality has a total area of 31.41 km² with population of 42,574 and household number of 8436 (GoN, 2020).

Figure 3.1: Google map of Rajpur Municipality, Rautahat



Note. The map of Rajpur municipality and its surrounding local bodies is from google map.

3.3 Source of data

The data was collected from households and experts. A semi structured questionnaire was prepared and filled by visiting the Muslim houses in Rajpur. Apart from this, interviews were taken from the Muslim leader of the area mainly who have ideas about the history and culture of the Muslims. The newly elected local body officials are also from Muslim community, so the insights of the policy makers was also be assessed through this study.

The semi structured question mostly contains open ended questions. Each questionnaire was filled up representing the information regarding the family of the respondent as a whole.

A self-administered semi structured questionnaire was used to gather data from Muslim residents of Rajpur Municipality. The questionnaire contained the socio demographic information of the participants, cultural and traditional practice and their livelihood strategies.

A semi structured questionnaire was also asked with the community leaders and government official of the Rajpur Municipality. The required secondary data was

collected from relevant literatures, Rajpur Municipality Office and their published and unpublished documents, internet, relevant stakeholders etc.

3.4 Sampling technique

The study used snowball sampling method. First of all, the ward with highest number of Muslim population was identified. Based on the information obtained, the community was chosen nearby the ward office. The semi structured questionnaire was asked with the local Muslim residents based on their availability and willing to participate in the study. Further the participants were linked with other to undertake the study as in snowball sampling method. The data was taken from participants unless the saturation level is reached.

Theoretical framework

This study used ethnographic design to access the information from the residents of Rajpur Municipality. Naturalism is considered as major methodological feature within ethnographic research. It captures the nature of human action in the real setting. For this, the study was carried out intensively, in direct contact and engaging with real activities of the participants. And this also aligns with my current research framework for understanding the culture of the Rajpur residents. The participant observation, direct conversation and open detailed interviews are commonly used in ethnographic research.

3.5 Analysis, presentation and write-up

The information was gathered from the field through in depth interviews and site observations. The information was recorded. The data was categorized based on the themes. The information shared by the participated was noted in the paper and recorded to transcribe later. The record data was translated in English and arranged based on the sub themes of the study.

3.6 Ethical consideration

It was ensured that the information gathered from the field solely used for the academic purpose. The participants were made aware about the reasons of conducting the study and proper consent was taken before undertaking the interviews. All the participants in the

study involved voluntarily. I have taken the consent from the research participants for interview and its recording. The names of the people and places that were involved during the research process have been changed. The conversations and the interaction were interpreted with reflections and understanding of the context. I also ensured them that their identity will not be disclosed without taking their prior consent. Some of them had no problem disclosing their identity and others asked me not to mention their details. I have done accordingly here in this paper. As an ethical consideration, the qualitative researchers face dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations (Sanjari, 2014). These points were considered during the research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

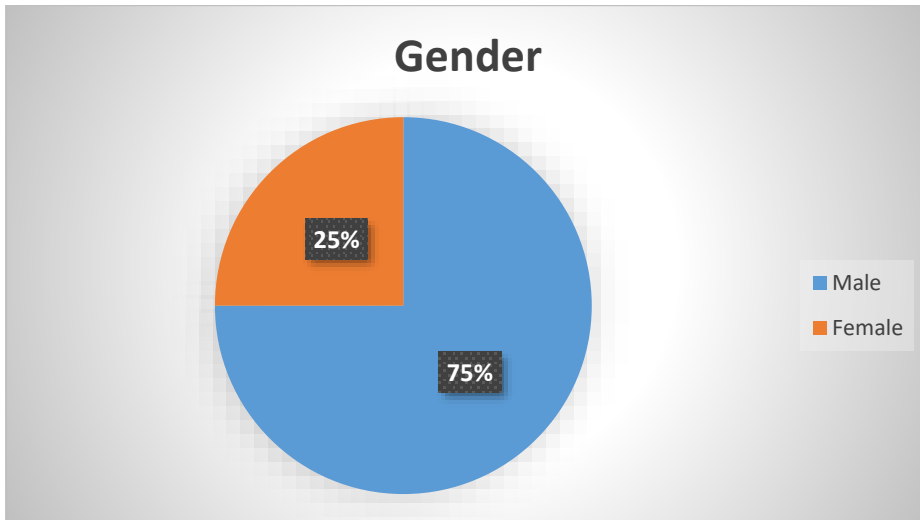
The data collection was conducted from Muslim communities of Rajpur Municipality of Rautahat district. The participants were made aware about the reasons of conducting the study and verbal consent would be taken before undertaking the interviews. All the participants in the study were involved voluntarily. A saturation level was reached after conducting interviews with around 16 participants.

Table 4.1:

Interviewed participants and their details

Participants	Details	Remarks
Local households (21)	It includes the locals of Rajpur Municipality.	Females were hesitated to share and participate in the data collection.
Local bodies (3)	It includes the ward and municipality authorities of the study site.	
Islam culture experts (6)	It includes experts who were aware about the issues and challenges faced by Muslim community of Rajpur.	
Community leaders (7)	It includes the community leaders who have ideas about past and present culture differences within the Muslim communities.	
School/Madarsah students and teachers (11)	It includes teachers and students from Islamic school and Madarsah.	

Note. The table shows the numbers of respondents from different sectors.

Figure 4.1*Participant's distribution based on gender*

Note. The figure shows the percentage of male and female responders during research.

The survey was used for the local household members of Rajapur Municipality. However the semi structured interviews were conducted with local leaders, local bodies and community organization members.

