

The Practice of Gender in Muslim Community of Kalaiya, Bara

A Thesis

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mr. Amir Raja has completed his dissertation entitled “**The Practice of Gender in Muslim Community of Kalaiya, Bara**” under my guidance and supervision in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology. I hereby, recommend this dissertation for final approval and acceptance.

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Letter of Approval

This dissertation entitled “**The Practice of Gender in Muslim Community of Kalaiya, Bara**” submitted by Mr. Amir Raja has been evaluated and accepted by following evaluation committee as precondition in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology.

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Amir Raja

January, 2021

Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**The Practice of Gender in Muslim Community of Kalaiya, Bara**” submitted by me to Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, is entirely original work prepared under guidance and supervision of Dr. Youba Raj Luintel (Associate Professor). I have made due acknowledgements to all idea and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this thesis. The result presented in this study has not been submitted and presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or other reason. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Amir Raja

January, 2021

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Glossary and Abbreviations

CBS:	Central Bureau of Statistics
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
Fn:	Footnote
HDR:	Human Development Index
HH:	Household
HLNEC:	High Level National Education Commission
KII:	Key Informant Interview
NC:	Nepali Congress
RPP:	Rastriya Prajatantra Party
Surahs-ayats:	Chapters-verses of Muslim's holy book- Quran

Chapter One

Introduction

This research explores the practices inter-twined with the construction of gender. It closely observes the social ingredients linked with construction of gender. It checks the gender supplementary practices carried out in Muslim community living in Kalaiya, Bara. The paper goes through close consideration of believes, faiths, myths, and practices, which are in continuous action in construction of gender among Muslim community.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Nepalese society is broadly characterized as male-dominated society. This long-prevalled male domination is byproduct of various social and cultural components prevailed in the society. The transparency of male domination is flashed through close consideration of mechanism linked with construction of gender. The mechanism of gender construction involves roles of various social institutions. Religion is one of the important social institution marking South Asian societies. This paper aims to link the contribution of religion in creation of gender. Particularly, the objective of the research is to relate the issues of gender construction with Islam and the followers of Islam—Muslims by contextualizing it to Kalaiya sub-metropolitan city of Bara district.

My research study is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that gender is socially constructed. Secondly, there is the role of religion in the construction of gender. Basically, the paper carries examination associating the construction of gender with religious norms, beliefs, practices and myths. It means that the Islamic norms, beliefs, practices and myths are inquired to detect its correlation with gender fabrication.

The essence of the research lies with the process through which gender is constructed within Muslim community. It checks different domains like: socialization, religious beliefs and practices, marriage, sexuality, public/private spheres and inheritance of property – to find the close association of these domains in the construction of gender

in Muslim community. The socio-cultural difference in being male and female is tested in early socialization pattern of children. This indicates engagement in different sports, early dress up pattern, behavior, body language, friend circle- that society injects concerning biological differences between male and female. The study also focus on examining the religious beliefs and social practices--for schooling daughters, women and inheritance of property, rituals of purity and pollution with restrictions, divorce, widow marriage, polygamy, exogamy and endogamy, marriage taboo and incest taboo, son's preference, women abortion, marital rape and women's picture in public and private spheres--in construction of gender.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Muslim population in Nepal is widely dispersed and around 97 percent of Muslims reside in Tarai region of Nepal (Seddon, 2017). According to census 2011, the central districts of Tarai record the highest concentration of Muslims. . As Seddon (2017) visualized the heterogeneity within Muslims according to geographical locations along with different arrival history in Nepal. In this sense, the sketch of Muslims of Nepal is complicated. The general picture shows that the variation in practice of religious norms within Muslims as well. There is a notable difference in cultural practice within Muslims depending on their division between Barelvi and Deobandi.¹ In Nepal, the presence of two mosques near Ghantaghar, Kathmandu—Kasmiri mosque assumed for Barelvi² and Jamme mosque considered to represent the Deobandi³ —illustrates the differentiation within Muslims. The unique feature of castes and sub-castes among Muslims in the Tarai are well mentioned in the work of Seddon (2017) in his book *The Muslims Community of Nepal*. My research field is located in Bara district where I was born and brought up. In Bara district, we can find different castes within Muslims (mostly Ansari, Dhuniya, Darzi, Dhobi and Natuwa). There is even a cultural differentiation within Muslims along with their distinct

¹ The Sunni Muslims of South Asia are divided into two major sub-sects, that are, Deobandi and Barelvi, named after their places of origin in India in the 19th century. Because of abiding differences between them, these two sub-sects have built up walls of hatred and mistrust between then over time.

² Barelvi oriented Muslims regard themselves as follower of traditional Islam that goes back to time of Prophet Muhammad.

³ Deobandi oriented Muslims from the Tarai areas are spokespersons and leaders for a renewal and reform of Islam (Sijapati, 2011).

feature as religious minority. This makes the orientation of Muslims complex. This seeks importance to carry our research being specific by contextualizing our reading.

The socio-political status of Muslims in Nepal is broadly a disadvantaged minority. The Muslims are undoubtedly one of the socially and economically disadvantaged group and they are one of the most marginalized group by mainstream politics (Seddon, 2017). In his book, *Social Ethnography of Hill Muslims of Nepal*, Upadhyay (2014) marked Muslims as religious alien of Nepal and presented a very bold statement arguing that the exclusion and backwardness was institutionalized as a part and parcel of Muslim life in Nepal which had been a long remained as Hindu Kingdom. The poor and disadvantaged position of Muslims is further clarified by 2011 census, the HDI index for Muslims—as 0.42 which was still lower than that of hill dalits and for all dalits, again, only madhesi dalits registered lower at 0.40 (Seddon, 2017). The identification of Muslims were on the basis of religion, but it was noted that while “technically not untouchable,” Muslims are considered impure by the Hindu caste system (Bennett et al., 2008)

The location of my field research was centered in Bara district, where I was born and raised. There is heterogeneity in the community. These diversity is in the terms of religion, castes, language and cultures. I have found marginal cultural differences among people belonging to different orientations like *Madhesi*, *Pahadi*⁴ and Muslims. The differences bring unique projection of Muslim community in the area. The differences also pointed by Sijapati (2011) who noted that the Muslims of Nepal are widely recognized for their bizarre characteristics of “*ulto-dharma*” (opposite religion) from the majority of people following Hindu religion in Nepal. This distinct cultural practice and my direct participation in such diverse environment also motivated me to uncover and explore the practices of Muslim community.

There are also several initial events that poked my field of interested area to Muslims community of Bara District. My orientation from Muslim community is primary cause that led my life through various crucial incidents leaving many questions behind. During my childhood, I enjoyed numerous benefits due to my natural belonging to male. There were many opportunities and special care due to my

⁴*Madhesi-Pahadi* is a socio-cultural distinction among people on the basis of geographical geometry (tarai-hills), dress-up diversity, language diversity, and so on.

biological feature (male). These opportunities started from easy access to outdoor playing to sending boys to private-boarding schools. I had gone through basic socialization where boys are meant to handle outside work while girls are matched with household activities. Thus, most often, the questions hits my mind, like—how does this big gap between male and female emerges? What are the ground for such flatter inequality? Are such distinctions natural?

The available literatures have focused on the area of how gender is constructed in general by several social domains. The socio-cultural factors involved in gender construction are captured by literatures appraisal but there is lack of proper research study to capture the dynamics of society. However, the roots adding surplus in gender construction vary with culture. According to Little and McGivern (2013), the dichotomous view of gender is specific to certain culture and is not universal. This means that with variation in culture, gender and its construction is viewed as fluid. The readymade or generalization model for investigating social ingredients in gender construction cannot fit in every society with distinct cultural practices. The contextualized research is better option to cope the dynamics present in society. The heterogeneity within Muslims of Nepal speaks a lot about the essence of carrying specific context centered research to bring out grounded reality. Similarly, the Muslims of Nepal have been long been a part of Non-Islamic environment which adds surplus complication while investigating the construction of gender. It becomes important task to appreciate the diversity of Muslims with informed, contextual, reasoned responses rather than predetermined presumptions, specific events, particular actor and reactions. In order to check out gender construction among Muslims of Bara District, the research questions need to pick up different associate terminology so that its investigation can lead to understand gender construction.

1.3 Research Questions

The overall literature reviewed thoroughly speaks on the concept of gender and Islam. The prime job of my research is focused in searching the mechanism linked with the construction of gender in Muslim community. The research question of my paper is focused in exposing the gender-loaded practices in Muslim community. In general, my research question points out the investigation of religious ideology (Islamic and non-Islamic) in construction of gender. The specific questions compiles the inquiry of

major domains like socialization, religion, sexuality, marriage, property and private-public spheres assembling its association in Muslim community of Bara District.

General Research Questions

1. In what way the construction of gender is typified through religious ideology of Islamic practices prevailing among Muslims of Bara district?
2. What are the gender specific norms within Muslim community carried out from the surroundings of non-Muslim communities?

Specific Research Questions

1. How does socialization contribute in gender construction among Muslim community?
2. Which are the beliefs and faiths responsible for gender construction in Muslims?
3. How are practices of Marriage put sex-based asymmetrical relation among Muslims?
4. In what way sexuality governs in gender construction among Muslims?
5. How does the private-public positioning of men and women create unequal relation among Muslims?
6. What are the concerns related to property issues in gender construction?

1.4 Rationale and Limitations of the Study

There is lack of studies targeting Muslims of Nepal. The studies cannot touch the specific Muslims living in Tarai belt of Nepal. The Muslims women are in shadow of the academics. The issues relating to gender practices relating Muslims are still in dim light from the eyes of researchers. The poor positioned and as disadvantaged group of Nepal, Muslims need to have proper attention from academicians, researchers, and policy makers. The long history of Nepal as Hindu kingdom mapped the backward status of Muslims in non-Islamic environment. This becomes important to bring research work for disadvantaged and minority group like Muslims and especially for overall intersectional position of Muslim women. My research study is fruitful in examining the cause for hierarchical positioning of Muslim women in Nepal.

My study constitutes of qualitative research, which impose limitations to go for larger samples size due to in-depth interview procedures taking longer time. The small scale samples for data collection puts question mark on data validity. The research study has precisely focused the construction of gender in Muslims of Kalaiya, Bara district. It may not represent Muslims of other parts of Nepal due to presence of diversity among Muslims of Nepal. This study is of master level of dissertation which only meets the partial fulfillment of the requirement of Master's degree of arts in sociology. There is constraint in terms of time and cost for the research study.

Chapter Two

Gender and Muslim Women: Literature Review

This chapter gives brief account of literature available on the issue of gender and Muslim women. It also incorporates the readings on Muslims living in Nepal. This involves findings from authorized published books and journal articles. Finally, the body of literature helped me to find the research gap.

2.1 Conceptualizing Religion—Islam

The term ‘religion’ is one of society’s basic institutions. The three major perspectives of sociology—the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist—analyze religion differently. Functionalists assumes that religion helps to unify society and provides people with a sense of where they stand in relation to the infinite. They mainly visualize religion with three major functions: cohesion, social control and provision of propose (Curry et al., 1997). Emile Durkheim (1912), a leading functionalist, in his classic work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, laid the foundations for the functionalist approach to religion. Durkheim argued that all religions have social rather than supernatural origin, that is, worship of religion is equivalent to worship of society (Durkheim, 1912). In contrast to functionalist perspective, conflict perspective emphasizes the role that religion plays in justifying the status quo and inequality. Karl Marx stressed that the ruling class used religion as a weapon to achieve its own ends. For Marx, religion was ‘the opiate of the people.’ Religion, according to Marx, is an ideological tool of dominant group or groups in society, which makes false promises about a next world and distract people from their oppression and exploitation (Cuff et al., 1979). From the symbolic interactionist perspective, the role of religion is in shaping social identity and locating the individual in society by searching answer of question—“Who am I?” (Curry et al., 1997).

Kidwai (2005) writes that there are presupposition and beliefs regarding Islam that it has treated women unjustly. There is a general belief that Islam enjoins upon women to cover their bodies from top to toe and force them to confine themselves behind four walls of their houses. It does not give them the right to divorce. It permits their

husband to keep four wives simultaneously. It accords them half of the share in inheritance of the property as compared to men (Kidwai, 2005).

In the holy religious text of Muslims—Quran, is based on the equality of treatment between man and women. According to Quran, “the most honoured of your eyes of Allah is the most righteous of you” (49:13 *surahs-ayats* of Quran, cited from Kidwai, 2005). The foundation for reward and punishment in Islam is based on righteous deeds and sinful acts. The equality of treatment between men and women is further clarified in the terms of education. In his book: *Islam America and South Asia, 2005*, Kidwai (2005) quotes Prophet Mohammed saying to illustrate the notion of equality “the search of knowledge is a duty of every Muslim (male or female) and thus seek knowledge from the cradle to grave. Knowledge for a Muslim is not divided into sacred and secular.”

In Islam, therefore, both woman and man are credited with the capacity of learning and understanding and teaching. This is further illustrated by pointing the example of the most famous women in the history of Islam; Aiysha- the Prophet’s wife. The quality for which she is remembered primarily is that of her intelligence and memory. She is regarded as one of the greatest teachers of the Hadith (Prophet sayings) (Kidwai, 2005). Right of female child to life and right of her proper upbringing and education like the male child under the strict Quranic injunctions were granted in Islam. Right of inheritance, of acquisition, ownership and disposal of property are conferred on women by Islam. A woman’s right to property is enshrined in the Quran. Islam has assigned half share to woman from the paternal property as compared to men because they were not obliged to look after anyone from their property. This is women’s sole property whereas men are duly bound to maintain their families which include wives, children and even their aged parents. Moreover, women get a handsome amount of money at the time of their marriage which is their own property (Kidwai, 2005).

The Quran laid out a set of marriage laws that guarantee married women their family shares, their own possessions and capital, the right to agree upon when they marry (*nikahnama*), and the right to initiate divorce. Islam grants women the right to seek divorce in the form of *Khula*. *Khula* is a procedure through which a woman can divorce her husband by returning the *mahr* (dower) or something else that she

received from her husband, as agreed by the spouse. In the case, if women are not satisfied with their married life, they can make them agree to divorce by financially compensating them. Islam has not given the right to divorce directly. Islam opens the door of either partner's remarriage after divorce. In Islam, there is provision for man to have four wives simultaneously while compelling them to be content with one husband at a time. Quran allows polygamy but with strict condition of treating the wives equally and justly. It says: "If you fear to that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one" (4:3 *surahs-ayats* of Quran, cited from Kidwai, 2005).

In my research, I will search for hierarchical relation produced by religion on the ground of sex. This further implies the search of process of how the identity set by religion is asymmetrical which favors the male dominated society. The research will adopt feminist perspective to visualize how the concealed unequal sexual relation is produced in society through religious practices—the social construction of gender. This study is centered on one of the religious group who are the followers of Islam—Muslims—living in Nepal.

2.2 The Muslims of Nepal: The Historical and Socio-Political Landscape

There is huge diversity among the population of South Asia. The social psychology, social capital, ethno-linguistic and religious composition is profoundly diverse. These fall under four large linguistic family groups as: Indo-Aryans, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian; which are further subdivided into numerous sub-groups, castes, and tribes. The Indo-Aryans form the largest ethnic-linguistic in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, and Maldives. These regions are occupied with major religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and many other minor religions. There is social, cultural and political dominance of Hindu religion in Nepal (Upadhyay, 2014).

Nepal lies on the southern edge of the Himalayas between the Tibetan autonomous region of China and India. Geographically, Nepal is composed of three zones: the high Himalayas in the north, the central foothills and the low lands of the south as Tarai. The historical track shows Nepal as Hindu kingdom throughout the majority of

its modern history. The modern history marked the late eighteenth-century Gorkhali conquests of the Shah kings of the western hill state of Gorkha who unified the forty-six hill states of the territory of Nepal and claimed the Kathmandu valley as its capital (Sijapati, 2011). Upadhyay (2014) argued that Nepal has been constantly portrayed as demonstrating the slogan “unity in diversity” from its cultural-ethnic-social-religious plurality. Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal in 1768 had quoted “Nepal is a garden of the four *Varna* (Castes) and thirty-six *Jat* (ethnicities).” The proverb fails to match present picture of diversity.