4.1 Socio-cultural system prevalent in Islamic community of Rajapur

My study demanded in-depth interview with the local community members of Rajapur Municipality. In most of the cases, I had issue with the language. Most of the people preferred to speak Hindi language. At the time of taking verbal consent, I also mentioned that I would be using the voice recorder to record the conversation so that it would be easy for me translate and transcribe the content. In few cases, I had to even undertake help of my colleague for the conversation with my participants. The sub themes of this chapter include the cultural practices of Muslim community of Rajapur, education system, income and occupation as part of their socio-economic condition.

Cultural practices of Muslims

It was found the Muslims in the study area were using various languages including Nepali, Hindi and Bhojpuri. However, all the Muslims claimed the Urdu as their cultural language as their Islamic codes and books are written in the same language. But the students and teachers at Madarsah had given high priority to the Urdu language. A school

girl interviewed from Juwiriya Islamic Girl's School said, "One of the main reasons for coming to Madrasah is that I got to know about the Urdu language".

Muslims in the study area also gave high priority to their holy book Quran. However, it was found that the perception regarding the message from Quran were different among different people. According to a Muslim leader, the Islam community strictly follows the Quran which has five pillars which every Muslims must follow. He shared about oneness of Allah. The Oneness of Allah means that "there is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet". The second pillar he shared that "*Hum logoko ek dinme paanch bar namaz padhna jaruri hai*" (It's compulsion to offer praying for five times in a day which is called 'Namaz'). The third pillar of Quran was doing one month fasting every year. It is celebrated as 'Roza' by Muslims. Apart from this, the fourth pillar argues that every Muslims must go to 'Macca' for at least one time in their life. The fifth pillar talks about donation and charity by the Muslim people. Muslim people have to donate certain amount of their earning to help the poor people and provide charity which is called 'Zakat' in local language. He said though Quran has mentioned that every Muslim has to go 'Macca' at least once in their lifetime, it really depends on the economic condition of the people. He added,

Hum logokaa trust hai jahase hum garib logo ko lejate hai harek saal, lekin sab logo ko lejana namumkin hai. (We have trust where we ask the interested poor people who want to go Macca and take few people as well but it's impossible to cover every people).

But he didn't share on what basis are the poor people selected and taken to 'Macca'. But the information regarding the oneness of Allah was different among different leaders and even the community members. Majority of local people of Rajpur shared that oneness is that there is only one god which is Allah. However, a Muslim leader had different perception. He shared that oneness of Allah not only about one god but also about the justice and equality. Allah won't be merciful to those who are not found to be merciful to the mankind. Since, Allah is the creator of everything, there is no offspring, race, gender, body and unaffected by emotion. These characteristics can't be adhered by human. This is the reason one cannot be god and there is only one god.

The people in Rajpur celebrate all the festival as celebrated by the global Islam population. It was found that there is harmonious relation among the people with different caste as well. Angez Khan from Rajapur shared that,

In my area, there is less number of hindus family yet we have good bond harmony among us. The people from hindu caste are always welcome during our festival. People come to our house during Eid and have 'Sewai'. We even use fire crackers and engage with hindu families during Diwali.

The participants of Rajpur Municipality shared that the most popular festivals as Ramadan, Eid and Moharram. In Ramadan, people have fasting for one month long period. In this case, people take food only at the night time. They consume food before Morning Prayer and eat nothing the whole day. It was found that people in Rajpur celebrated two Eid festival; Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrate after Ramadan and Eid-ul-Adaha also called Bakar Eid is important if people wants to go for 'Hajj'. The finding is similar to a study conducted by Ojha (2021) and Liuhto (2012) which confronts the necessity of religious harmony to maintain peace and stability in the country like Nepal.

There was gender differentiation found in wedding and divorce. In most cases, the girl don't know whom they are going to be married and have to accept the groom whose their parents decide. Apart from this, if there is any issue, it's not socially accepted for girl to give divorce to her husband. However, the male members can easily give divorce. A husband in front their family, relatives and local leaders can give divorce just by saying 'talak' three times (talak, talak, talak). However, a community leader said that the cases are different these days. Even Muslim girls have gone to court and have filed case against any assault. The rule of law has been more powerful these days rather than socially accepted norms. Similarly, the polygamy is allowed as per the Muslim culture. But the system is strictly prohibited by country's law and there are multiple cases, where person has been jailed for such activities which are against the constitution. The system of divorce (talak) is still prevalent in Muslim culture in different parts of the country as stated by Yashin (2020). The author adds that polygamous marriage is allowed in Muslims but it depends on a man's ability to support multiple households' activities.

All the people interviewed for the study in Rajpur Municipality shared that they prefer and have done arrange marriage. It is called 'Nikah' in the Muslim community. However, though most of the people didn't prefer to say their age when they got married. They

shared that it's common to get marriage in Muslim community at early stage. When asked if they know that early marriage is illegal in Nepal, Salim Miya shared that,

We are aware about the early marriage. Even I was married in very early age but I won't let it happen with my daughter. My daughter is studying in class eight in government school and I want to see her going to campus. The only thing I am worry is about finding appropriate groom for her. If her age is higher, it might be difficult to find groom for her.

However the perception of Makbool Miya was different. He shared that,

My eldest daughter got married at the age of 14. I have three daughters and I don't want them married at early age but I have no other option. One of the daughters is studying in class five. I know that she is unaware about the marriage and other ritual but the financial burden will increase if I wait for every daughter. Even the groom asks for high price (dahej). The cost for organising the wedding ceremony and demands from groom will definitely increase if I wait for another ten years I have no good source of income and can't afford what groom family demands. I don't know what to do, let's see how Allah helps.