Nepal is highly heterogeneous and known for its diversity. According to 2011 census, there are 126 caste and ethnic groups; and 123 languages spoken in Nepal. The census report of 2011 shows that the majority of the population is Hindu (approximately 81 percent) and that of sizable Buddhist population (aapprox. 9 percent) and the Muslims as second-largest religious minority after Buddhists with population concentration of about 4.5 percent approximately. There are also small number of other religious groups like Christian, Jain, and Sikh communities in Nepal (CBS, 2011). This is figured in table 2.1 showing the distribution of religion in Nepal.

Table 2.1: Distribution of Religion in Nepal

Religion	Population	Percentage
Hinduism	21,551,492	81.34
Buddhism	2,396,099	9.04
Islam	1,162,370	4.39
Kirat	807,169	3.04
Christianity	375,691	1.41
Prakriti (Nature Worship)	121,982	0.46
Bon	13,006	0.04
Jainism	3,214	0.01
Bahá'í	1,283	0.01 (approx)
Sikhism	609	0.01 (approx)
sOthers/Unspecified	61,581	0.23
Total	26,494,504	100

Source: Population data from censuses of 2011 (CBS)

Similarly, the distribution of Muslim population in Nepal by district is shown in table 2. The distribution of Muslim population is not even by district. Although the composition of Muslims population is small in number, they are seen in every district.

There may be many dissimilarities among them but the common faith in Islam and Prophet Mohammad is same among all Muslims.

According to geographical feature, Nepal is divided into three different parts. They are: himalyan region; hilly region; and tarai region. My study is centered in tarai region specified in Bara district. In Nepal, tarai region covers 17 percent of area with total of 50.26 percent population concentration and there are 20 districts out of 75 districts of Nepal according to 2011 census.

Table 2.2: Muslim Population of Tarai by District (2011)

District	Total Population of District	Muslim Population	Muslim Percentage
Rautahat	686,722	135,283	19.70
Kapilvastu	571,936	103,838	18.15
Banke	491,313	93,263	18.98
Bara	687,708	89,685	13.04
Sunsari	763,487	88,072	11.55
Parsa	601,017	87,033	14.48
Mahotari	627,580	83,696	13.33
Rupandehi	880,196	72,428	08.23
Dhanusha	754,777	63,099	08.36
Sarlahi	769,729	60,679	07.79
Saptari	639,248	57,004	08.92
Siraha	637,328	47,566	07.46
Morang	965,370	45,755	04.74
Jhapa	812,650	25,974	03.20
Nawalparasi	643,508	24,160	03.75
Bardiya	426, 576	11,084	02.60
Chitwan	579,984	6,741	01.16
Kailali	775,709	4,930	00.64
Dang	552, 583	4,781	00.86
Kanchanpur	451,248	461	00.10

Source: <http://www.nmc.gov.np/site/cms/11>

For Seddon (2017), Muslims are highly heterogenous group. There are several different and distinct Muslim communities in Nepal, with different histories, different social and cultural practices, different economic roles, occupations and statuses, and living in different parts of the country. The Muslim community is divided along religious-sectarian and doctrinal, geographical or regional, linguistic, cultural, caste and classlines. The presence of the ‘Nepali Jame’ and ‘Kashmiri’ mosque; near the

Ghantaghar in central Kathmandu; verifies that Muslims in Nepal are not homogeneous (Seddon, 2017).

This heterogeneity is clearly seen in the writing of Sijapati's work "Islamic Revival in Nepal: Religion and a new nation," where Sijapati (2011) on internal dynamics present among the Muslims writes:

Most of the Muslims are Sunni and identify as Hanafi, though Islamic law is not practiced in Nepal and so the identification reflects a general orientation towards the school of law traditionally followed in India. The major exception to this is the population of Muslims of the Ahl-e Hadis sect, who are growing in number (though no statistics are available on this) and influence, and very small numbers of Shi'a in southwest of Nepal. Muslims in Nepal understand themselves in various categories of identification from religious affiliation to ethnicity and caste (traditionally linked to occupation), each of which involves its own levels of hierarchy. The most pronounced divisions are those based on geographical location and doctrinal orientation: on one hand, the hills and the Kathmandu valley versus the southern Tarai lowlands bordering India, and on the the hand, the Barelwis versus Deobandis, Alh-e Hadis, and the Jama'at-I Islami. Within this Deobandi and Jama'at-I Islami oriented Muslims from the Tarai areas are the spokesperson and the leaders for a renewal and reform of Islams. Within the Kathmandu valley, there are further, significant divisions between the Kashmiri Muslims and Hindustani, or "Nepali," Muslims (Sijapati, 2011, pp.17-18).

2.3 Arrival History and Cultural Diversity of Muslims

In her book, Sijapati (2011) has taken Arabic text entitled "Hudud al-Alam" as reference to show the earliest record of link between Nepal and the Islamic world. This mentioned the import of musk from Nepal, suggesting that there may have been early trade links between Nepalis and Arab tradesman (Sijapati, 2011). Seddon (2017) stressed that the first documented direct contact between Muslims in India and Nepal was after the visit of Al Birani in the early 14th century CE, when Sultan GayasuddinTuglaq, the emperor of Delhi, went to war with Hari Singh Dev at Simraungarh. The Sultan destroyed the Tarai King's capital of Simraungarh and the King retreated to the hills of present Nepal. Another historical record highlighted by Seddon was of 1340 CE, the time of King Raj Malla, when Sultan Shams-ud-Din Ilyas of Bengal invaded the Kathmandu Valley through Banepa. This resulted in the looting and the destruction of of the royal Hindu temple of Pashupatinath, the Buddhist stupa Swambhunath, and the other sites in the valley (Seddon, 2017).

The geographical locations—the Hills, the Tarai and the Kathmandu valley-- are the foundation for tracing history of settlements of Muslims of Nepal. This leads to the classification of Muslims in Nepal as: Hill Muslims, the Kashmiri Muslims of Kathmandu, the Hindustani Muslims, Tibetan Muslims in Kathmandu, Muslims of Kathmandu today, and Muslims of the Tarai (Upadhyay, 2014). The brief account of this classification is explained:

A. Hill Muslims

Hill Muslims are widely identified as ‘Charaute’ or ‘Miya,’ who are said to be traditionally scent manufacturers, musicians and suppliers of bangles (*chura*) etc. Hill Muslims apparently settled early in Nepal, coming from different parts of northern India during the 16th and 17th centuries. They are invited by the rulers of the Chaubise petty states in the western hills. The Muslims were called to assist the rising petty state of Gorkha who wanted Muslim artisans and artillerymen of making firearms (Seddon 2017). Upadhyay (2014) suggests that there is a small number of these hill Muslims in Nepal’s central and western hill districts of Tanahu, Gorkha, Kaski, Syangja, Palpa, Argakhanchi, Pyuthan and Dailekh (Upadhyay, 2014).

B. Muslims of the Kathmandu Valley

Sijapati (2011) broadly divided the Muslims of Kathmandu valley into categories such as: Kashmiri Muslims, Hindustani Muslims or Nepali Muslims, Tibetan Muslims and Kathmandu Muslims.

The Kashmiri Muslims: The ‘Kashmiri Muslims’ delivers different senses as: those who are Kashmiri by descent, those who are Kashmiri by geographical origin and those who are Kashmiri by religious affiliation. According to the Vamshavalis, the first Muslims to settle in Nepal, arrived from Kashmir in the late 15th and early 16th century during the reign of King Rama Malla (1484-1520 CE). They were invited to serve their court and they built Kashmiri Masjid, only few hundred meters from the king’s palace. There is very confusing and it seems clear that early Muslims, who came in the 15th-16th and in the 17th centuries respectively, are different from those who came in the mid-19th century, who are identified as “Hindustani Muslims.” (Seddon 2017)

Hindustani or Nepali Muslims: The Muslims who came in the mid-19th century are identified as “Hindustani Muslims.” Hindustani Muslims are commonly immigrants from Lucknow (Seddon, 2017). “Hindustani” Muslims, as they were called until, currently identify as Nepali Muslims (Sijapati, 2011). The Muslims are associated with those who like the Begum Hazrat Mahal of Lucknow; the former concubine and wife of the Nawab of Oudh (Ayodha) fled from India after the “Great Mutiny” of 1857 in which she had supported the rebels against British . She along many entourage settled as refugee in western Tarai and then in Kathmandu (Seddon, 2017).

Tibetan Muslims: The Tibetan Muslims in Kathmandu offered a new dimension to Muslim plurality and cultural and linguistic diversity (Fadzakir, 2001). ‘Tibetan Muslims’ came relatively recently in 1952, after China took over Tibet and declared it Chinese (Seddon 2017).

Kathmandu Muslims: The Muslims of Kathmandu are located within a 1.5 Km radius of Ghantaghar, where the two main mosques (called Kashmiri Mosque and Nepali Jame Mosque) in the city are located. Bagh bazaar, the area directly adjacent to the Nepali Jame mosque, is with the highest number of Muslims. The Muslims in Kathmandu are identifiable communities that are themselves heterogeneous in many ways. The history, the economy and society, and the culture of the Muslims of Kathmandu suggests a complex , varied, divided, and interactive community than the standard classification (Seddon, 2017).

C. Muslims of Tarai

According to the 2011 census, about 97 percent of the Muslim community lives in the Tarai region (a fertile strip of lowlands bordering India) of Nepal. The other 3 percent is found mainly in the city of Kathmandu and the Western hills; very few (0.5 percent) are in the mountain districts of Nepal.

There is no detail account for the history of Muslim communities living in the Tarai. Upadhaya suggests that after the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814, when the boundaries of southern Nepal and India were clearly marked, a large part of area present day Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, inhabited by a significant Muslim population, become the territory of Nepal. By this process, a significant Muslim population was effectively ‘incorporated’ in Nepal (Upadhaya, 2007). Gaige (1975) suggests that

Muslim settlements into Mahottari-Dhanusha and Bara districts were settled fifteen generation ago (may be as much as 500 years).

The distribution of Muslims within the Tarai is very uneven. Gaige (1975), for example, presented that in 1961, the proportion of Muslims in the Far Western Tarai was less than 1 percent on average, except in Banke District, it was exceptionally higher, it was 22 per cent (Gaige 1975 p. 209). There is important cultural and more particularly linguistic distinctions among three major Muslim geographical communities living in Tarai. The majority of Muslim in the mid west speak Awadhi, the majority of Muslims in the central Tarai speak Bhojpuri, while those in the eastern Tarai mainly speak Maithili. The Muslim community living in the Tarai in different geographical region has adopted the local language of indigenous population affiliated to belonging particular area (Seddon, 2017).

2.4 Locating Muslims in Nepal's Caste Structure

The 'Muluki Ain' of 1853-54 was the first codified legal code which was highly influenced from the sources such as *dharmashastra* and *Lokdharma*. The Muluki Ain had defined the status of various communities and ethnic groups, that is, the objective of codification was to build a unified nation on the basis of strict political religious sense (Hofer, 1979). Seddon (2017) argued that 'Muluki Ain' as a part of the larger project of the Hinduisation does not help us in understanding the complex structure of Muslim community as the legal codification acknowledge the fuzzy and unclear boundaries of social groups.

Andras Hofer (1979) in his text *The Caste Hierarchy And The State In Nepal* put how Muluki Ain legalized and institutionalized caste hierarchy. Hoffer (1979) integrated three historically and regionally autonomous caste hierarchies which are of the Parbatiya, the Newar and of the Tarai people, as well as a number of ethnic groups into an all-embracing "national" hierarchy of castes. This is shown below in the diagrammatic view in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: The Caste Hierarchy of the Muluki Ain

Caste Division	Caste and Ethnic Groups
"Tagadhari" (Wearers of the Holy Thread)	Khas – Brahmin, Thakuri, Chhetri; Newar – Brahman and ChatharīyaSrēstha; Tarai – Brahmin (<i>referred in the code as Indian Brahmin</i>)
"NamasinyaMatwali" (Non-enslavable Alcohol Drinkers)	Newar Vaishya equivalent castes – PanchthariyaSrēstha, and Newar Buddhists – Gubhaju/Baré (Vajracharya/Shākya), Urāy (Tuladhar and others), Jyapu, and other smaller <i>pure</i> occupational castes. 'Gurkha' tribes – Gurung, Magar, Rai and Limbu
"MasinyaMatwali" (Enslavable Alcohol Drinkers)	Bhote (including Tamang and Sherpa), Thakali, Chepang, Gharti, Hayu, Kumal, and Tharu.
"Pani Na Chalne, Chhoichhito Haalnu Naparne" (<i>Water-unacceptable but touchable</i>)	Newar lower <i>impure</i> occupational castes – Bha, Manandhar, Kapāli, Khadgi/Kasaī, Dhobi, etc. <i>Mlechha: Muslims and Europeans</i>
"Pani Na Chalne Chhoichhito Haalnu Parne" (<i>Water-unacceptable and untouchable</i>)	Khas occupational castes – Kami, Sarki, Damai, Badi. Tarai occupational castes – Dhobi, Halkhor, Chamar, Dushad, Dom, Musahars, etc. Newar lowest occupational castes – Kulu/Dom, Podhya, Chyamaha/Chandala, etc.

Source: Andras Hofer, 1979

During Rana rule (1846-1950 AD) of about century, Muslims were considered as *mlekshya* (*mleccha*) or foreigners and taken as impure and inferior status in the rigid fourfold caste hierarchy of Brahmin, Kshetriya (Chhetri), Baishya, and Sudra, below that of the Sudra. The classification of Muslims in Muluki Ain is interesting as they are seen as the member of a single caste group. They are classified in two different ways: first, Muslims are defined in terms of 'touchability' and 'untouchability' where Muslims were placed as impure but touchable caste; and second classification was of *ajlaf-ashraf* where *ajlaf* referred as 'native' Muslims or *Nepal ka Musalman*; and *ashraf* were regarded as 'foreign' Muslims or *Pardesi Musalman* (Hofer, 1979). The dichotomy of *ajlaf-ashraf* provided a primary caste differentiation within Muslims. Seddon (2017) writes:

Ashrafs were considered to be descendants of distinguished foreign ancestors and hence of superior caste group as opposed to the *ajlaf* castes, descendants of local converts (i.e., people who converted to Islam from Hinduism). *Ashrafs* are the traditionally divided into four subgroups: the *Sayyads*, who are considered to be descendants of Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, and Ali, the

fourth caliph of Islam, and hence are of the highest social status; the *Sheikhs*, who claim to be of Arabic origin; the Mughals, who are descendants of central Asian invaders; and the Pathans who claim to descent from Afghan conquerors. Kashmiri Muslims would be included in this category of ‘distinguished foreigners’ (Seddon, 2017 p. 88).

Seddon (2017) had written that *ajlafs*, in contrast, are local along with Hindus who converted to Islam. *Ajlafs* are the occupational groups like *ansari*(weavers), *sabjifarosh*(vegetable vendors), *dhobi* (washermen), *naddaf*(cotton teasers carders), *doffali*(tassel and bangle sellers), *mocchi* (cobblers), *darzi* (tailors), *hajam*(barbers) etc. who are placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Seddon remarks, “It is generally believed that *Ajlafs* are accorded a lower status because these castes converted to Islam in the hope of improving their status and not through the sword” (Seddon, 2017, p. 88 fn). The hill Muslims and Charaute groups are placed in this category (Seddon, 2017). The main castes and sub-castes among Muslims in the Tarai are well mentioned by Seddon (2017) in his book *The Muslim Community of Nepal*. Table 2.4 will demonstrate the hierarchy with their a brief explanation.

Table 2.4: Major Castes and Sub-Castes among Muslims in the Tarai

Main Castes and Sub-Castes	Their Respective Position of the Castes and Sub-Castes with their explanation
Sayyid	None throughout the Tarai Region
Shaikh	None throughout the Tarai Region
Pathan	Mainly landowners and cultivators, throughout the Tarai
Thakurai	Mainly landowners and cultivators, Parsa and Bara districts
Jat	Mainly landowners and cultivators, mid-western Tarai
Gaddi	Traditionally cattle herders, most now cultivators, mid-western region
Ansari	Traditionally weavers, today mainly cultivators and businessmen, throughout the Tarai
Teli	Traditionally, oil manufacturers, some now cultivators and petty traders, central Tarai
Halwai	Traditionally sweet makers, most now cultivators and petty traders throughout the Tarai
Dharkar	Weavers and manufacturers of cane chairs, throughout the Tarai
Rangrez	Traditionally cloth dyers and calico printers, throughout the Tarai
Dhuniya	Traditionally cotton carders, most now cultivators, central Tarai
Darzi	Tailors and thread manufacturers, central Tarai
Kasgar	Traditionally potters, central Tarai

Chikwa	Butchers, mid-western Tarai
Hajjam	Barbers, throughout the Tarai
Kabara	Traditionally fruits and vegetable sellers, mid-western and central Tarai
Patihar	Selling threads needles and ribbons, throughout the Tarai
Kawasi	Selling threads needles and ribbons as well as fruits and vegetables, throughout the Tarai
Churihar	Bangle makers and sellers, central Tarai
Dhobi	Traditionally washermen, throughout the Tarai
Natuwa	Labourers, throughout the Tarai
Halalkhor	Scavengers and labourers, throughout the Tarai
Nat	Traditionally tumblers and acrobats, throughout the Tarai
Faqir	Traditionally mendicants/beggars throughout the Tarai

Source: David Seddon, 2017

There are high-caste as well as low-caste among the Muslims (Gaige, 1975). But castes among Muslims differ from the caste system found in *Madhesi* Hindus. The caste relation among Muslims are less rigid as compared among the Hindus (Seddon, 2017). Upadhyay argued that there is no issue of untouchability or ritual pollution among Muslims unlike the Hindus rather all can dine on one table (Upadhyay, 2014).

In order to present the status of the Muslims during the panchayat⁵ era, Upadhyay (2014) writes, ‘ the late king Mahendra replaced the 1853 old legal Code with a comparatively more modern new Code in 1963, which provided equal citizenship status to the Muslims (Upadhyay, 2014 pp 33).’ It was the first time when ‘the right to religion’ had been constitutionally recognized but still conversion to another religion was a punishable offence. The 1959 and 1962 Constitutions respectively clearly pointed that King need to be a Hindu and Nepal as a Hindu citizen. The institutions like Millat-e-Islamia, the Muslim Sewa Samiti, and the Islamic Sangh Nepal were established in the era of 1970s and 1980s in order to promote Islamic social values and practices and conducting social works among Muslims of Nepal. However, the party-less Panchayati system suppressed the politics of ethnicity or religion as a part of the effort to consolidate the national identity and unity (Upadhyay, 2014). Upadhyay (2014) writes:

⁵ Panchayat era is the partyless political system started from 1960 with direct leadership of the king Mahendra.

The Panchayati slogan *ekdesh, ekbhesh, ekbhasa* (one country, one dress and one language) proved perilous to Tarai people and to many ethnic and religious minority groups. The slogan one dress, one language tried to design a new united Nepali identity with a common dress *Daura-Suruwal-Dhaka Topi* (Nepali trouser and Nepali cap) and one language (Nepali language) excluding all others, but failed despicably to give equal caste/ethnic/religion/region based egalitarianism to all Nepali masses (Upadhyay, 2014 pp 9-10).

The multipartyism era was relatively progressive for the minorities. The constitution of 1990 introduced significant clauses relating to religious minorities although it was based in the ideas of Nepal as a Hindu monarchy. This provided the provision to treat all its citizen equally with phrase ‘all citizens will be free to profess and practice religion.’

The beginning of 21st century is taken as vibrant era in terms of ‘inclusion.’ The social groups like women, *dalits*, *masdthesis*, and *adivasijanjatis* had been clearly identified and were claiming identity group of special attention and support for socio-political inclusion. However, Muslims as a religious minority remained unrecognized and ignored by the ‘social inclusion’ projects of the donors and, increasingly of the government (Seddon, 2017). To address the issue of Muslims, Islamic Sangh Nepal proceeded its step forward to establish the National Muslim Forum in June 2005. The main aim of the Forum was to help Muslims find a unified Nepali Muslim voice and to establish a political ground for articulating Muslims needs to the government (Sijapati, 2011). The Maoist insurgency between 1996 and 2006 further promoted the education and political advancement of Muslims as Maosit challenged the established system by highlighting various inequalities produced by unitary Monarchy regime (Seddon, 2017).

After the people’s movement in 2006 and the Nepal’s new set-up for secular-republic in 2008, the marginalized community seemed to come increasingly to the forefront (Upadhyay, 2014). In the meanwhile, there were protest in the Tarai under the banner of ‘Madhesis.’ The political activists highlighted the right of Madhesis as a whole but Muslims (and also Tharus) were in objected to accept the banner of Hindu-dominated majority of Madhesis (Seddon, 2017).

The Interim Constitution of 2007 for the first time placed the provision of incorporating and uplifting the marginalized communities (women, *dalaits*, *janjatis*,

people from remote regions, *madhesis*, and ‘others’) through mechanism of quotas under inclusive policy. However, Muslims were not explicitly recognized as a minority group rather they incorporated under ‘others’ and thus there is no provision as a separate category for Muslims.

The Constitution of Nepal: 2015 has incorporated the provision of Muslim Commission to ensure the overall process of inclusion in the article 264. Under article 51 regarding policies of the state relating to social justice and inclusion codes (see Annex III):

To make special provisions for equal distribution of economic, social and cultural opportunities and benefits to the Madhesi community, Muslims and backward class and for opportunities and benefits to the indigent citizens within such communities for their protection, upliftment, empowerment and development.

Similarly, the cultural orientations of Muslims in Nepal are unique and distinct from Hindus. Sijapati (2011) noted the work of Marc Gaborieau where he admitted that for Hindus of Nepal, the cultural practice of Muslims is strange. He noticed the strange differences from the eyes of Hindus majority as: Muslims do not perform their ablutions in the same way as did by Hindus,; the former bury their dead, the later cremate them; for the later sacred direction is east, while the former turns towards Mecca. The author also pointed the general belief found in Hindu society by characterizing Islam as *ulto dharma*, reversed religion (Sijapati, 2011).

2.5 Understanding Gender

This historical emergence for the discourse of the concept “gender” was after the book “The Second Sex” by Simone de Beauvoir. French feminist de Beauvoir did not use the term “gender” herself, she formulated a critique on biological determinism by pointing out the distinction between “natural sex” and “cultural sex roles.” Regarding gender, Simone de Beauvoir said: "One is not born a woman, one becomes one." This means woman is not born but made (Luintel, 2018, p. 3).

Little and McGivern (2013) analysis is centered in finding the difference between sex and gender. The major arguments of their writing claim that sex and gender are not interchangeable. Sex mainly points out physical or physiological differences between male and females. This includes primary sex characteristics i.e. reproductive function

and secondary characteristics between male and females such as height and muscularity (Diamond, 2002). As per Lerner (1986), who visualized gender as a set of cultural roles which includes a costume, a mask, a straightjacket where men and women dance their unequal dance. She argued that it is unfortunate to interchange gender and sex as it hides and mystifies the difference between the biologically given--sex—and the culturally created—gender (Lerner, 1986).

For Jane Flax (1990), physical male and female humans resemble each other in many more way than they differ. She questioned the cause for higher socio-cultural gaps created by narrow range of anatomical differences between male and female humans.

We quote Flax:

Through gender relations, two types of persons are created: man and woman. Man and woman are posited as exclusionary categories...The actual content of being a man or woman and the rigidity of the categories themselves are highly variable across cultures and time. Nevertheless, gender relations so far as we have been able to understand them have been (more or less) relations of domination (Flax, 1990, p. 45).

There is seen naturalization of gender by society. The stickiness of gender in our mind, more or less allow us to take gender as natural. In words of Judith Lorber (1994) “Gender is so much routine ground of everyday activities that questioning its taken-for-granted assumption and presuppositions is wondering about whether the sun will come up. Talking about gender for most of people is the equivalent of fish talking of water.”

Gender, according to West and Zimmerman, is as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction. This also includes learning to produce behavioral displays of one’s “essential” female or male identity (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

They argue:

Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. But, in fact, gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction and out of social life. Yet, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 142).

I conceptualize this issue in my research and relate it to Muslim community living in Kalaiya, Bara District. This involves the investigation of ingredients practiced in Muslim’s community which add in construction of gender.

2.6 Social Construction of Gender

This is widely accepted at present that gender is not given, but socially constructed. The construction of gender is through various social ingredients. Some of the elements that contribute in the shaping and reshaping of gender are: socialization and gender roles, patriarch, symbol system, sexual division of labor, inheritance of property, body politics and sexuality, and so on. These ingredients are explained in the following sections:

2.6.1 Socialization and Gender Roles

There is cultural script for masculinity that asks for aggressive behavior from boys. The phrase “boys will be boys” is used to justify muscular, strong, powerful and aggressive character of boy. The scripts that help in construction of gender is written by society and are generally learned through a process of socialization. Such scripts through socialization transformed into social norms for constructing gender. There are four major agents for gender socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. The secondary agents such as religion and workplace also contribute in gender construction (Little and McGivern, 2013).

As mentioned by Lorber (1994),

For the individuals, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of what the genitalia look like at birth. Then babies are dressed or adorned in a way that displays the category because parents don't want to be constantly asked whether their baby is a girl or a boy. A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the usage of other gender makers. Sex doesn't come into play until puberty, but by that time, sexual feelings, desires and practices have been shaped by gendered norms and expectations (Lorber, 1994, p. 14).

Gender is the derivative of socialization process. In the socialization process, children are introduced to certain roles that are typically linked to their biological sex. Such roles are introduced in the way as if they are taken for guaranteed. The masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated with passivity, nurturing, and subordination (Little and McGivern, 2013).

To Little and McGivern (2013), “The term gender role refers to society’s concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave. Those roles are based on norms, or standards, created by society.”

Gender roles are injected to children through play. There are “gender appropriate” toys such as for boys, there are active toys like trucks toy guns, and superhero toys whereas girls are often given dolls. Such practices create ground for gender-normative behavior and the construction of gender (Caldera, Huston, and O’Brien, 1998). Gender roles further continue at different stages of life that ask for continuation of social expectations rather than free personal choice. The choice of profession is also gendered with assumption of male to be enrolled in outside home sphere occupation such as politics, military and engineering while female limits their profession within home sphere such as cooking, childcare, and health care (Diamond, 2002).

My attention of research is to pick up several socio-cultural practices where hidden forms of gender-related elements are practiced in Muslim community in Kalaiya, Bara District. It includes dress-up patterns among Muslim girls, their playing games and friend circles, works enrollment and educational engagement to inquire the asymmetrical relations between boys and girls. I check the socialization process and the roles provided in Muslim community that aid in gender construction.

2. 6.2 Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy picked up by feminist scholars as complex concept with different meanings (Beechey, 1979). Radical feminist writers like Kate Millett, for patriarchy, focused solely upon the system of male domination and female subordination. However, Marxist feminists have attempted to analyze the relationship between the subordination of women and the organization of various modes of productions (Beechey, 1979). Juliet Mitchell defined patriarchy as an ideology through her major book on “Psychoanalysis and Feminism” (Mitchell, 1974). Psychoanalysis perspective of gender construction checks out how we acquire gendered subjectivity and internalize associated norms and values (Weddon 1987, cited in Luintel 2018). In Freudian theory to analyze “pysco-sexual process”, Freud highlights the primacy of penis as signifier of sexual difference and girls

psychologically suffer due to lack of penis, which Freud calls penis envy (Freud, 1977, cited in Luintel 2018).

Many scholars defined patriarchy in different ways. In her brilliant work *The creation of Patriarchy*, Gerda Lerner (1986) theorized patriarchy as the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. This means that men hold power in all important spheres and that women are deprived of access to such power (Lerner, 1986). Eisenstein (1979) defines patriarchy as sexual hierarchy which is manifested in the women's role as mother, domestic labourer and consumer within the family. Patriarchy is defined to mean a sexual system of power in which the male role is superior in possession of power and economic privilege. Patriarchy is the male hierarchical ordering of society (Eisenstein, 1999).

Lerner (1986) argue "Patriarchy is a historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly 2500 years to its completion. In its earliest form patriarchy appeared as the archaic state. The basic unit of its organization was the patriarchal family, which both expressed and constantly generated its rules and values (Lerner 1986, p 212)." The roles and behaviors appropriate for sexes were expressed in values, customs, laws, social roles and metaphors which become part of the cultural construct. The metaphors for gender have expressed the male as norm and the female as deviant; the male as whole and powerful, the female as unfinished, mutilated, and lacking in autonomy (Lerner, 1986). The patriarchy system is preserved via marriage and the family through sexual division of labor and society (Eisenstein, 1999). The root of patriarchy are located in women's reproductive selves rather than in an economic or historic one (Eisenstein, 1999).

The fundamental unit of organization of patriarchy was taken as patriarchal family. Such family expressed and constantly generated the rules and values suitable for patriarchy. The practice of patriarchy is existing for nearly four thousand years under paternalistic dominance. The responsibility and obligations are not equally distributed between men and women. The basic of paternalism is an unwritten contract of exchange: economic support and protection given by the male for subordination in all matters, sexual services, and unpaid domestic services provided by female (Lerner, 1986, pp. 212-18). Lerner (1986) states:

The system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women. This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining “respectability” and “deviance” according to women’s sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women (Lerner, 1986, p. 217).

The manifestation and institutionalization of patriarchy is also possible through control of symbol system and spreading of myth that women are marginal to the creation of history and civilization (Lerner, 1986). De Beauvoir (1947) clearly highlights such fallacy in her masterpiece draft *The Second Sex* where she stated: “They [women] have no past, no history, no religion of their own.” The myth that women had no history limits them to search for future alternatives which has profoundly affected the psychology of women. Although the fallacy—no history of woman-- is rejected by many scholars who are unearthing an unending list of sources and uncovering and interpreting the hidden history of women. Maria Mies (1981) dismiss the myths like—the myth that social inequality between men and women as being given by nature/biology; the myths of man-the-hunter and the myth to present men as “breadwinner,” the protector, the social engineer, the inventors of norms and value.

I will check how the institution of patriarchy is stabilized among Muslims through Islamic and other Non-Islamic social practices. This involves the investigation of marriage practices, symbol systems, beliefs, norms, values myths in practice among Muslim community. The function of patriarchy is explored among Muslim community.

2. 6.3 Symbol System

Humankind made a qualitative advancement in its ability to conceptualize large symbol systems which explain the world and the universe. Women were already so greatly disadvantaged that they were excluded from participation in this cultural advance (Lerner 1986). In the book “The creation of patriarchy” Lerner pointed an important phrase of Erich Fromm as “human beings are half-animal and half-symbolic.” Lerner argued that the exclusion of women from the creation of symbol systems became fully institutionalized only with the development of monotheism.

Women were denied equal access to religious learning, and priesthood, and thereby they were denied the capacity of interpreting and the religious belief system. Thus the symbols represented an essential ingredients in order and structure of civilization and hence the patriarchally organized society (Lerner 1986). Lerner (1986) coded Ernst Becker:

Man has a symbolic identity that brings him sharply out of nature. He is symbolic self, a creature with a name, a life history. He is a creator with a mind that soars out to speculate about atoms and infinity, who can place himself imaginatively at a point in space and contemplate bemusedly his own planet... Yet, at the same time... man is a worm and food for worms (Becker, 1986, p.199).

Pierre Bourdieu (1998) used symbolic violence as an analytical perspective to analyze the process by which differences between men and women are built, acted on and reproduced. The perspective mainly focused on mechanism of production and reproduction of the practices involved in the re-negotiation of asymmetry along with difference in power between women and men. Women and men internalize sexual social order and gender hierarchies as “habitus.” Habitus is the set of disposition which generate, unconsciously, practices and perceptions. Masculine domination is situated in the field where there is asymmetric between men and women is practiced. Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power which according to him is “a soft power” which lead to conclude that symbolic violence carries “soft power” through actions having discriminatory and injuries meaning (Bourdieu, 1998).

In my research, different symbol systems are dug out to relate it with the issue of gender construction among the Muslims of Bara district. This involves investigation of beliefs for Muslim women in public-private sphere, dress-up concerns for Muslim women, marriage beliefs, and other beliefs related to purity and pollution.