My findings were similar to a study among Muslim people in Kaski district with respect with their education (Bhusal, 2014). It was found that the marriage and religious beliefs were main factors for obstructing educational achievements in Muslims children.

A community Muslim leader said that as per the Quran, the prayers are compulsion in Islam five times in a day. The first praying is offered before sunrise, second in afternoon, third before the sunset, fourth after sunset and the last prayer is offered late night. He added,

Hamlogo ke Quranme paanch baar namaz padhne baat kiya huwa hai. Kohi saksht kahi ho usko namaaz dinme paanch baar padgna padta hai. Subaha se lekar raat tak humlog namaz padhta hai. Aap ye jo masjid dekh rahe hai, waha se mikese yahake admiko namazki timeka waqt pata chalta hai. Aap yaha baithengeto "Allaha ho Akabar" sunaidega thori derme. (As per the Quran, we have to pray fives in a day. From sunrise to night, prayers have to be offered which is called 'Namaz'. There is mike and speaker installed at nearby Mosque. The time for 'Namaz' is announced by the speaker saying "Allaha ho Akbar" If you wait for few time here, you can also listen it).

According to a Muslim leader, there are fix roles of father. The father keeps the name of family and provides their children with good culture and education system. I found that people in Rajpur are aware about educating their children. The parents accepted that though they could study during their time, the system has totally changed from last 10-15 years.

There is a condition called 'Haram' in Islam which means suicide is strictly prohibited. Whatever is the condition; suicide is not accepted and is considered as haram in Islamic religion. Afrz Alam said,

Aadmi galti kari tabho kono chintake baat naikhe, Allah sabke kaam karihan aa kawano samasyo hokhi ta jarooratmandko dekhiya. (Human beings are liable for mistakes, but Allah forgives for mistakes if we have faith over him).

I came to know about the dress code for assigned for men and women in Islam. The men usually wear 'kurta', 'pajama', cap and women wear 'niqab' and 'burka'. However, during my visit at Rajpur, I found that all girl students at Madarshah were using 'niqab'. The students has used separate shawl to cover their head and shoulder. Only the eye sections were visible. There was fix colour of the dress. All teachers were wearing kurta, pajama and cap. My perception before the study was that burka and niqab are same. But during the study at Rajpur and interview with Madarsah represnetatives, community leaders and site observation, I came to know there are several dress code used by women with burka, niqab and hijab which are different. In case of burka, whole body is covered from top to toe including face. In niqab, whole body is covered but the eye section is only open. Hijab is like a headscarf that covers hair and neck only. Several literatures have quoted that the ideological orientation of Madarsahs are conservative (Bhattacharya, 2006). However it was found that the social norms and community standards also help to shape the people ideology. The Muslims are spread thought the country and their perceptions and ideology also differs. According to Bista (2015), the Muslims in earlier days used to go to Lahsa via Nepal. When Ratna Malla invited Kashmiris in Kathmandu, others also entered Nepal from western Nepal and now they have occupied most of the part of Nepal inform of churaute.

Most of the Muslim in western terai speaks urdu, but in other part of the country the language is influenced by the local society that they live in. Most of the Muslims living in

terai are farmers with few of them are tailors and bangles seller. And the details mentioned in Bista (2015) also match with my findings in Rajpur, Rautahat.

Education at Islamic school

To know the education system is prevalent in Muslim community, I visited an Islamic school located in ward 9 Bairiya of Rajpur. I interviewed with three students at the school. Apart from that, I also took interview of the school principal. At first, a girl student felt uncomfortable to talk with me. However, I was with the principal and teachers of the school who asked the girl to share whatever she has felt, experienced and learnt at the school. The school provides accommodation and food for all the students. People living in hostels are from different part of the country including from places of Terai Bara, Parsa, Janakpur, Siraha and few students were even from India as well. There are a total of 700 students with students enrolled from class nursery to 12.

According to the Municipality representative of Rajpur, Dr. NoorMohammad Raajik Aalam, though this is the municipality with majority of Muslim population, there is always harmony among the people. Though the municipality has given priority to education, the people are facing difficulty in getting proper job. They aren't satisfied with their earning and wants to go abroad. Though the economic condition of the people have increased these days due to the remittance, it would be better is they can get employment in their country. The study is similar to the study conducted by Ojha (2021) showcasing the good social relationship of Muslim people with other religion in Nepal. The author also cited that the Muslims have been living together with other religion maintaining peace and harmony.

Anwar Hasan, a local inhabitant from Rajpur, shared his perception on traditional and modern differences on family and education system. Without any hesitant he shared that,

Earlier, there was belief in our religion that more children are gifts of god. If there are more male members in the family, can earn and sustain the family. The females have to only involve in household chores and were not allowed to go outside. Even I had nine siblings but things have totally changed in last 10-15 years. I use to send both my sons and daughters to school. My eldest daughter studies in class eight and is very clear, even teaches me – laughter sound ha, ha, ha. Everything is fine, may Allah bless.

Through personal interview and discussion, I came to know that the Muslim people of Rajpur are rich in culture. Despite being the majority population, Muslims have very good relationship with people from other religion. The Muslims are very strict with following the Quran. However, the new generations have discarded the old tradition and make them adapted as guided by country rules and community ethics. The education system has already from particular Urdu based Madarsah to multidisciplinary Islamic school in Rajpur. But, the local government has been facing challenges to integrate Madarsah with the normal schools.