2. 6.4 Sexual Division of labor

The debate on division of labor brings a map to trace the construction of gender. The debate incorporates the idea of Marx idea on class formation, the lens of socialist feminist and capitalist patriarchy and the line of liberal and radical feminist in broader frame.

In “The German Ideology” Marx (1846) highlighted historical dialectic materialism and notes:

As soon as the distribution of labor comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he can't escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critics, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood (Marx, 1846).

The formation of class in Marx's writing is solely based on the means of production. To code Engel in “The Origin of the Family, Private property, and the State” where the central argument is that the unequal and asymmetrical relation is product of private property. Engel's work lies in the equation: oppression equals exploitation (oppression equals to exploitation). He believed at the same time that there is no difference between domestic violence slavery and wage slavery of the husband. The both are derived from capitalism. Marxist analyst argued that class division of labor and sexual division of labor are byproduct of economic (Eisenstein 1999). The construction of gender also involves the mechanism of who inherit the parental property or whether daughter receives the share from parental property or not. For feminists like Maria Mies (1981), it is the process of “domestication”, and “housewifization” that makes women disappear from the picture and confines them to the domestic sphere even more (Mies, 1981).

Radical feminists fully focus their attention in women as “sex” and they found the politics and theories of the left insufficient. They argue that the determining relation is to reproduction, not to production. Eisenstein (1999) presented the synthesis of radical feminism and Marxist analysis to formulate a cohesive feminist political theory of “socialist feminism.” For Eisenstein (1999), capitalist patriarchy is a source of problem and suggest that socialist feminism is the answer (Eisenstein, 1999). Liberal feminism conceive of the “self” as a rational and autonomous agent; and social contexts such as caste, gender, ethnicity, etc, do not matter (Jaggar, 1983). Liberal feminists blames sexual division of labor as major cause of inequality between men and women and thus to manage this gap, liberal femenist suggests to achieve full equality of opportunity for women compared to men in all spheres of life (Jaggar, 1983). The criticism of liberal feminism lies with its excessive concentration on “housework” that explicitly leaves the issues of power and sexuality untouched. Also, liberal feminist analysis respond to the position of women in the typical middle-class,

the bourgeois and well educated society in the West which disregard intersectional dimension of women (Luintel, 2018).

My research encompasses the issue of sexual division of labor to look after gender construction in Muslim community. This incorporates the participation of women in public-private domains. The study checks the number of participation of Muslim women in public institutions like municipality, hospital, health post, school and entrepreneurship.

2. 6.5 Inheritance of property

The investigation regarding possession and control over property further clarify the gender construction study. Fredrick Engel's *Origin of the Family, Private property, and the State*, which describes "the world historic defeat of the female sex" as an event deriving from the development of private property. Engel commented that in tribal societies the development of animal husbandry led to commerce and the ownership of herds by individual heads of the families, presumably males, but his writing lacks clear proof of how this took place. He claimed that the surpluses from herding were appropriated by men and became private property which helped in institution of monogamous family. The communal property ownership which was the major feature of classless communist societies breakdown and the emergence of the individual family as the economic unit developed with concept of private property. This monogamous family transformed into patriarchal family after development of state where wife's household labor "became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production." Engel (1884) wrote:

The overthrow of the mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the women was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children (Engel 1884, p. 30).

Marxist-economic analysis seemed to be influential in historical analysis of construction of gender. However, Marx and Engel's writing lack adequate proof and they also limited the discussion of "the women question" by offering a persuasive, single-cause explanation with economic determinism (Lerner, 1986). Socialist feminism cluster the Marxian concept of "class oppression" and the radical feminist

concept of “gender oppression.” “Socialist feminism develops a portrait of social organization in which the public structures of economy, polity, and ideology interact with the intimate, private processes of human reproduction, domesticity, sexuality, and subjectivity to sustain a multifaceted system of domination” (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1996 p. 480, cited from Luintel 2018, p. 9).

The study embraces the affair of inheritance of property including its control and distribution between Muslim men and women. It checks out the beliefs and practices ongoing in Muslim community regarding inheritance of property. It finds out the procedures of offering property to women if any and critically analyze relating it with men to uncover the relations between male and female regarding property among Muslim community.

2. 6.6 Control over Female Body, Power and Sexuality

The literature on power is marked by deep, widespread, and seemingly intractable disagreement over how the term “power” is to be understood (Allen, 2014). Allen (2014) argued that liberal feminists have conceptualized power as a resource which is positive social good and this is currently unequally distributed amongst women and men. To say, liberal feminists like Okin (1989) put it, “when we look seriously at the distribution between husbands and wives of such critical goods as work (paid and unpaid), power, prestige, self-development, and both physical and economic security, we find socially constructed inequalities between them, right down the list” (Okin, 1989, p. 136).

The counter definition to liberal feminists put the definition of power as domination where the root of its meaning lies in relation---including ‘oppression’, ‘patriarchy’, ‘subjection’ and so forth (Allen, 2014). De Beauvoir (1949) applied phenomenological approach to theorize male domination and the position of women in social, cultural, historical and economic conditions. Beauvoir presented man as subject and absolute whereas women is object. This distinction is key to Beauvoir’s understanding of domination and oppression (Beauvoir, 1949).

Radical feminists understands power in terms of dyadic model of domination, that is, relations of dominance/subordination which is often understood in the analogy with

the relationship between master and slave (Allen, 2014). As Mackinnon (1987) puts it, “women/men is a distinction not just of difference, but of power and powerlessness...Power/powerlessness is the sex difference” (Mackinnon, 1987 p. 123, cited in Allen, 2014, p 7). Radical feminists like Pateman (1988) claims that gender difference is constituted by domination; as she puts it in a master/subject model as, “the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection” (Pateman, 1988, p. 207). However the claim of Baitliwal (2007) presented an experimental account where she argued how women were cheated in a way by expelling them out of power from the process of empowering women (Batliwala, 2007).

Feminists visualize sexuality not as a question of choice of women and men as individual biological (natural) beings, but as a political site of power relation (Luintel, 2018). This means “sex is a status category with political implications” (Eisenstein, 1999). There have been two major paradigm to analyze sexuality: essentialism and constructivism (Wieringa 2002, Wieringa and Blackwood 1999, cited from Luintel 2018). Luintel (2018) further discussed on these paradigm arguing that essentialists who are biological determinists believes that sex is natural force and this biological difference between men and women is the main cause of women’s oppression. In other hand, radical constructivists counter-argue that it is oppression not biology that produces sexual difference. Constructivists attention is to the point that sexuality is the social construction produced historically and they don’t consider sexual behavior as fixed, but fluid and variable (Luintel, 2018).

De Beauvoir’s “The Second Sex” stands against essentialism and thus regarded as a “decisive blow” of essentialism while the work of Foucault’s “The History of Sexuality” displace it (Wieringa 2002, cited from Luintel 2018). Foucault noted that sexuality is the dense transfer point for relation of power; it will wrong if we just portray sexuality as alien and natural (Foucault, 1980). Maria Mies (1981) analysis of gender division of labor is the platform to test of how power is socially constructed (Mies, 1981). The concluding remark of Luintel writing tells “issues of sexuality are therefore integral in the whole spectrum of power relations between men and women. Sexuality is a site that shapes, reproduces, articulates and transforms gender relations”(Luintel, 2018, p. 27).

Feminist scholars have argued that the body is both socially shaped and colonized. The politics of the body, different from the body politic, argues that the body itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control. Body politics was first used in this sense in the 1970s, during the “second wave” of the feminist movement in the United States. It arose out of feminist politics and the abortion debates. Body politics originally involved the fight against objectification of the female body, and violence against women and the girls, and the campaign for reproductive rights for women. “The personal is the political” became a slogan that captured the sense that domestic contests for equal rights in the home and within sexual relationships are crucial to the struggle for equal rights in the public. This form of body politics emphasized a woman’s power and authority over her own body. Many feminists rejected practices that draw attention to differences between male and female bodies, refusing to shave their legs and underarms and rejecting cosmetics and revealing, form-fitting clothing. The book “Our Bodies, Ourselves”, published in 1973, aimed to widen and deepen women’s knowledge of the workings of the female body, thus allowing women to be more active in pursuit of their sexual pleasure and reproductive health (Phillips and Rakusen, 1970).

The major objective of research is to investigate the process involved in gender construction among Muslim community. The important dimension is to find out power relation, control over body and sexuality. I will link these issues like--role in decision-making regarding number of children and contraceptive devices, picture seen in women’s abortion--with the beliefs, myths, and practices within Muslim community.

2.7 Empirical Studies

Muslim women have a distinct identity and status in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture and ritual and have historically faced multiple forms of discrimination: first—as a woman; second—as a Muslims, and the integrated the third one—as a Muslim woman. There are various conservative, patriarchal attitudes and behavior that prevail inside Muslim community, family, and households. Muslim community impose—the restrictions on education, carry the practice of early marriage, the dowry system, limited involvement in household decision-making, purdah, easy divorce by

husbands, the unequal heritage system, and other practices contribute to subordination of Muslim girls (Seddon, 2017).

The study undertaken in 2009 (Rana) shows that women in the Tarai region of Nepal enjoyed very limited role in household decision-making. The analysis of occupation pattern of Muslim Females (in 2009 study undertaken by Rana, cited by Seddon, 2011) revealed that most of the women, however, remained within the home, and only a quarter were engaged in income generation. There is big gap between male and female in Muslim community. As cited by Seddon (2017), Mr. Asgar Ali, ex-Deputy Mayor of Janakpur and currently a local political leader of the RPP (Nepal) commented in the interview that:

According to the Human Development Report, 2006, Muslim male literacy rate was 61.8 but female literacy rate only 26.5. Over 40 percent of children leave school (i.e. drop out) during their primary education; and the percentage of students obtaining their secondary certificate is 25.5 percent in male and 12 percent in female. The proportion of Muslims getting higher education is negligible. The census of 2001 showed that the number of graduate and postgraduate Muslims amounted only to 4,067. Very few Muslims are employed in the army, the police or governmental jobs. This situation adversely affects the self-confidence of Muslims (Seddon, 2017 p 13).

The access of Muslims in education is very poor. This poor access to education has resulted in lower indexing in public sector employment and thus in fact at inferior positioning in economic and social status of Muslims (Seddon, 2017). The report of CBS 2001 shows us that around 35 percent of literacy rate in Muslims community while the national average of 52 percent with Muslim men around 62 percent, but Muslim women only 27 percent.

The poor schooling and literacy in Muslims are result of various factors. The historical study shows us that before the 1940s, Muslims, like many other low caste groups, were not allowed to attend the schools provided for other children. According to Shamima (1993), Muslims were not in fact allowed to attend Nepalese attend Nepalese state schools until the 1940s. The HLNEC (2055 BS) was the first commission to give explicit consideration to the education of backward communities such as backward castes, language minorities, caste minorities (*dalits*) and economically backward groups, and this further suggested the requirement of special provision to increase their access to education.

Muslim's children were found to enroll in *Madrasas* for education. The education at Madrasas has not until recently been recognized in official educational frame whereas Sanskrit education has been long recognized. The cultural-religious reasons block the chances of Muslim community girl's education at state schools. Seddon (2017) argued that the main causes of poor girls' education in Muslim community are lack of religious education in the mainstream schools, lack of Islamic environment, lack of awareness of parents, co-education, absence of female teachers, traditional *purdah* system, and conservative thinking of parents. Thus, there is lack of state support along with social and cultural problem within Muslim communities that results in poor education (Seddon, 2017).

2.8 Research Gap

The few scholars like Seddon (2017), Upadhyay (2014) and Sijapati (2011) are the pioneering figure to write on Nepalese Muslims. Their work lacks the detail inquiry of gender loaded practices among Muslims. The unique cultural orientation of Muslim women is missing issue of consideration in their work. They failed to address the diversity present within Muslims of Nepal.

There are many scholarly articles, books, and journals which have mainly focused on the topic of gender, in general. The scholars delink sex from other sets of identity portraying the solo suffering on the basis of sexual orientation. In depth, the suffering doubles for those of the women who are already being the part of disadvantaged groups (includes disabled women, low caste women, women from minorities). In South Asian societies, caste and other set of identity including religious background is in vital role. For such picture, intersectional approach of study or targeted study is always a good option. Such approach of study is minimal in our academics.

There is a lack of empirical research summing the issue of gender with religion and regional context of Nepal. Also, the Muslims of Nepal have been long in the shadow from the eyes of scholars due to their minority figure. Similarly, the bulk of research work is mainly centered in Hill region. The report of census shows the majority of Muslims are residing in Tarai belt of Nepal and this region is untouched from academicians. This means that Muslim women living in Tarai belt of Nepal are in subordinated positioning of being women (as a part of male dominated society) which

gets further intensified due to their religious category of minority group; and their regional affiliation of Tarai belt. It makes them into the category of one of the most disadvantaged group of Nepal. This dark spot is far from the light of research.

The efforts of Seddon (2017) in his book *The Muslim Community of Nepal, 2017*, put a remarkable introductory frame of Muslims living in Nepal. His writing although slightly picks the issue of gender and women but it only presented the overall position of Muslim women in Nepal. His writing lack the contextualized information and failed to bring proper ingredients which can cope the issue of geographical heterogeneity within Muslims of Nepal.

In her book, *Islamic Revival In Nepal: Religion and a New Nation, 2011*, Sijapati (2011) mainly mapped the political picture and the positioning comparing the Muslims in Hindu Kingdom and a new secular Nepal. The reading can be fruitful to understand the backward socio-political positioning of Muslims of Nepal. However, it doesn't provide any picture of intersectional positioning of Muslim women in particular. Similarly, the work of Upadhyay (2014) is mainly directed towards social ethnographical study of hill's Muslim of Nepal in his book *Social Ethnography of Hill Muslims of Nepal, 2014*. This study is insufficient to collect geographical diversity within Muslim of Nepal.

These literatures failed to give comparative picture of unique featuring Muslim community by contrasting them with culturally distinct *Madhesis* and *Padhadis* living in Tarai belt of Nepal. It shows that there is a vacuum of literature linking Muslim community and gender. This paper is a small effort of input in the line of addressing above research gap. I have prepared research questions that can be effective for in-depth inquiry of gender construction by disclosing the issues of religious faiths, myths, beliefs, and practices.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Research methodology is concerned with process to be followed to attain the research objective (Creswell, 2003). The basic assumption of my research claims that the variables “religion” and “gender” are socially constructed. I have adopted constructionist orientation towards religion and gender. My research has adopted interpretive social science approach to explore the construction of gender by religion by close consideration of gender practices in Muslim community of Kalaiya. This means my research study is based on constructivist ontology in the sense it keeps claim for the social construction of gender. This incorporates interpretivism as an epistemological position which search for subjective meaning of social action rather than objective reality. The methodological approach of my research study is underpinned by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Being an interpretive social science researcher, the appropriate research design suitable for my research is to carry exploratory research. The most appropriate and suitable methodological approach for my research study is qualitative approach. The research methods required in my study are open-ended questions for in-depth interview.

3.1 Kalaiya: The Research Site

The majority of Muslims of Nepal are concentrated in Tarai belt of Nepal. It will be easy for me if my research field centered the Tarai district of Nepal. I selected Bara—a Tarai district of Province No. 2. Bara district, with Kalaiya as its district headquarters, covers an area of 1,190 km² (460 sq mi) and has population of 687,708 according to 2011 census. The main languages spoken are Bhojpuri, Bajjika, Tharu and Nepali. The human development index of Bara district ranged from 0.457 in 2011.

Table 3.1: Socio-demographic Profile of Selected Study Site and overall Nepal

Indicators	Nepal	Bara
Population (2011)	26,494,504	687,708
Muslims concentration (2011)	1,162,370 (4.39 percent approx. of total population)	89,685 (13.04 percent approx. of Bara district population)
Human Development Index (2011)	0.522	0.457
Sub-Metropolitan Cities	11	2
Municipalities	276	5
Village Municipalities	460	9

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics 2012, Census 2011 HDI Report 2014

My research site is mainly located in a Bhawanipur-tole lying in Kalaiya--a sub-metropolitan city and headquarters of Bara district. Bhawanipur tole covers area of ward number 1 and 3. At the time of the 2011 Nepal Census, Kalaiya had a population of 123,659 residing in 28,645 individual households. The main criteria used for the selection of site are: degree of concentration of Muslims and easy accessibility of convenience.

3.2 Justification of Selecting Research Site

My field research was carried out in Kalaiya, Bara. The research site: Kalaya—a sub metropolitan city, is a market area with its close connection with Birgunj (a metropolitan city and district headquarter of Parsa district) and Jeetpur-simera—a sub metropolitan city, in Bara district. The research site is nearby Birgunj-Raxaul, which is the major custom and the Gate way of Nepal. There is a domestic airport nearby Simera, Bara. The overall features are making easier interaction of different cultures, religious groups, ethnic groups and other diverse groups in my research site. The dichotomy of *Pahadi and Madeshi* is observable in the site of research. Similarly, there is the clash in between Nepal and India culture due to open border (custom) of Birgunj-Raxaul. Moreover, the place constitutes the major religious groups like Hindu and Muslim—who are distinct in religious and cultural practices. Thus, my research site is highly heterogeneous in nature. In such context, it becomes an important task to closely explore the construction of gender being context-specific and grounded.

I belong to Muslim family of Kaliya, Bara. I found that there is significant difference of being boys and girls in the family. The structure of family is categorized by certain

way of doing. These differences easily help to distinguish differences in between male and female through dress up pattern, schooling pattern, playing style, decision making role, work specification, style of speaking and so on. I have myself faced a big wall, which is constructed in between male and female. My belonging to Muslims community shows Muslims to be more unique in religious practice than other religious groups. The unique demonstrations of dress-up easily differentiate them from other culturally distinct groups (*Madhesis* and *Pahadis*). Similarly, the minimal presence of Muslim's women in public sphere is another striking scenario that is empirically observable in Muslim community. These unique orientations of Muslims influenced me to carry my research by context-specific to explore gender loaded element practiced in Muslim community.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a plan for the collection and analysis of data. It is a framework that has been created to find answers to research questions (Creswell, 2003). The main function of research design is to explain how the researcher can find the answer to the research question. For any investigations, the selection of an appropriate research design is crucial in enabling the researcher to reach at valid findings, comparisons, and conclusions (Kumar, 2011).

My research is explorative research. It explores the gender practices within Muslim community. It adopts gender approach to dig out differences and inequalities practiced in Muslim community on the basis of biological differences or sex difference. The research examined various religious domains including religious faiths, beliefs, myths, and practices carried out in Muslim community than contributed in gender construction.

3.4 Nature and Sources of Data

The model of research design demands qualitative data. The data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected from direct field work. In this process, individual respondent has been chosen as sample unit. The sampling in my research is purposive. The collection of primary data involves interview, group discussion, case study, and key informant interview. The interview

and group discussion are conducted with parents from Muslim community. The Muslim scholars like *Mualana, Hafiz, Moulbi, Aalim* are the key informants to get information related to Islam. The entrepreneur Muslim women including Muslim woman in public spheres are another key informants to bring out information about private-public sphere positioning of Muslim men and women. It also includes field observation of Muslim family to monitor differences in between male and female members of the family.

The major sources of secondary data are published and unpublished journal articles, literatures, census report, survey findings, various books, booklets, online media sources, websites etc. Secondary sources also include information from several Muslim organizations such as Islamic Sangh Nepal, National Muslim Forum and other different Mosques in Nepal.

3.5 Sampling

My research follows purposive sampling method. A purposive or judgmental sampling is a form of non-probability sample in which the subjects are selected to meet the study's needs. This form of sampling generally considers the most common characteristics of the type it is desired to sample, tries to figure out where such individuals can be found and then tries to study them (Baker, 1999). There is scattered placement of Muslim population in Kalaiya. By applying purposive sampling, I selected Muslim respondents from major sects like Mansoori, Ansari and Hawari as the sample to represent the Muslims of the research site. The samples of the study are both close to market and far from market area. It carries the viewpoint of Muslims with different economic access. Also, the diverse categories of age group like Muslim girls as key informants, parents with children, and even elderly respondents were selected to explore the changes in practices and belief system concerning gender relation. The equal proportionate of male and female parents were inquired to collect views from either perspective.

3.6 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The collection of primary data requires the following tools and techniques: in-depth interview, group discussion, observation, and key informant interviews.

3. 6.1 In-depth Interview

In-depth interview aims to explore the contextual boundaries of experiences or perception to uncover hidden from ordinary view or reflection or to penetrate to more reflective understandings about the nature of experience. It's objective is to gain access into hidden perception of the self (Marvasti, 2004). For collecting data, I have followed unstructured format of in-depth interviewing. I selected in-depth interview as an appropriate method to collect data with the objective that it can bring the hidden commonsense perceptions, explanations, and understandings linked with cultural practices ongoing in Muslim community which can unpack gender practices. The open-ended questions are preferred choice for interview. In this process, a total number of 20 parents with children were selected. This includes equal number of 10 male and 10 female respondents. The aim behind selecting parents was based on the assumption that the parents can be the source of in-detailed information regarding the gender relations. The in-depth interview of Muslim's parents can bring the picture about the issues like socialization process, marriage practices, public and private positioning, and inheritance of property ongoing in Muslim community to visualize the process of gender construction.

The interview was carried based on check-list (see Annex 1). Since, the interview were of unstructured format, it was flexible to go for amendments. After rapport building with the respondents for the first time, I had gone second time to take interview. In this process, I had taken consent of respondents to note down, record their voices and take photos of some respondents. For the purpose to maintain research ethics as well as for privacy and confidentiality of respondents, real name was hidden.

3. 6.2 Focus Group Discussion

According to Marvasti (2004), in focus groups the researcher asks questions from a number of respondents at same time to stimulate discussion and thereby understand (through further analysis) the meanings and norms which underlie those group answer (Marvasti, 2004). In focus group, collective conversation or group discussion are to carried out at same time to collect some hidden data. The organized small group of 5

parents from Muslim community are subjected with same queries. I selected unstructured approach to gather information based on my check-list (see Annex 3).

I had carried focused group discussion to produce richer data and to explore the gender loaded elements which were not studied before. This method of data collection technique has been applied with the objective to address the hidden issues which might not have been captured from in-depth interview of respondents. The interactional nature of focus groups was supposed to stimulate the memories of family belonging to Muslim community of specific events and practices linked with gender construction.

3. 6.3 Observation

In observation process, the researcher needs to spend many hours in direct personal contact of those who are to be studied. It is also one of the method of data collection (Neuman, 2006). I had gone through two phases of observation—the first as a layperson and the member of the Muslim community and the second as a researcher. The first phase as community member boosted my academic interest to apply sociological lens to carry my research in gender relation. In the first phase, I had myself been the part of the cultural practices and beliefs. In this phase, I perceived every norms, values and believes as “a god instructed.” The second phase of my observation was guided with a research motive—to explore the gender ingredients practiced among Muslims like other communities. Here, my objective was to closely differentiate the gender supplements. It involves my observation as a researcher to explore the gender elements in the major domains like socialization of male and female child, women positioning in the family, and roles of women in the family.

My observation as a researcher provided a picture where mostly Muslim girls were residing inside home while boys are seen playing out or roaming in markets. Similarly, the dress-up pattern is different for Muslim girls who are mainly in traditional full dress practiced in Muslim community while boys are found in modern type or Western dress-up practice.

3. 6.4 Key Informant Interview

I further triangulated my findings with key informants. This involves interview with 5 religious scholars, 5 Muslim girls of Kalaiya and 6 Muslim women working in public spheres. This is supposed to enhance validation of data and to bring grounded and context-specific domains of gender practices with in Muslims like other community of Kalaiya.

The issues like faith and belief system were triangulated and inquired with religious scholars of Muslims like *Moulbi, Maulana, Hafiz, Imam* and *Aalims* living in nearby religious sites (like: Kalaiya Jamme *Masjid*, Bhawanipur Jamme *Masjid*, and others). The issues like socialization and cultural practices involving gender roles were investigated with Muslim girls living in Kalaiya. The next domain of probing, that is, public and private spheres positioning of male and female were further investigated by interviewing Muslim women in public (like: entrepreneur in market and political figures). . The check-list carries questions to be inquired with religious scholars, Muslim girls, and Muslim women in public spheres (see Annex 2).

3.7 Profile of Respondent

In my research, a total number of 20 parents as respondents from Muslim community were selected in which 10 were male and 10 were female. All the respondents were undergone through in-depth interview.

This includes a field research conducted from Magh to Falgun, 2076. It also involves a pilot observation to verify the reliability of tools for interview. The pilot observation of 2 days (first week of Magh) which involves 4 respondents allowed me to modify my check-list according to context. I, then, translated my check-list to local language-Bhojpuri to bring uniformity in data collection. The respondents were from the age group 35-65 years of age. The table 3.2 shows the education level of respondents.

Table 3.2: Level of Education of Respondents

Education	No. of male	No. of female	Total
Illiterate	5	8	13
Literate			
School Attendants	4	2	6
SLC	1		1
Total	10	10	Total=20

The table 3.2 shows that there is higher rate of illiteracy among Muslims. The number of Muslims women who are illiterate are much higher than that of males. The picture of Muslim women in my research study is either illiterate or general school attendants. The number of male involved in education is comparatively higher than females. This shows huge gap in education while comparing education of respondents.

Table 3.3: Marriage Age of the Respondents (parents)

Age Group	No. of males	No. of females	Total
12-15	---	5	5
16-19	2	5	7
20-23	8	---	8
Total	10	10	Total= 20

The tables 3.3 shows the age of marriage of Muslim girls were in between 12 to 19. This clearly indicates the early marriage practice within Muslim community. The age of marriage for Muslim girls is comparatively lower than that of boys. This shows that Muslim girls were mainly married before the age of their higher education attainment.

3.8 Field Reflections

There arrived a very new picture during my field visit. The field was different from my presumptions. Although the research site is very much familiar as my birthplace but the issue of research was new for the people living in the place. This had provided a ground of various curiosity resulting to multiple doubts for the purpose of my data collection among respondents. Sometimes, there occurred unnecessary gathering in the place where I go for interview. These crowd and curiosity of nearby general people put me in the circle of complexity. I, then, very patiently and honestly shared

my purpose of study and ask for their help and support, which I received most of the times. My belonging to the place and being a member of the same community provided an extra weight among the people to feel easier to share their viewpoint. At the mean time, I promised on my ethical consideration to keep the identity of respondents hidden to make them confidence for sharing their perceptions and experiences.

I found a shocking experience when I went to the religious schools of Muslim girls in Bara. There was a strict restriction for a male to talk with those school's girls other than the family members or relatives. In fact, I found the co-education is not allowed in Islam and the same principle was followed in Islamic schools. In few nearby mosques, there operated a basic teaching where small children gets education sitting in same mosque—male in one row and female in another row (see Annex II, plate B). The picture was different for the Muslim girls reading in nearby government and private schools in Kalaiya. They were comfortable to share their experiences with shy gesture.

In my field study, I found that the age was critical factor for women deciding their public gesture. It was comparatively easier to interview the women age group above 40 years old (see Annex II, plate C). The newly married Muslim girls were mainly subjected towards the religious tradition of applying *parda* or *burqa* for facing in public (see Annex II, plate D). To interview them, in most of the cases, was not easy as it was not allowed from the head of the family (generally father-in-law or husband). In some of the cases—Muslim girls or women were seen in traditional business like bangles shops (Muslim sect: *churihar* is supposed to carry this business) and tailoring shops (Muslim sect: *darzi* is supposed to enroll in the business) in the market (see Annex II, plate E and plate F). The Muslim women working in the public were comfortable to share their views. The overall picture of research field is full of dynamics as some Muslim women were carrying business in market while other not even permitted for public appearance.

Similarly, some Muslim men were also very helpful to assist me while some are full of fear and doubt despite explanations. In some of the cases, the Muslim men were feeling so much confidence to snatch the experience of women and children, and they put the experiences of entire family themselves. They offered me tea. They frankly

presented their viewpoint about their children raring and issues regarding socialization of children. Initially, some of them even demanded their share from foreign aid as they thought the study purpose is to gain foreign currency. Then, I clarified the purpose of my study. I requested them to assist me in getting my degree level education. I showed them the essence of research in bringing factual picture of Muslim community and my request was effective to convince many of them. In some cases, the fear was easily noticeable. In this process, I had taken help of nearby brothers Md. Imtiyaj Mansoor and Shamshul Haq who helped me for making my field work easier and their close consideration at every step of my field is very much appreciable.

There was plan to carry the case studies of inter-religion married couples but I hardly found any case in my field visit. Similarly, the problem of time and cost restriction blocked me to manage a big group discussion. However, I managed a group discussion of 5 families. Being a male researcher, I had gone through some constraints to get answers on issues like sexuality. It was really challenging to collect data from Muslim community with very few women in public exposure. Also, the Muslim women were shy and in many cases ignored to click the photo since they consider it offensive according to religion (for photos see annex II).

Chapter Four

Practices of Gender Relations in Kalaiya

This chapter includes the compilation of data collected on broader issue of exploring the practice of gender within Muslim community living in Kalaiya, Bara. The first section includes inquiry on how gender practices are socialized within babies born in Muslim family. It includes exploring of the process of role learning according to sexual basis. The second section explores the role of beliefs and faith system which are contributing in social construction of gender. In the third section, the investigation of gender loaded practices inherent in marriage system is inquired. The fourth section examines the position of women in power sharing and their placement in delivering their desires. The in-door and out-door positioning of Muslim women is find out through close quire of public and private enrollment of Muslim women. In the final section, the control on property in relation to Muslim women is explored to observe gender relation in Muslim community.

4.1 Early Gender Socialization among Muslims: Cultural Practices

The gender socialization links with the procedure by which learning of culture's gender-related rules, norms and expectations takes place. The early age (childhood) socio-cultural settings within Muslims that incorporates gendered norms and expectations are the major interest of my research. The in-depth interview of parents and interrogation with Muslim girls' help me to draw the picture. Among 20 parents interrogated, every parent accepted the significant differences are seen between male and female from their childhood. The parents admitted that these differences sharpen with age. The parents took the line of Lorber (1994) to confess that the gender status is gained through the process of naming, dressing, and the degree of celebration as a marker. Rehman Miya (45) expresses his views:

The differences of being baby boy or girl start from the day of birth of child. Parents are forced to offer sweet and money to working *chamaeen*⁶ in gynecology ward if it's a boy child. Here, sweet symbolizes the sign of happiness in the family and the matter of pride. This culture is almost silent when girls birth take place. Then there is procedure of naming of children. This

⁶ *Chamaeen* refers to the ladies workers in hospital linked with cleaning works who mainly handle Gynae ward of hospital

means whether the surname to be “Khatoon” or “other.” The labeling of Khatoon or Parveen ⁷ indicates the girl and the rest is boys. The tag of name is just not an identity but long list for differentiating the actions, works, and the way of life. [Interview: Mansoor(45), Falgun 1, 2076]

The practice of bargaining for sweets or gifts after the birth of baby boy symbolizes the moment prioritizing boy over girl. The cultural exchange sweets demonstrates celebration mode during entry of baby boy in the family. Similarly, the words of Arfa Parveen (47) also supports the practice of exchange of sweets but her views were slightly different from Rehman’s view. She said, “For the first baby, the family members are equally happy whether its baby boy or girl. This intensity of happiness then depends on having baby boy or not. The baby boy always gets special welcome in the family by sweets or special functions in the family.” The words of respondents picked the significant differences in between boys or girls from the time of birth of a child. The cultural practices linked with welcoming baby boy is different from that of baby girl. (Field note: Falgun 2, 2076)

The differences are also introduced while selecting dress up for girls and boys baby. There are 9 parents who said that children, according to their sex, offered the dress after the day of birth of child. This means day one of the birth of the child introduces the differences in treatment for baby boys and girls. The baby girls are mainly gifted frocks while baby boys are offered t-shirt and it’s matching. Even the relatives also offer the similar matching gifts to newly born babies. However, the views of 11 parents out of 20 are different as they said that the age of baby leads to more selective dressup. Rehana Khatun (45) says,

It’s the age of the child which play major role in bringing differences between male and female. When the baby child starts to walk, parents bring frock, payal (silver ornament), hair cut is stopped and use of clips in hair are the major practices which bring differentiation in between baby girls and boys. [Interview: Khatun(45); Falgun 3, 2076]

The cultural scripts as argued by Little and McGivern (2013) is already set up among the families, relative and entire society as a whole. These cultural scripts are strictly followed in difference in cases of boy and girl. This, in fact, starts from the day of birth of baby child and it continues so on. This differentiation becomes more intense and serious with increase in age (especially after puberty) in Muslim community. All

⁷ Khatoon or Parveen is widely used surname for Muslim girls along with their name.

parents show their deep concern on wearing clothes by taking reference of Islam that advocates hard guidelines regarding girl's dress-up. This line of distancing between girls and boys sharpen with age. Every respondent had shown their rigid cultural guidelines that the girls need to follow. They linked the prestige of family with girls of the family. They argued that the girls need to show the decent behavior as prescribed by Islam and anything out of this is intolerable to religion. Manjur Alam (42), the father of two daughters, expresses his concern:

Daughters are the *ijjat* (prestige) of the family. It's all in the hand of daughter for looking after *baap-dada ijjat* (ancestor prestige). Whether to save the nose of father or to cut it, it is dependent on daughter's choice. If the daughter elopes, this means the nose of father is cut in front of society. The daughter's *chaal-chalan* (behavior) and *sanskaar* (culture) is the reflection of the family status. This involves strict dress-up pattern, language, and minimal exposure to public sphere. The dress of girls above 12 years must cover body completely. The voice of the daughter needs to be gentle at low pitch. [Interview: Alam(42); Falgun 4, 2076]

The schooling picture of girls within Muslim community varied. There was considerable debate of preference of modern schooling over religious schooling among parents. There were majority of parents in the group discussion who were arguing the importance of knowledge of *Din-Islam* (religious education) for girls who finally make the entire family Islamic. However, they also visualize the significance of modern education. In the group discussion, few families rejected the vision of modern education. Their argument lied in the ground that modern education invited openness in our community. They argued that the society is moving in the direction of nudity and it is abolishing the system of *parda* or *purdah*⁸ (coverings) from Muslims which they regard as sin for entire Muslim community.