4.2 Current livelihood situation of Islamic community of Rajpur

To understand the livelihood status, interviews were conducted with households and experts. The study also captured the challenges to sustain the livelihood of Muslim families of Rajpur Municipality.

Livelihood strategies

It was found people have been engaged in different occupation like agriculture, tailoring and production factories. Local inhabitants agreed that their living standard has increased. Most of the people used to work in farm, engaged as tailor, sell bangles and others. Still people are engaged in such occupation but income from such occupation is very less and difficult to feed the family. This is the reason, when the male members of the family become adult and obtain citizenships; they start the process of going abroad. Salman Miya, a local household member, shared that his elder son went to Mumbai in bag making factory around 15 years ago. Following him, his two other sons are working in Mumbai and Delhi. He also shared that most of youths from the area are engaged in bag making job. Even few people have opened their small factory and provided jobs to the Nepalese. However other respondents had different perception, he shared that all of his sons are earning abroad. Only family of youngest son is with him. His other sons have already taken their family members with them. He shared that what is the use of money if all the family members can't be together. However he always feels unhappy that he couldn't provide education facilities to their children during their time. He said,

I am very unhappy that I couldn't prioritize for sending my children to schools. If they had studied well, would have earned money staying in their own place.

The finding is similar as mentioned in a book 'People of Nepal' written by Bista (2015). It has mentioned that most of the Muslim in western terai speaks urdu, but in other part of the country the language is influenced by the local society that they live in. Most of the Muslims living in terai are farmers with few of them are tailors and bangles seller. The Muslims living in Kathmandu are economically viable as they are involved in trading and shop keeping.

An expert agreed that the income of the household is currently largely dependent on the remittance. The scenario is such that people increase their age in citizenship so that they can go abroad to earn money. But he this isn't something to be very happy. The skilled manpower is going abroad and we are hiring that manpower from neighboring India at higher cost. The condition is that it is difficult to find people to work in the farm. Earlier the agricultural production was very good and able to sustain the need of the Rautahat district. However, the condition is that several products are being imported. The local government needs to bring the different employment opportunities for capable youths.

As an Islamic cultural expert, Dr. Mohammad Kaushar Alam shared that, "there are several cases of degrading our cultures by youths during Moharram. Though there are Sunni Muslims in Rautahat, the youths who work abroad mostly in Mumbai and Delhi come to their home during Moharram." He added that,

Even Siya don't allow alcohol but in recent years, people have found using alcohol, shouting and dancing (seems vulgarism) during Moharram. In our case, we do fasting (roza), sit in home and celebrate it. Even the community leaders share the misconduct of cultural practices but the cases have been increased in recent years.

The community leaders are worried if this could degrade the social harmony. To ensure the proper livelihood, it is necessary there is a proper understanding and good networking among individuals. If there are any problems, community can come in front and help the people in need.

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (DFID, 1999). We can even see this from an economic paradigm.

Economic security promotes happiness, and is beneficial for growth and social stability. This is a central finding of a new ILO report (2004), which attempts for the first time to measure social and economic security of individuals and countries around the world. The report shows that about 73% of all workers live in circumstances of economic insecurity. Nepal is also one where much needed to be done. If we look and compare different livelihood capitals of Muslim people of Rajpur, it was found that they are weak in most of those forms.

After analyzing the livelihood strategies of Muslim people of Rajpur, I came to know that people have been involved in various works from agriculture to bag making, sewing and selling bangles. All the capitals of livelihood were poor with worst case with social, natural and physical capitals. Though the income level of people has been increased, it isn't coming from the production sector. The income is heavily dependent on the remittance.

Livelihood challenges

The livelihood problems faced by residents of Rajpur were different based on the occupation they were involved in. Mohammad Hassan having a tailor shop in a corner in market shared that the cost of sewing machine, machine oil and thread have increased. However, the money paid by people for stitching is very less. He shared that,

"If I increase the sewing charge, people will start visiting another shop. I was the second tailor shop to be established in the market but now there are more than 30 such independent shops The competition is very high and the income from the work has increased."

Similarly another participant used to work in another agricultural farm and get 50% of the produced items. He shared that the cost of labor and urea has increased. It is very difficult to find the people to work in the field.

The people were asked to share which of the livelihood capitals among financial, social, physical, natural and human capitals were important I shared the difference of these capitals and their components to the household participants. All the participants gave first priority to the financial capital. Bibi Miya shared that,

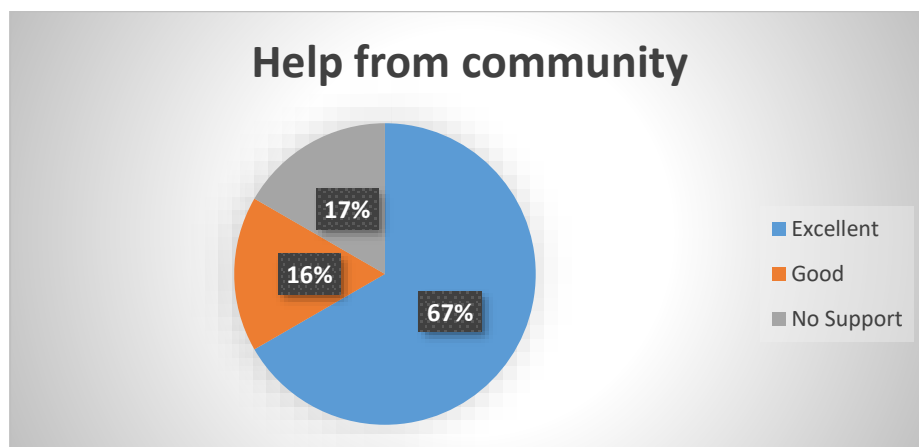
If one has money that people can buy any stuffs they want. They can go anywhere without restriction. The political leaders are why so powerful because they have money. They can do anything.