In the interview held, 15 parents out of 20 express positive views on sending daughters to modern school (Nepal Government authorized schooling). However, these parents still support the additional attainment of religious education. But 5 parents were in the single side of giving full Islamic education. Ramjan Ansari (55), one of who support Islamic education, argue, "There is no higher level Islamic education in nearby areas. My daughter take basic level urdu education in order to make the entire family environment Islamic wherever she goes after marriage."

⁸ *Parda* or *purdah* is practice in Muslims that involves the seclusion of women from public observation by means of concealing clothing.

Despite modern days schooling optimism among parents, the scene for higher education is very pessimist. This negative attitude for higher education is clearly reflected in the words of Taranum Khatoon (52):

Girls are meant for kitchen work. Actually, it is well-known fact that after marriage, the girls need to handle family and it is in the hand of their husband's family whether to permit them for work or not. I have seen many girls who studied before their marriage but after their marriage they have to discontinue their study. What is the use of teaching girls for higher level if she is not permitted to involve in job? [Interview: Khatoon (52); Falgun 5, 2076]

The picture is different in one of the respondents who presented a radical arguments about girls schooling. In the words of Nasima Perveen (38) who keeps her argument in support of higher education for every girls: "There is necessity in teaching girls for higher education. This makes them independent and self-capable." But, at the same time, she also presented challenges which oppose such practice. She further adds,

It becomes challenging to marry our daughter if she go for higher study. In our Muslim community, girls get married nearby or below age of 20. The higher level education takes time due to which it becomes challenging to search husband for daughters. People start to bite back and there is always fear to hear some negative comments about our daughters. So, most of the family start to search for good husband once the daughter's puberty stage begins. [Interview: Parveen (38); Falgun 4, 2076]

In the interview, many parents had shown their interest of teaching their daughter but the conditions they demanded or their need of Islamic environment according them is absent at their place. Almost every parent shared their deep concern of how they used to have a big stress until and unless their daughters going out return to home. The parents agreed on their demand for minimum exposure in society or public spheres although the girls are permitted for schoolings. They further argued that the girls need to maintain *parda* with increase in age and it becomes compulsory after puberty and the public exposure without *parda* is considered to as sins Islam. Also, most of the parents expressed their disagreement on sending their daughter out of their homeland for higher degree education. [Field note, Falgun 5, 2076]

In the interview conducted, all the parents accepted the early marriage train is practiced among Muslim community. One of the major barriers restricting higher level education is girl's early marriage. Although there is relatively increase in

marriage age at present but still this is below par to attain higher level education. One of the respondents put his words:

Initially, both girls and boys were married at early age. This train is almost declined at present scenario. However, the Muslim girl's marriage age is still lower than other non-Muslim community. It has been very recent picture when some Muslims girls are sent to Birgunj (a nearby city) for attending colleges. However, still most of the parents hesitate to send their girls in Kathmandu or any other distant study. For boys, they easily get permission for abroad or distant study. (Interview: Falgun 6, 2076)

When asked about reason for such hesitations in case of girls, the respondent blamed the non-Islamic surrounding as major cause among parents. He further replied "The dress-up pattern in cities is very open. The girl's dress-up in cities is against merit of Islam. We don't want our daughter, after being matured, to involve in such open and in co-education schooling set up. I too support higher education but not in such set up." He further added "One of my daughters is getting her +2 level education in Hari Khetan, Birgunj. The college sends different buses for girls and boys, Similarly, there is different class room according to sex." Most of the parents were in favor of basic level education although the concern of higher level education was not their subject of concern. (Field note: Falgun 7, 2076)

Sattar Mansoor (62), a retired Government employee, views differed in the case of education among Muslim girls. He expressed his views like:

There is a larger family size in Muslim community. The moderate economical condition can't permit every child for higher education. This leads to calculative expense in education favoring boy against girls. It directs to private boarding school for sons (maximum expenses) while daughter in government school or the girls are mainly provided basic level Islamic education at their home. Girls are still perceived as other house property while boys are care-taker of parents and entire family. Boys, thus, always get higher degree of preference as compared to girls. In fact, many families open insurance or go for fixed deposit in the name of newly born girl child to carry future investment for marriage rather than carrying investment in education. [Interview: Mansoor (62); Falgun 8, 2076]

He further adds: "There need to keep balance for girl's marriage as dowry and in fact, many families open insurance or go for fixed deposit in the name of newly born girl child to carry future investment for marriage. Muslims families cannot afford twice investment, that is, once during education attainment; and next during their marriage." This practice of selective educational investment in bigger family size of Muslims is

never going to supports girls who are also a part of male dominated society where the preference of son is always higher than girls. This restricts girls from university level education as the girls.

Similarly, 5 Muslim girls were inquired about the difference they face during childhood due to sex differences. All the girls accepted about the bold inequalities for being male and female. The story of Nuri Khaton (14) resembles with the suffering of many girls. She tells:

It is different to be a boy and a girl in our society. The girls need to be aware of the differences if she expects good words of mouth from the people they are surrounded with. The restriction starts with social prescriptions of long listed scheduled of daily works. The physical appearance is supposed be with long hair with lots of focus in facial make-up and figure maintenance of the girls. The girls are supposed to wake up early in the morning. It is considered as sin or virtue from societal established norms. The day of the girls start from kitchen with tea preparation and ends with cleaning of kitchen at night. [KII: Khaton (14); Falgun 9, 2076]

This research shows how the seed of gender is spread through cultural practice inherited among Muslims. The initial investigation of gender domains begin from the childhood phase with learning of social roles. It is noted from the research that there is distinct socialization for male and female in Muslim community. The girls are always regarded with the concern of *parda* in Islam. The families are very serious regarding the dress-up pattern of girls. The girls are linked with family prestige. The cultural practice of *parda* and non-Islamic environment de-motivate family from sending their daughter for higher level education. The common picture of larger family size for Muslims leads to selective investment for boys and girls, that is, for boys investment lies in education while for girls it centered in marriage as dowry. The basic religious education and school level education is the prime allocated educational train for Muslim women. The Muslim girls are further trained for domestic works which make them more interested in household and religious work.

4.2 Role of Beliefs and Faith System in Gender Construction among Muslims

The practice of cultural system varies with difference in religion. The cultural system is the set of beliefs, faiths,, rituals myths and symbols. The cultural system practiced by Nepalese Muslims (as religious minority) is different and unique when projected from configuration of Hindu-Buddhist (majority). It involves inquiry of gender loaded

beliefs, norms, rituals, myths and symbols prevailing among Muslim community of Kalaiya. This carries critical examination of available narrations about Islam and women.

A total number of 5 religious elites (*Molbi, Maulana, Imam, Haafeez, Aalim*) as key informants were interviewed to get the information regarding beliefs and faiths found in Muslim community. Every religious elite I visited were male and as a male researcher I had not been permitted to meet any of female elites as they were not allowed for public gestures. I visited religious sites Masjid (mosque) for my interview with key informants. The logic behind this interrogation is to inquire how religious beliefs and faiths play in the construction of gender. The beliefs and faiths are responsible for shaping day to day activities of the followers of religion. The religious elites are one who guides the common followers of the religion. The views of these elites are more influential to guide me for the required data of my research. There was common argument among religious elites about big distinction between Muslim's male and female. One of the informants presents his view as:

Both boys and girls are gift of *Allah* (god) but they are accordingly provided different tasks. There is equal access of girls and boys to education in Islam but out-door works are assigned for boys and girls are meant for indoor work. Wives need to handle house and the entire family. It involves work like cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, children rearing, elderly caring and other indoor works while husbands need to handle the source of income from which the house can function. This includes earning and handling outdoor works. Although husband can assist his wives in kitchen but wife is not permitted to work out in public sphere. Girls are required to place themselves in *purdah* or *parda* (curtains). Girls are believed to be inside *parda* for secrecy. Only husband are authorized male for whom there is no requirement of such strict restriction. The violation of such rule is considered as a sin in our Islam. (KII: Falgun 9, 2076)

The respondent presented the geometry where male and female are meant for separate functions. Interestingly, he linked the biological functions with cultural functions denoting both as natural which are assigned in Islam. Samim Ansari (57) who is a *Molbi* in nearby Mosque had a very rigid argument regarding women. He said, "women are meant for *parda*. In case, the family go against it need to be punished by god. The home which are sending their daughters or women for out working will never have *barakat* (blessing) despite the bigger digit of earning." He further gave the

reference of Sunni hadith⁹ to show the importance of *parda* for women saying: “Even the God knew the importance of *pardha* for women. Unlike men who are made directly from clay by god, women were not gone from the same procedure of creation. While Adam¹⁰ was sleeping, God took a rib from him and from it he created Eve¹¹.” However, while the creation of Adam and Eve is referred to be in the Quran, but the exact method is not specified there.

All the religious elites accepted the backwardness of Muslim girls in education enrollment. When they were asked about major cause for such picture, the restriction of public exposure and faith for residing girls at home and indoor works as taken for granted are repeated statements from many respondents. Mahamud Miya (53) expresses his view:

Girls are looked for *ghargirasti* (household works) or *chula-chaukhat* (soil made cooking device) and education is not the first priority for girls. If the girl is uneducated, it's not of surprise but if a girl doesn't know kitchen work, it's like committing a big crime. Islamic education is needed for girls to make the entire family environment Islamic. However, education for earning is not permitted in Islam as the working environment is not sex selective and to work with male for female is restricted. Education attainment is not constricted but the placement of girls in the four wall of the house up to somewhat restrain the schooling interest among the parents. [KII: Miya (53); Falgun 9, 2076]

Nejamudin Mansoor (27), who is also *Aalim* by education, somehow differs in his argument as he tells:

There is lack of Islamic schooling facility for Muslim girls. The co-education is restricted in our religion. There is no scope for Islamic qualification in Nepal as the Government of Nepal has not authorized higher degree Islamic education. The long suppressive policy of Government regarding Islamic education has isolated this community to be advantaged from educational policy. The non-Islamic environment has de-motivated parents to involve in Nepal's Government educational framework. In addition to co-education, the dressing patterns like pant, shirts, skirts or the dress without *dupatta* or *odhani* (shawl-like scarf) in school or colleges also demoralizes parents send their daughter to be part of current schooling atmosphere. [KII: Mansoor (27); Falgun 10, 2076]

All of the informants rejected the chances of public participation for Muslim women like political enrollment and entrepreneurship. Also, there was common view of all

⁹ Hadith is considered as record of the tradition or saying of the Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁰ Adam or Aadam is believed to be the first human being or Nabi (prophet) in most sects of Islam.

¹¹ Eve or Bibi Hawwa is believed to be the mother of mankind in Islam.

respondents for inter-religion marriage. The respondents told that inter-religion marriage is a conditional in Islam. The required condition asks for religious transformation and need to accept Islam to carry marriage with Islamic tradition. It means inter-religion marriage is banned in Islam in one way but in other way the transformation of religion or the acceptance of Islam make the inter-religion marriage possible. Again, I want code the words of Nejamudin Mansoor (27) to describe the faith on love marriage in Islam:

There is no Islamic law for love marriage. Since, the girls are restricted to remain in *Parda* and the exposure of girls other than her husband is considered as sin so love marriage, pre-marital or extra-marital relation is prohibited in Islam. [KII: Mansoor (27); Falgun 10, 2076]

Every respondent rejected the idea of purity or pollution in Islam for women which are prevailed in the society. “There are some irregular practices like girls can discontinue their regular course prayer and can omit fasting in *Ramadan* (one month long fasting period for Muslims) during their menstruation period,” one of the respondent presented his view. All of the informants dismiss the coercive charges for any sorts of prevailing idea of impurity during menstruation rather they presented their logic that menstrual restrictions for carrying religious rituals are for health concern of girls or it is resting phase of girls. Also, there were similar views for all respondents regarding Muslim girls religious site’s (Masjid) entrance. Kalim Ansari (40), a Maulana in nearby Madrasa says,

There is no different sites for prayer for men and women. They can hold the prayer at the same site if there is some kinds of *parda* (opaque) between male and female. They can’t chant prayer by being face to face. This is the reason why women are found to stay at Mokhtum (place where children used to study their religious text) while performing prayers in our society. It is restricted in our religion for women chanting *Aazan* (the Muslim call to ritual prayer made by a muezzin from the minaret of a mosque) since it is believed that no other than husband are permitted to hear her voice so openly. [KII: Ansari (40); Falgun 11, 2076]

The further inquiry on believes and faiths for inheritance of property leads to varied opinions among religious scholars. One of the respondents expressed his argument as:

There is no provision for keeping solo-property for women. They are always visualized in pair, that means, they are attached to their husband, while talking about their property. They claim their *sohar* (husband) as their property in the society. At most, why do they keep money as every necessity of the women is

fulfilled by their husband or the head of the family. (Interview, Falgun 12, 2076)

The similar opinion of the next respondent comes like:

The girls are taught from their childhood that the ultimate homes of girls are their husband home. The most of the girls link their fate with their husband's fate. They are initially dependent on their father's source of income which shift to their husbands after marriage and finally, their elderly phase is supposed to be handled by their son. She is never admitted in the position to think of herself for present or about her future or any source of income. (Interview: Falgun 13, 2076)

When the respondents were asked about widow marriage, they accepted the possibility of such marriage in the religion. However, they accepted the higher degree of practical complexity for woman than man to conduct such marriage. A respondent expresses his argument:

Widow marriage, although, allowed by our religion but the chances of widow marriage is just like negligible. Such marriage is like strong sign of shame and disgrace—like loss of prestige in the society. It's like rare and never operated with the same energy with mass presentation. A widower has comparatively more chances of getting remarried. Even in some cases, parents offer their unmarried daughters to such person if the background (wealth, job and degree of qualification) of widower is strong. This becomes almost impossible for widow at practical level. (Interview: Falgun 14, 2076)

When the key informants (religious scholars) are inquired for family planning procedure in Islam. All of them rejected the provision included regarding family planning in Islam. They admitted that the child as the gift of god. However, they agree on practical provision ongoing in society which are insisting numerous Muslims to have limit on the number of child. (Field note, Falgun 17, 2076)

This section of chapter admitted the role of belief and myth system in construction of gender. The overview of the investigation draw our attention to unique cultural practices among Muslims living in the non-Islamic environment. These practices are loaded with gender carrying elements. The Islamic faith which portrays male and female in pair makes a boundary line separating the complete function of human society. In this clear-cut, dividing line is mapped where females are provided responsibility of in-door activities which is commonly symbolized by the term "*parda* for girls" while boys are for carrying out-door activities. The practice of gender in Muslim community is even carried from surrounding societal practices. This is

illustrated from the increases in complexity for widow marriage within Muslim community which is supposed to be carried easily according to Islamic scripts.

4.3 Manifestation of Gender through Marriage Practice in Muslim Community

The construction of gender is very much processual phenomena linked to our life through social practices. Marriage is a socio-culturally recognized practice for union of spouse that establishes rights and obligation between the couples, as well as their children, and between them with family and relatives. Marriage is conducted by either religious or legal references. In our society, the major procedure involved in marriage is religious guidelines. In the Muslim community, the Islamic law is the acceptable terms for marriage. In order to search for gender involved components in the Muslim community, the practice of marriage is selected as one of the domains. The in-depth interview from parents helped me to bring my data. Every parent commented on distinct presumption and practices of marriage held within Muslim community. These presumptions and practices demands different roles from Muslim men and women resulting to different positioning within households.

The respondents accepted early marriage train in Muslim community. Sakhina Begum (40) was married with Nooralam Mansoor (44) at the age of 15. Sakhina, who is a house-wife, has got five children- three daughters and two sons. She shares her experience of marriage:

Marriage, for girls, is all about fate. This is all written beyond our reach determined and already defined by Allah (god). Marriage are conducted by parents. The parents know what is right for their children. We, girls, are taught by our parents (especially mother) to observe all sufferings of *sasural* (home of husband) and handle the family smoothly. For me, my husband is my world. I cannot go against my family or husband in any case. [Interview: Begum(40), Falgun 11, 2076]

The similar view are found in the words of Rehana Khatun (47), who, was married at the age of 16. Her husband works in nearby Dabur factory located in Rampur-Tokoni, Bara. They had four children: three daughter and one son. She had not gone to school in her life but she had basic idea about how to carry religious rituals (daily religious prayer, religious ceremonies) learnt from her mother. She chants prayer for five-times (*Paach waqt namaaz*) daily. She tells:

When I was 16 years old, I got married. My parents were very much worried for my marriage after I became 13. There is a common phrase that is repeated in the family or by the relatives--*beti jawan ho gail ab saadi kare k padi*(a time highlighting girls' adolescence and need of marriage). In our family, still it's prevailed that girls are considered as *dosar k ghar ke sampati*(other house property), so after they get bigger (used to symbolize time after girls go through mensuration), they need to be married. The girls should not come in front of father and elder brother. My mother always taught me to keep 'dupatta' with full 'salwar' and 'kamiz' (*dupatta* is a length of material worn arranged in two folds over the chest and thrown back around the shoulders, typically with a salwar kameez, by women from South Asia) to cover the head and body completely. After my marriage, my *shohar* (husband) fulfill my every demand. I cook food for my family, care my children, engage in cleaning home and washing clothes. I take care of my father-in-law and mother-in-law. I rarely go to bazaar (market); especially during festival shopping of Eid And Bakra-Eid (festivals of Muslims). [Interview: Khatun (47), Falgun 3, 2076]

Again, I wanted to code the views of Sattar Mansoor (62) who presented a different views regarding marriage age of Muslim girls. He says:

Early marriage is often practiced in our community and even in entire society. The one who makes marriage certificate are well-known about this fact. They manage the legal authorized (Nepal Government specified age of marriage) date of marriage while making the certificate. The parents, especially for the case of girls, are worried about their married age. There is a kind of responsibility (or like burden type) for parents for their daughter marriage. The burden type responsibility is due to societal biting remark (fear of girl's affairs) of girl which hurts family prestige and blocks the marriage proposal as well as the demand of dowry is also a possible cause. [Interview: Mansoor (62), Falgun 8, 2076]

The parents were asked about the basic features to be focused while conducting arrange marriage for girls and boys. There is variation in requirements for boys and girls while selecting the matching for their child. Islam Hawari (65) states,

Children are reared for the future hope that they will look after their parents. My wife, Jagnesha Khatoon (60), is old now. We have five daughters and one son. I married my daughters and now we are trying to marry our only son so that there come our daughter-in-law who can handle the kitchen. The thing goes in the process. My wife frequently forces me to fix the son's marriage as we are now in the need of care-taker and one who make food for us. [Interview: Hawari (65); Falgun 12, 2076]

He paused for few seconds and further added with smile: "Finally, we want to see our grandson as well before our death." The further inquiry about marriage requirements for girls and boys are presented in the view of one of my respondent:

All parents are conscious about their son's and daughter's marriage. The parents try to search the best matching for their child. While searching the husbands for

their daughters, parents are mostly careful about the qualities of boys like-- *padhal-lekhal* (qualified, literally means clever), *sushil* (good habits that predominantly means--No to drinking habit) and *kamnihar*(nature of works enrollment assurance of future security or safeguard from economical crisis). Similarly, for their sons, the basic requirements are that the girls need to be *rahangar* (one who can fit in cooking, washing, cleaning and other household works), *sanskari* (well trained to look after family and elders), and *sundar* (beautiful--fairness, height, figure etc). (Interview: Falgun 18, 2076)

The required characteristics for girl's marriage are-- *rahangar*, *sanskari* and *sundar* while in boys, the features are- *padhal-lekhal*, *kamnihar*, and *sushil*—are repeatedly highlighted by most of the parents. In group discussion, every parent accept the differences on the ground of sex differences. The parents presented one of the story which can figure out the differences. The story starts like:

The looks of boys are never a primary concern for marriage. Nobody asks whether the boys can cook or not but the same is the basic question for girls. A team of woman from boy's side go to visit girl's home to look after girls' appearance or the beauty of the girl to be married. Similarly, there is also a ceremony called *dulhan k imuh dekhai rasm* (a ceremony where gifts are given to bride by seeing her face. The gifts may be money or ornaments). There come the feelings of proudness in the family if the beauty of bride is appreciated from relatives or neighbors. This is the reason why for girls-- beauty becomes their first and most essential asset in her life. Also, there is organization of ceremony when the bride at the first time enter to the kitchen-at most where fish (a symbolic representation of good luck) is cooked to grandly welcome the bride in home and to handle the kitchen in a way as well. [FGD: 5 Parents, Falgun 27, 2076]

The experience of Mariyam Parveen (48) also cast another picture of differentiation in being daughter and daughter-in-law. wider differentiation. She expresses her view as:

It's very much predictable and bitter truth that there is a kind of partial freedom in girls' life which is also snatched after getting married. Initially, both boys and girls are under guardianship of parents. The dynasty of power regime is transferred from father to son but girls always share the backbench in this power regime. For girls, life is always like a jail. Previously, girls need to be under their parent's command which then get shifted to husband after marriage. It all goes to the hand of husband and family of husband to allow or restrict the outdoor movement. [Interview: Parveen(48); Falgun 14, 2076]

She further added with disappointed face, "Which is the actual home for girls? There is no free entrance to our *nahiyar* (father's home) or *sasural* (husband's home). It requires formality where there is *din-dherai* (short contract which defines the period of time girl's going to stay at their *nahiyar* or *sasural*) before and after either going to

nahiyar or *sasural*.(Field note, Falgun 19)” A similar comment were found in the words of Islam Hawari (65):

Daughter-in-laws are *ghar k dhan* (asset of the house). We are from a *ijjatdaar pariwar* (prestige holder family). From the beginning, *beti-patoah* (the daughters or daughter-in-laws) of our family are not permitted to go out without their guardian. It is the weakness of the guardian if their wives or daughter-in-laws goes out of track (literally means going out of home without guardian). In the entire society, there is our prestige for keeping our family in control. None in the society can point finger on our family for this issue. [Interview: Hawari (65); Falgun 12, 2076]

In nutshell, the practice of gender is also manifested through marriage related assumption, beliefs and practices ongoing within Muslim community. These presumptions and practices of marriage demands different roles for men and women. In order to meet such interest of marriage, distinct socialization is motivated for male and females. The common narrations found in our research linking women and marriages are: ‘women as house property;’ ‘women as source to expand family;’ ‘women as prestige of family’ and so on. Such narratives provides different ground of treatment in between male and female. Another practice which is playing vital role in setting gender practice is of course the practice of early marriage among Muslims living in Kalaiya. Although dowry is strictly prohibited in Islam but this is in practice among Muslims which is also playing an important role in building unequal relation between male and female.

4.4 The position of Muslim women in Power Sharing and their Control over Desires

In my research, the assigned task is to link different faces of social institutions with the construction of gender. In doing so, I select religion as one of the social factors in the construction of the gender. This section investigates how religious norms, practices, and myths generate difference in power relation between male and female. The parameters like sexuality and control over body are terminology under which research checklist were prepared for inquiry. It aims to inquire the position of Muslim women in power sharing and their control over desires. The Muslim women from the interview were targeted sample to acquire information regarding this issue. Almost all women agree on their weak role in decision making in household activities. The main cause behind this scene according to the respondents, are their minimal understanding

in outside public issues. When interrogated on internal issues like family planning, mixed responses came from them. Taranum Khatoon (52), who is also a housewife, presents her view with shy gesture, regarding decision making for the number of children:

There is no fix way of deciding the number of children. It is a matter of common consensus among the family heads and the couple. There requires son in the family. If the number of son becomes two or more, than there generally starts gossip of family planning in the family. Generally, if the elder children are daughter than the number of children required extends for the hope of getting son. There is equal pressure from the family head (especially mother-in-law) who always insists of seeing her grandson rather than grand-daughter. The series of children continues until and unless the son is born. [Interview: Khatoon (52); Falgun 4, 2076]

All women presented the higher preference of son in the family. “The numbers of son for the couple is one of the major factor for family planning,” according to respondents. In addition to family pressure, the societal pressure is another determinant factor demanding for son in the family. This issue is pointed from the views of Roshni Khatoon (48), who has recently gifted with a son after four successive daughters.

For me, to be the mother of four successive daughter is similar to a kind of committing a crime. Every faces were seen blur after the birth of the daughters. It’s not only the family who pressurize for the son in the family but also there is the role of relatives, neighbors, and the entire society who put a kind of pressure before every delivery. The pressure exerts from higher expectation of having son from every nearer of the family if the daughters are in series. These faces becomes more down in the case if the next child is also a daughter. This expectation further extends for next child for the hope of son. The scene is different if there is successive number of sons. Everybody gives a suggestion of stopping child if the initial baby boys are two or three. [Interview: Khatoon (58); Falgun 14, 2076]

All woman interrogated thoroughly accepted the responsibility of child’s rearing as a compulsion but, the number of children required is never their own decision. They also consent that there is no control over abortion scene for women. Most of the woman rejected the application of abortion in the family. It’s socially and religiously unacceptable to go through abortion in our community. To have or have not children is never a direct concern of a woman but to rear the children is full woman responsibility. One of the respondent says:

I am the only daughter-in-law in the family. The jobs of women become double at the time the baby is born. Every family member welcomes the newly born child but none of the member shares equal responsibility of rearing of child. This adds more responsibility on the woman as she has to go through kitchen as well as child caring at the same time. The mother-in-law, although, helps occasionally but for the most of the time, the women need to manage the both. (Interview: Falgun 17, 2076)

Every woman refused to talk on the issue of the use of contraceptive devices while they presented their view on the use of the ornaments. They accepted that ornaments as one of their important part of dress-up. A respondent tells:

The uses of ornaments for girls or women are like *singar aurat k gahana* (ornamentation as woman asset). From the period of socialization, dress-up and make-up are parallel terms that go side by side for girls. Almost every girl in our society is known about the beauty parlor and this is everywhere nearby market in which mainly girls and women go but the men are not permitted to enter in the beauty parlor which is for female. There is hair cutting saloon for boys where as there is beauty parlor for female in our society. After the death of their husband, these ornaments get withdrawn from the woman. She is regarded as widow and the widow is supposed to follow certain restrictions imposed by the society. The ornaments elimination from the life of widow is one of the social restriction that women need to follow. A marriage ceremony or any other ceremonies is never the part of widow to celebrate. The widows, the most of the cases never invited for marriage or she (widow) herself feel humiliated to place herself in the colorful environment of the parties as the color of her life get washed after the death of her husband. The dim color is her indication or symbolic identity from which people can easily make assumptions regarding her out-look and sufferings. (Interview, Falgun 18, 2076)

The next statement to demonstrate the correlation among women beauty, ornaments and their husband is seen through various social and religious practices which promote girl's for make up while it resists them from public exposure as well as keeps them inside four wall of the house. Similarly, when the women inquired about their dress-up choice, most of them accepted their dressing style is the social prescription while the quality or the color choice is the only department where women can keep their interest. A respondent keeps her views like: "Girls or women is subjected to dress up the dresses like *saari*¹², *suruwal-samij*¹³ sets , and *lehenga-choli*¹⁴. Any other dress up in the societal framework is taken as offensive. In many cases wearing

¹² *Saari* means a long piece of fabric that's wrapped around the body and draped over a shoulder, and garments worn underneath, including a short-sleeved blouse.

¹³ *suruwal-samij* is a traditional combination dress worn by women.

¹⁴ *Lehenga-choli* is a form of full ankle-length skirt worn by women from the Indian subcontinent which is long, embroidered and pleated.

*burqa*¹⁵ or loose dress is strictly commanded. The tight dress or the dress similar to boys or men is considered as the symbol of forwardness or negativity.” (Field note, Falgun 14)

To sum up, this section brings out the findings concerning power sharing for Muslim women and their position is placing their desires in the family. The investigation shows that there is no independent position for Muslim women. Their status is derived from the identity of mother, daughter and wives with her association with male (head) member of the family. This means she has scripted role of child bearer, child rarer and care taker of the entire family. The Muslim women possess no control on their body or desires rather they need to go through a strict religious scripted which is strictly internalize by family, community and society as a whole.

4.5 Private-Public Spheres Picturing the Indoor-outdoor Concentration of Muslim Male and Female

The participation in public or private spheres determines the picture of indoor and outdoor concentration of Muslim male and female. This exposure whether mandatory or optional-- is applicable to trace the process by which unequal relation produced between male and female. The tasks, which men or women prohibited to perform allow to project the involvement of works for men and women. It provides the space where male and female are mainly involved. The involvement in the private or public spheres are one of the major domain assisting in construction of gender. This involved the Muslim women’s entrepreneurship and their public participation including the enrollment in the jobs like government schools, sub-metropolitan office, and nearby government hospitals.

The number of Muslim women in the entrepreneurship is minimal. There are few places in the market which are occupied with Muslim women like bangles shop, beauty parlor and tailoring line. Most of the women selling bangles in the market are Muslims while most of the tailoring line in Kalaiya are placed with both Muslim’s men and women. The ratio of Muslim women engaged in tailoring¹⁶ line is

¹⁵ *Burka* means a long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet which is worn by Muslim women in public

¹⁶ Tailoring line is the business or occupation of tailor or clothing.

comparatively lower than that of men. The Muslim women are profoundly seen in the ladies tailoring department, that is, they are mainly functioning the tailors with ladies customers. However, the men, in the tailoring line, has both ladies as well as gents as their costumer. This involves interview from 20 parents and other key informants (5 entrepreneurs Muslim women and deputy¹⁷ mayor of Kalaiya who is Muslim women). The view of Sahima Khatoon (39), an entrepreneur who has recently opened ladies tailor, nearby the market shares her views:

It is difficult to sit in the market for women by carrying out any business in the market. In Muslim community, women are generally supposed to handle indoor works. It is like an exception if any woman is engaged in entrepreneurship. The societal eye for such women is never positive. Women, who are working outdoor are labeled with the loss of self-prestige. There are very common phrase in the society called *bazaar aurat* (literally means market women) but it is used to stigmatized women linking with prostitute (sex workers). It means the women working in the market is targeted with the words like *belaj* (lack of shyness) or terms linked with nudity and sex business. Such woman is always surrounded with fear for attack on their izzat (prestige) while working out. She has to maintain family prestige (manage her family trust) and at the same time, she also has to fit herself in the competitive market. The women working out also has the deeper struggle as the workload of kitchen and children is additive to the outdoor. [KII: Khatoon (39); Falgun 14, 2076]

The similar comments come from Aasiya Khatoon (33), who also work in tailor line nearby her house in Kalaiya-1.