Households were asked with a question as how difficult is it for them to get job. All the people said that it was very difficult to get job. The case may be as the people are looking for high paying job but have to be involved in contract based with no regular monthly income. Few participants who were involved as working in other farms shared that they don't have fixed income. They always look for alternative job and even go to neighboring India for labor jobs. Mohamad Iqbal said

“There are even condition that I have think how to feed by family in the evening. If there is no client in any day, I have to come home bare hand I have small tailor shop where most of the people come for re-stitching. Earlier I was hired by a cloth shop where I had fixed salary but now I have small shop corner and people even notice it. Since we don't have saving, it is really difficult few times. However he shared that his one of the son has gone abroad to earn money and have been sending money but it is used to pay loan which was taken to send his son abroad. The other son is just 13 years old and can't go for earning. Only my earning is used to feed my whole family.

Figure 4.2

Response of help from community



Note. The figure shows the response from responder regarding the help they are getting from the community.

A question as how are the people satisfied with the help receive from the community members, it was found that majority of people have received excellent support from the community people. This shows the level of social relation and harmony among the people. One of the participants shared that,

My husband passed away when I was just 23 and I had three children. It was very difficult for me to take of those children. However the community collected money and nearby Madarsah admitted my children there. Later, the school also took the admission based on the recommendation of the ward. Now one of the sons is working in a garage. He didn't studied well, only till class seven. However, my other two children are still enrolled in school.

This shows if the community member wouldn't come in front helping the lady to sustain her life, her children life would have been more miserable. Howeve finding from my study was totally different what the UNHRC (2012) found. The study claimed that the people had a feeling that their culture, religion and language have been hampered by the elite Hindus of the society. However, in discussion with the Municipality authorities, there is no such scenario in Rajpur. In spite of having majority of Muslim, one can't find degrading or hampering the religious view of the people from other castes. He claimed that the case of Rajpur is totally different. From Municipalities authorities to ward members and community leaders and households are Muslim, due to which it is easy for us to make laws and implement at local level.

A question related to livelihood challenges was also asked with Municipality official but they shared that there is no major livelihood challenges faced by the people. People can easily sustain their life and are involved in different income generating activities. Under Prime Minister Relief Fund, the Municipality was also running providing employment to the locals. But it is necessary to understand that livelihood isn't only about the income and lifestyle of the people. As per the livelihood can be only sustainable, if it meets the criteria for all associated capitals including social, economic, physical, natural and human (DFID, 1999). There should be proper working time an earning as per the nature of the job. Even the Labor Act 2017 of Nepal has provision of working hours no more than eight hours a day and forty-eight hours a week. The act has also provision for occupational health and safety of the workers. The act has made provision of social security scheme the provident fund, gratuity and medical insurance of the workers. It also talks about the authorized trade union or labour relation committee. The Five Year Plan

2019/20 of Nepal Government has mentioned to bring all the workers under the social security system gradually formalizing the informal sector. It has also focused on human capital potentials with emphasis on creating employment opportunities.

The livelihood challenges faced by the people were fully based on the income activities they were involved in. When talking about all livelihood capitals, people were giving high priority to the income. There was common perception that when one has money, they can maintain good social relationship, develop infrastructures and easily fulfill all their needs.

4.3 Socio-economic challenges of Islamic community of Rajpur

To understand the socio-economic challenges faced by the people of Rajpur, locals were asked with several questions. The questions were mainly related to their income, occupation and education.

Income

It was found that majority of people didn't want to share their exact income. Arsad Alam shared that,

Hamar tinu beta sa kamayela bahar gaile baran. Yeha kaha kaam mili. Padhe bela na padhlan sa, abhi kaam khojeme dikkat ho jata. Hum ta khet khaliyani kar leni, mane abhin sa ladka saa kaha maniyani sa. Duigo betake kamai niman baa, har mihana paisawo pathaye lan. Chhotka ladha 3 mahina pahila gayiyle baa, uho 2-4 mahiname deuba pathaye lagi. Mane paisa ke kono dikkat naikhe, jawan paisa pathewe lan wohi se pug jala. Karja warja katake hami pariwarke pug jaai. (I have three sons and all have gone abroad to earn money. They didn't show interest for the study and now have to work for others. Two sons have been sending money and youngest one went just three months ago. I don't have issue with having money. Most of the portion send by them is used to pay that they took to go abroad).

Dr. Fariyaz Alam shared that taking interest of the saving or fixed deposits are also haram. I was surprised to know how taking interest of our own saving is haram. He shared that,

We only take what is ours! Since we have deposited particular amount, the deposited amount is only ours. In other Islamic countries, there is system where

the interest from the deposited amount is directly sent for charity. If someone is on your door asking for the money or any help, we must help them in any way we can. There is system of 'Sadka Khairat' in Islam community. If there are any helpless people with poor health condition, we need to immediately help (called Sadka). Apart from this, we need to always provide help to poor people (called Khairat)".But this was ashish

Education

It was found that most of the children used to go Madarsah. The Madarsah has also changed from earlier days. Previously the students were taught in Urdu language. Now the children are taught with Nepali, English, Mathematics and Science subject as well. I found that all students at Madarsah used Nepali language. The Madarsah was also teaching Nepali language, so the students were using Nepali language based on the questions that I asked to them. Upon asking why were they attending Madarsa rather than going to the normal government or private school, the students replied that previously Urdu was only the subject taught but in present days all the subjects of normal school are also included in the curriculum, so they are not deprived of schooling like normal kids. I found that one of the main reasons of attending Madarsa was to learn Urdu and Farsi language. All the students interviewed said that they wanted to learn Urdu language which is not taught in other normal schools. Apart from this, safety was also their concern. There was separate hostel and rooms assigned for girls studying in Madarsas.

I had also discussion about the schools and education system with Municipality officials and experts. I found that the local governments were aware about the education practices prevalent at Madarsah. However the issue was that though there were Islamic schools and Madarsah, it was not given accreditation by government for secondary board. Also it was difficult for local government to track the exact number of students. In most of the cases students were enrolled both at Madarsah and schools. An expert shared that,

The education system of our areas has totally changed now. The Government in collaboration with different organizations has been organizing child education program. Even the province government has scheme of Beti Padhao abhiyan. This has helped a lot. The perceptions of people have changed from last 15 years.

When I asked if there is any plan or issue in upgrading the education system in Rajpur, a municipality authority added that,

There are several students who go to both Madarsah and School as well. In this case, it is difficult to make plan and allocate resources for students. The municipality is working to find as how coordination can be established among Madarsahs and schools.

One of the respondents had separate argument. He shared that,

Hamar laika college tak apdhle baa Ketna kaam khojlakha mane kaam naikhe milat Dekhatani sahuji ke beto India se padh ke aile ba mane ghare me baithal baa Ta yi hisab se besi padhla ke kathi faida bhail Doctor engineerra sa ehinge baitha taran sa. (My son also studied till college but couldn't get any job. Sahuji's son has also studied from India but has been sitting in home from longer time. What is the importance of education, if one can't easily get job. The situation is that doctors and engineers are sitting home and not able to earn money).

We checked this with municipality officials as well, and they agreed that there is employment issue in the Municipality. This is the reason if one of the parents sees that other children are sitting in home even after higher education, people are not convinced to let their study higher. Instead people have perception that their children will earn and help in sustaining the family. As cited by Paudel (2018), there is need of money and time in education for educational investment. There is common perception that the people can easily get higher paid job if they acquire education. But it is necessary to understand that the chance of acquiring higher education depends on the foundation level of the education of the children if the base is not strong, the whole system may collapse.

An expert shared that INGOS have been investing in equity and inclusion in education system in different areas of Rautahat district. From past three years, World Education Inc./UNICEF have been working in eight different local bodies of Rautahat district to conduct program to minimize these issues through the provisions of various reading/learning materials, enhancement of teachers' skills for interactive and equitable access to education, etc. The program has been supporting the Early Grade Reading (EGR) and EGM (Early Grade Math) with core function to improve the reading and learning skills of students from class 1-3. When I asked if such project can help in solving the current educational system, he replied that it is necessary to organize more TOT

programs. The schools in the Municipality are still conducting the teaching learning system using the old traditional method. In this progressive education period, students need to be made aware about real world problem and the challenges can be tackled in more effective way.

Change in Perception and Practices: Traditional vs Modern

As the people are being educated, the people have been dropping the tradition customs which is against the country's rule and regulation. There is no doubt that the tradition and reforms have been practiced to preserve the culture but has to be adopted as per the social norms and modern practice. A community leader from Rajpur shared that,

The Islam has kept restriction with movement of girls. But this has changed significantly in recent years. The people don't want to differentiate other on basis on gender. You can see girls going out of home for shopping and other purposes. Most importantly there is awareness regarding the education. Even in Muslim culture, you can see both sons and daughters going to school together." He further added that, "earlier the wives were suppressed and had to do whatever asked by the husband. Now they have started asking for their rights.

This shows that the rule of law still prevalent in the country and women are also capabilities of taking leadership role. You can see women taking major roles at municipal and national level." But Mohammad Iqbal, a local resident, had different perception He shared that,

The Quran is most important to us. We follow whatever is written in the Quran. The restrictions are made to live a disciplined life. If everyone follows the Quran, there won't be any clash in the society. But he also has a common understanding that there shouldn't be any differentiation among people based on caste, gender and economic level. I am also sending my sons and daughters to Madarsah. I could study at my time but I want to ensure that all my children are educated enough to get proper job and live their life happily.

This shows that people have accepted the fact that the cultural practices which supports discrimination and social clash should be revised and community should only adhered to practices that have legal imprints.

It was found the Madarsah system was important for the people of Rajpur to learn Urdu language. Almost all the most used to go Madasah to know about the message written in Quran. In most of the cases, when the people are aware about the information of Quran, they leave going Madarsah and enroll in schools. On other hand, it was difficult for local government to track the number of students as they are enrolled in both schools and Madarsah mainly during the stage of primary education.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

The Muslim people of Rajpur are rich in culture. Despite being the majority population, Muslims have very good harmony and social engagements with people from other religion. The Muslims of Rajpur are very strict with following the traditions and as the message written in their holy book, Quran. However, the new generation has discarded the old tradition and makes them adapted as guided by country rules and community ethics.

It was found the Muslims in the study area were using various languages including Nepali, Hindi and Bhojpuri. However, all the Muslims claimed the Urdu as their cultural language as their Islamic codes and books are written in the same language. Muslims in the study area also gave high priority to their holy book Quran. However, it was found that the perception regarding the message from Quran were different among different people. The people in Rajpur celebrate all the festival as celebrated by the global Islam population. It was found that there is harmonious relation between the people with different caste as well.

All the people interviewed for the study in Rajpur Municipality shared that they prefer and have done arrange marriage. It is called 'Nikah' in the Muslim community. However, though most of the people didn't prefer to say their age when they got married. They shared that it's common to get marriage in Muslim community at early stage. It was found that the marriage and religious beliefs were main factors for obstructing educational achievements in Muslims children. There is a condition called 'Haram' in Islam which means suicide is strictly prohibited. Whatever are the conditions; suicide is not accepted and is considered as haram in Islamic religion. Even that taking interest of the saving or fixed deposit is also haram.

After analyzing the livelihood strategies of Muslim people of Rajpur, I came to know that people have been involved in various works from agriculture to bag making, sewing and selling bangles. All the capitals of livelihood were poor with worst case with social,

natural and physical capitals. Though the income level of people has been increased, it isn't coming from the production sector. The income is heavily dependent on the remittance. The livelihood challenges faced by the people were fully based on the income activities they were involve in. When talking about all livelihood capitals, people were giving high priority to the income. There was common perception that when one has money, they can maintain good social relationship, develop infrastructures and easily fulfill all their needs.

Households shared that it was very difficult for them to get job. The case may be as the people are looking for high paying job but have to be involved in contract based with no regular monthly income. Few participants who were involved as working in other farms shared that they don't have fixed income. They always look for alternative job and even go to neighboring India for labor jobs. People can easily sustain their life and are involved in different income generating activities. Under Prime Minister Relief Fund, the Municipality was also providing employment to the locals. But it is necessary to understand that livelihood isn't only about the income and lifestyle of the people. As per the livelihood it can be only sustainable, if it meets the criteria for all associated capitals including social, economic, physical, natural and human. The income of the household is largely dependent on the remittance. The scenario is such that people increase their age in citizenship so that they can go abroad to earn money. The skilled manpower is going abroad and the Municipality is hiring that manpower from neighboring India at higher cost. The condition is that it is difficult to find people to work in the farm. Earlier the agricultural production was very good and able to sustain the need of the Rautahat district. However, the condition is that several products are being imported. The local government needs to bring the different employment opportunities for capable youths.

Muslims have been living with other religion in Nepal. This overall situation is important on the study of religious harmony which shows communities can live in peace and harmony without conflict and tension. It is accepted that the unity and solidarity among religious groups is very much important to form a harmonious society. It is necessary to initiate inter-religious harmony with full trust and mutual respect among multi-religious groups.

Muslims have their culture and tradition. Rautahat has the highest number of Muslims living together in the same society. Madarsa is identified as the most trusted institution by

Muslims for providing cultural education. Quran is widely used by Muslim and these Islamic books are even available now in local language. There are Mosque in different areas of Rajpur community.

There is necessary to organize more TOT programs for teachers to improve teaching learning process. From past three years, different organisations have been working in the Municipality to conduct program on minimizing education issues through the provisions of various reading/learning materials, enhancement of teachers' skills for interactive and equitable access to education, etc. The program has been supporting the Eary Grade reading (EGR) and EGM (early Grade Math) with core function to improve the reading and learning skills of students from class 1-3. However the Municipality needs to be serious for the programs to be conducted by them to improve education system. The schools in the Municipality are still conducting the teaching learning system using the old traditional method. In this progressive education period, students need to be made aware about real world problem and the challenges can be tackled in more effective way. It was found the Madarsah system was important for the people of Rajpur to learn urdu language. Almost all the most used to go Madasah to know about the message written in Quran. On other hand, it was difficult for local government to track the number of students as they are enrolled in both schools and Madarsah mainly during the stage of primary education. The education system has already shifted from particular urdu based Madarsah to multidisciplinary Islamic school in Rajpur. But, the local government has been facing challenges to integrate Madarsah with the normal schools. The main reason of attending Madarsa was to learn Urdu and Farsi language. All the students wanted to learn Urdu language which is not taught in other normal schools. Apart from this, safety was also their concern. The discussion about the schools and education system with Municipality officials and experts found that the local government were aware about the education practices prevalent at Madarsah. However the issue was that though there were Islamic schools and Madarsah, it was not given accreditation by government for secondary board. Also it was difficult for local government to track the exact number of students.

5.2 Conclusion

The research study was based on the three major research questions related to socio-cultural practices, livelihood strategies and socio-economic constraints of Muslim people in Rajpur municipality of Rautahat district.

From the study it was found that all the Muslims claimed the Urdu as their cultural language as their Islamic codes and books are written in the same language. It was found that the perception regarding the message from Quran were different among different people. The people in Rajpur celebrate all the festival as celebrated by the global Islam population maintaining harmony among people with different caste as well. Though majority of Muslim are very strict with following the Quran, the new generation have discarded the old tradition and make them adapted as guided by country rules and community ethics. The education system has changed from particular urdu based Madarsah to multidisciplinary Islamic school in Rajpur. But, the local government has been facing challenges to integrate Madarsah with the normal schools.

It was identified that the livelihood strategies of people of Rajpur are different as they are involved in different occupation. It was found that youths from majority of houses have gone abroad to earn income. All the capitals of livelihood were poor with worst case with social, natural and physical capitals. Though the income level of people has been increased, it isn't coming from the production sector. The income is heavily dependent on the remittance. The livelihood challenges faced by the people were fully based on the income activities they were involve in.

It was explored that the socio-economic condition of the people in Rajpur was poor. The income was highly dependent on remittance with less focus on the agricultural and industrial production. However the socio-bonding among the people was very high. People prefer to go to Madarsa to learn Urdu and Farsi language. In spite of going Madarsah, the students also go to schools to obtain formal certificates to make their career. There is need of educational investment in Rajpur to sort the issue of quality education and creating jobs for the deserved and qualified people. There is common perception that the people can easily get higher paid job if they acquire education. But it is necessary to understand that the chance of acquiring higher education depends on the foundation level of the education of the children if the base is not strong, the whole system may collapse.

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APPENDICES

Survey Question - Households

My name is Pramod Bharati and I am student at Staff College. I am conducting this survey to examine the cultural values of Islam communities and find the current livelihood challenges faced by the people. I need your help to complete this survey which will take no more than 20 minutes to complete. I assure you that the information shared by you will be kept confidential and will only be used for my academic purpose. If you don't want to continue, kindly let me know. Also, you are free to skip any question which you don't want to answer. This is a purely voluntary task and I hope that you will provide your insight. Would you like to participate in this study?

If Yes (continue with survey), if No (end the survey).

Only continue if respondent agrees to participate in the survey

A. Socio-demographic Details			
S.N.	Questions	Response	Comments
A.1.	Full Name		
A.2.	Contact Number (if any)		
A.3.	Temporary address		
A.4.	Permanent address	District: Municipality / Rural mun: Place:	
A.5.	Nationality	a. Nepali b. Indian c. Others	
A.6.	Migrant	a. Yes b. No	
A.7.	Gender	a. Male b. Female	

		c. Other	
A.8.	Age group	a. 18-25 b. 26-35 c. 36-45 d. >45	
A.9.	Do you have any of the following?	a. Voter registration card b. Citizenship card c. PAN card d. Any other ID:	Tick all that apply
A.10.	Highest grade completed	a. Illiterate b. Informal education c. Primary d. Lower Secondary e. Secondary f. High secondary or above	
A.11.	Marital status	a. Single b. Married c. Divorced d. Widowed	If a, skip to A.13.
A.12.	If married, how many children?		
A.13.	Total number of members in the family		
A.14.	Total number of working members in the family		

B. Religious and Cultural Beliefs

B.1.	How would you describe the role of religion in your life?	a. Very important b. Moderately important c. Slightly	
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		important d. Not important	
B.2.	Why is the religion and the cultural belief important to you?		
B.3.	In your opinion, how and why has religion in Rajapur changed from old generation to the present?		
B.4.	What are the unique traditions and culture practiced by Muslims communities of Rajapur?		
B.5.	What are the challenges faced by you/family members/community during celebrating religious programs?		Write atleast one case

C. Socio-economic Condition

C. Socio-economic Condition			
C.1.	What is your current source of income?		
C.2.	What are your alternative source of income?		
C.3.	How do you currently support yourself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employed in the formal sector b. Working for someone in the informal sector c. Work in some income generating activity d. Self-employed in own informal business e. Self-employed in own formal business 	

		f. Supported by family/partner g. Other (please specify)	
C.4.	What is your average monthly income from the job? (individual)	a. <10000 b. 10000-20000 c. 20000-30000 d. >30000	
C.5.	What is your average monthly income? (family)	a. 10000-20000 b. 20000-30000 c. 30000-40000 d. >40000	
C.6.	What is your average monthly expenditure?	a. <5000 b. 5000-10000 c. 10000-15000 d. >15000	
C.7.	What is your average monthly saving?		
C.8.	Are you satisfied with the amount that you're earning?	a. Yes b. No	

D. Livelihood Challenges

D.1.	What are the challenges faced by you at your household level?		
D.2.	How difficult is it for you or your household members to get job?	a. Very easily b. Easily c. Difficult to find job	
D.3.	Have you or any member of the household ever skipped any meals because there was not enough food in the house?	a. Yes b. No	
D.4.	How do you cope with the issues?		

D.5.	Please rate the level of support you feel you receive from the community	a. No Support b. A Little Support c. Some Support d. Good Support e. Excellent Support	
D.6.	How do you describe your living environment? (neighbors) Please elaborate		

Thank You for your time!

Survey Question - KII

My name is Pramod Bharati and I am student at Staff College. I am conducting this survey to examine the cultural values of Islam communities and find the current livelihood challenges faced by the people. I need your help to complete this interview which will take no more than 30 minutes to complete. I assure you that the information shared by you will be kept confidential and will only be used for my academic purpose. If you don't want to continue, kindly let me know. Also, you are free to skip any question which you don't want to answer. This is a purely voluntary task and I hope that you will provide your insight. Would you like to participate in this study?

If Yes (continue with survey), if No (end the survey).

Only continue if respondent agrees to participate in the survey

A. Personal Details			
S.N.	Questions	Response	Comments
A.1.	Full Name		
A.2.	Contact Number (if any)		
A.3.	Temporary address		
A.4.	Permanent address	District: Municipality / Rural mun: Place:	
A.7.	Gender	d. Male e. Female f. Other	

1. What do you feel are the core values of Islam culture?

.....

2. As a Muslim citizen, what part of your culture makes you proud?

.....
.....

3. How is the relationship among people of different culture living in Rajpur?

.....
.....

4. What are the challenges faced by Muslim communities of Rajpur Municipality?

.....
.....

5. What are the possible ways to uplift the livelihood of Muslim residents of Rajpur Municipality?

.....
.....

Thank You for your time!

Photographs



Interview with the Mayor and Doctors
Rajpur



Discussion with community people of



Juwairiya Girls Madrasah



During interview with girls students



Photograph of Girls classroom



Photograph of Boys Classroom