There is general belief that the prosperous family never permits their daughter or daughter-in-law for outdoor work. The woman working outdoor is the symbolic representation of struggling class or the lower class in our society. This means the women working outdoor are assumed to struggling for managing hand-to-mouth issue otherwise a reputed family never allow their daughter or daughter-in-law to work out-door. The women with tailoring skills never get fairly justice as she is bounded to open the shop nearby the house (may or may not get good market access). Similarly, she is never allowed to involve in the gents tailoring line. The society, family or husband never and ever allow the girl or woman in such occupation—offensive occupation. In fact, the head of the family simply allows the women for such occupation (tailoring line) since there is no sight of male in the course. [KII: Khatoon (33); Falgun 19, 2076]

In the process of collecting data regarding entrepreneurship enrollment and the picture of women, a view of nearby Muslim girl and a beautician trainee is captured. Muskaan Khatoon(17); a Muslim girl who completed her SLC examination two years

back and recently taking basic beauty parlor training nearby Kalaiya market, expressed her view:

Initially, my parents were not in the favor to send me in the parlor. In order to convince my parents, I gave examples of lots of my nearby friends who are already taking the training. My friends (only girls) come to my home to take me and they leave me at home. I have to return at home in time. My parents are very much protective about me and regarding the family reputation. She further added the intention of her parents behind learning skill which was never a money-making centered. My parents allowed me to learn the skill as it can be used for the self or for the family occasionally during marriage ceremony or festivals. Similarly, every trainee or trainer in the course are female which make an easy entrance to working place (parlor). [KII: Khatoon (17); Falgun 19, 2076]

In the course of taking interview, my next informants were Muslim women working in the bangles shop in nearby Kalaiya market. One of the Muslim women working in the bangle shop at nearby market keeps her words:

It has been long since we are working in the place. This area in the market is specified with cosmetic items and bangles shop. The most of the customer, therefore, coming at this place are ladies. Previously, we used to take bangles in our head and go door to door to sell it at home. At that time, mainly women or girls were not coming at the market so door-to-door was the only way to sell the bangle but the scene is different at present. The females, now, are easily noticeable in the market area. The aged women (40 years or above) are easily coming market for daily shopping or rest of works while the daughters or daughter-in-law come to the market with their mother or mother-in-law. Also very few of them especially newly married girl--daughter-in-law with strict family, who were not allowed to step out of their home, send the samples of bangles to identify the proper size. (KII: Falgun 27, 2076)

Nasrudin Ansari (65), one of the elderly respondents who himself witnessed the changing scenario market from long time, explained the comparative picture of market and the changes in time-frame:

The market easy entrance is only the recent picture for Muslim women. This practice is negative culture invited by the time. The present international migration of male, leave no or less option for women to reside in the home. Similarly, the women from villages migrate from village to town area (Kalaiya) in order to educate their children. This also breaks the village long-lasting traditional beliefs allowing more freedom for the migrated women. The local inhabitants also get adjusted to this practice. The market's picture of Kalaiya is the illustration of this fact. There is equal proportion of male and female engaged for shopping in the market. However, the Muslim women of middle-age (group of 40 or above) are mainly involved in the shopping department rather than the new faces. There is still a provision to live inside their home

(husband home) for several months for newly married girls. [Interview: Ansari (65); Falgun 17, 2076]

The political participation of Muslim women is almost negligible. Almost all the male respondents were seen against projecting female in the politics from their family while the interest of female respondent for politics is nearly zero. All female respondents keep themselves far from the front-line public exposure like politics or any socio-political mass gathering. The comments of Rabida Khatoon (54), a Muslim woman and the Deputy Mayor (NC) of Kalaiya—a sub metropolitan city, reflects the position of women in politics through her words:

Politics was not the first option of my life. I was the typical house-wife who spent lots of time managing inside home work as well as looking after children. After the death of my husband in political revolution, I thought to spend my life in the politics. My husband's contribution in the politics as well as the special reservation for women provided by Nepal's Government, grants my entry in Nepal politics possible. There is very less political consciousness among the Muslim women. They are like the second-class-citizen in the state as they are never free to vote of their choices and they participate in election or voting as directed by their guardians. [KII: Khatoon (54); Falgun 20, 2076]

The public participation of Muslim women were interrogated through visit of several nearby governmental institutions. In Kalaiya's Sub-Metropolitan office, the majority of employee working in the office were male and few women while there were only single Muslim women as employee in the office. Similarly, the number of Muslim women working in nearby Government Hospital at higher posts, Kalaiya is also negligible. Among three nearby Government schools (Janta Madhyamik Bidhalyay, Shree 3 Chandra, Madarsa School), the number of Muslim women in teaching faculty is null.

This subchapter brings out the picture of Muslim women with highly indoor concentration. The outdoor or public participation for Muslim girls is marked with negative image attacking on character and self-respect of girls. There are only very few public spheres where girls can get conditional license of entry by family. Such entry is not open rather they are granted in and only the public spheres with no chances of male collision. Similarly, the entry in public spheres somehow becomes easier with age factor. It means public entry is less questioned if women are in middle age and there is almost no restriction for old aged women. Most of the girls in public spheres admitted that there is stigmatization of Muslim girls as characterless if the

girls choose working in public. The whole picture finds the challenges and social barriers which are restricting girls to indoor.

4.6 Property Issue and Gender Practice in Muslim Community

The practice involved in distributing parental properties between son and daughter is used to flash the visualization picture for son and daughter, and their position in the family. The issue related to property is one of the important dimensions to determine the control in the family. The Muslim parents and girls were inquired about this issue. All of the respondents accepted that the possession of property is in the direct hands of male in the society. There is subordinated role of female in the case of property. The sale or purchase is never the matter linked with female. However, they are involved in the storage of the property. One of the reason associated behind this scene is found in the words of Sattar Mansoor (62):

In the family, the picture shows that the property of the family is seen in the name of the female (especially mother). This is due to government policy that involves the easy transfer of property in the name of female with lower taxation of the Government. It pushes the family to bring women in the front in order to save money during purchase time but it never give them control. She never rises the voice to sell the property in her name. Within female, mother is the first option as mother being a female and at middle age is the safe and also the profitable deal for the process. This means a daughter is never the child of her own home as she have to go after her marriage while newly face of daughter-in-law still not the trustworthy of entire family. [Interview: Mansoor (62), Falgun 8, 2076]

The respondents equally accepted the running provision where there are no criteria of offering property to the daughter. Dowry system is general and the most common practice picked out by almost all respondents. Salim Ansari (63), a senior inhabitant from Kalaiya-1, reports:

The dowry taking-giving is taken as legal crime and it is offensive in Islam but in practice, it is carried out in almost every house. The practice of dowry or its intensity differs according to the class of the family. The more selective the groom is the higher chances of charging dowry. The literacy has no direct impact on reducing dowry however it intensifies the system as the charge of dowry for educated groom is higher. There is bilateral contract of exchanging some valuable items like cash, land, means of transport (two wheller or four wheller), jewelries etc. which the bride family need to offer groom family. There may or may not the role of mediators while fixing the contract. The offering of some kinds of wealth like jewelries (like gold, silver) as marriage compulsory dress-up for girls are provided by both bride and groom family.

The offering of jewelries to their daughter and son-in-law is compulsory for bride family while the groom family gift to their daughter-in-law is like a subject matter of prestige. The groom family offers jewelry as a symbolic demonstration of their class. The jewelries are the only personal assets of the girl where she can claim her possession throughout her life. (Interview: Falgun 17, 2076)

He further elaborates the consequences of dowry:

Dowry system, although, separates some wealth in the part of the girl however this practice is like hard imposition on bride family. For the most, the male or groom or his family is seen highly benefited from the system. The groom families are the one who demands the desirable dowry while bride family are the follower of the conditions of dowry with limited bargaining. There is a heavy torture to the bride in the case her parents failed to deliver the promise of demanded dowry. There is also repetitive torture of dowry post marriage which even resulted to murder or the suicide of the bride in some cases. This system has resulted burden of marriage in the bride family and the daughters are thus seen with the sense of responsibility and burden in the family. (Interview: Falgun 17, 2076)

There is a conditional transfer of property in the name of the daughters. One of the respondents states that the chances of getting daughter the parental or inheritance of property in our society is almost rare. He explained the conditions where the first case occurs if there is no son for couples, the parents transfers the property in the name of daughter. The next case, if the sons are not taking care of their parents, the parents think to transfer their part of property to their daughter. According to the respondent, the second case is very rare as the society does not support the practice and the parents need to be radical to take such tough decision. There is sense of loss of status in society in the case if the parents stay at their daughter's home even if they have sons.

.Rasiya Khatoon (43), a house-wife, presents different views regarding parental property. According to her, "There are always some rights in the house of their parents for girls. Even after partition of parental property, the girls equally get respect from all the sides. The parents (or parental background) are ready to help their daughter either financially or morally at the time of need. The girls feel themselves secured and protective at their husband's home due to back up from their parental side. At the time any problem exists at their husband home as the parents come in front to help their daughter." Although many respondents disagree with Khatoon (43) statement by arguing that the chances of occurrence of asking help from parents home

is very rare for girls in practical as they have to admit their husband home as their own home after getting marriage. (Field note: Falgun 13, 2076)

The concluding remark of this section admits that the transfer of parental property in the name of the daughter is never the first and top concern of the parents. Regarding inheritance of property, the societal practice is adopted by Muslim community which has no matching with religious Islamic text.

4.7 Final Note on Practice of Gender Relations among Muslims in Kalaiya

The final note is the brief account of key findings of my research. The search is carried to explore gender related practices present in Muslim community living in Kalaiya, Bara. It is inquiry of gender practices on different cultural domains within Muslims. The ingredients of gender are inherited in early cultural practices linked with socialization of child bearing and rearing in Muslim community. Muslims have very rigid religious practice of dress-up for girls and boys. The cultural imposition residing girls in *parda* (coverings) is strictly follow up in Muslim community. The practice of *parda* is limiting girls from public participation.

There is lack of desired social settings de-motivating parents for sending their daughters for educational enrollment. This means being in minority, Muslim parents feel insecure to allow their daughter's exposure in non-Islamic environment. Moreover, the larger family size in Muslims, somehow leading to selective educational investment prioritizing sons over daughters.

The dominant belief in Islam arguing to visualize male and female in "pair" by distinguishing biological functions and cultural responsibilities is also one of the responsible factor creating sharp distinctions between male and female. The Islamic belief regarding family planning is also notable factor which resulting in larger family size limiting access of education for every child. Such beliefs are widely practices among Muslims orienting women towards in-door works.

The cultural practice discouraging women in public sets no individual identity of girls. The names of the girl are always attached with her father, husband or son by default. The practice of marriage is an important institution of gender practice among Muslims. The early marriage practice also helps in domestication of girls. The dowry

practice among Muslims is also very much putting male as valuable over females as burden. The final picture of girls is portrayed as :other house property, prestige of the house and as a source to expand family. This very picture often snatches the control from their own body and desires.

The overall scene of sharing power in between Muslim men and women is unequal. The women have supportive and secondary role over decision making procedure in family. Even their dress-up is the choice of the society and family. The Muslim women are bounded to share public spheres. In the case, they do share, they need to fulfill various conditions and guidelines of the family. In many case, the girls joining public spheres are stigmatized and are presented as characterless. Although, there is religious provision supporting Muslim women (easy widow marriage, no to dowry, provision of inherited property) but not practiced in practical.

Chapter Five

Key Findings and Analysis

This chapter is all about analyzing the data collected from the field. It constitutes brief analysis of gender practices carried out in Muslim community in Kalaiya, Bara. It includes analysis of how gender practices are internalized with socialization of babies born in Muslim family. This constitutes the analysis of the role of belief and faith system that aid to gender practices. The other domains like practice of marriage, the position of women in decision making, women's concentration in indoor or outdoor, and the issue of property is analyzed to explore gender practices among Muslim community.

5.1 Early Cultural Practices Feeding Gender Socialization among Muslims

In my interview undertaken among parents, the domains of gender are easily noticed. The words of parents generally reflect gender loaded views. The construction of gender is easily traced out of the social practices and the institutional pattern set by the society. The gender related components are found while investigating socialization process within Muslim community. The roles introduction according to sex preference and the fundamental distinguishing settings after the child is born with clear and transparent boundary between boys and girls lead to another socio-cultural hierarchical relation termed as "gender". This hierarchical relation, no doubt, favors male while it suppresses and brings female in subordinated position.

In my interview, Rehman Mansoor (45) and Arfa Khatoon'(47) spointing of some symbols like sweets exchange and special welcome after male-baby birth demonstrates the higher degree of preference of boys in our society which is seen absent in the case of female baby child birth. These symbolic practices show how parents give more weight to boys than girls. The statements of Rehana Khatoon (45) and Manjur Alam (42) clearly show the pure distinction between male and female in selecting dress-up within Muslim community. The dress-up pattern for girls become strict rules in Muslim community which shadow girls from public sphere. From the words of almost every respondent, the barriers are easily found out in terms of educating girls. The patriarchal believes are well set in the thoughts of Taranum

Khatun (52), who connects girls with kitchen. The words of Nasima Khatoon (38) and other respondents put social practice like early marriage train and non-Islamic environment as barrier of higher education among Muslim girls. There are gender loaded comments in the words of Sattar Mansoor (62). He picked up the religious factor leading to larger family size along with poor economic condition leading to sons as first choice for educational attainment over girls in Muslim community.

5.2 Role of Beliefs and Faith System in Gender Construction among Muslims

The beliefs and faith residing among people are also a major factor contributing in the formation of gender. The faiths and believes are rooted on several domains and the religion are also one of them. These faiths and beliefs are one of the essential constituent for constructing social meanings and definition in our everyday life. In my field work, it can be debunked that how religious centric faiths and beliefs are helping in producing and promoting sex based inequalities.

There is a clear message from the respondents for strong belief that categorizes the socio-cultural affiliations on the basis of sex. As per the comments of respondents, the belief that girl is indoor centric while boy as outdoor centric influence the regular life of girls and boys. Such beliefs separate daily work involvement for boys and girls. The direct linkage of girls with *ghargirasti* (household works) is its consequence. The next important stereotype set by such foundational concept of *ghargirasti* is that the girls are made for four walls which further become stronger by the introduction of term *parda* (curtain) from religion. This overall religiously legitimizes male supremacy society by placing woman in indoor. Regarding inheritance of property, the religious faith shadows the self-identity of girls as it merges woman with her husband in terms of property. The dependencies of girls are further rooted in the society due to lack of their independence in terms of economic. In fact, there is collision in between religious faiths and Islamic text as the text mentioned some shares of property for women which is not in practice among Muslim community living in Kalaiya.

The statements of Nejamudin Mansoor (27) highlights that Muslim women are relatively dense sufferer due to their religious positioning and their long survival in male dominated Hindu Kingdom. This places them in higher degree of suffering as

they are restricted for carrying higher degree education due to lack of Islamic environment as well as the social trains like early marriage, son special preference as care-taker of family and denotation of widow marriage as shame overall disregard some of the privileges set by Islam for woman. They are neither in the position to getting Islamic education due to lack of government attention and investment nor they can enroll in Government prescribed educational framework. This illustrates the fact that Muslim girls are dual sufferer in the context where the research is carried out.

5.3 Manifestation of Gender through Marriage Practice in Muslim Community

The views of Islam Hawari (65) including other respondents show how the practice of marriage is one of the major social factors contributing in the construction of gender. The continuity of early marriage train in Muslims is somehow restricting girls from public sphere. The restrictions as per respondents become murky after marriage as there is common stereotype linking indoor placing of daughter-in-law with higher prestige. The practice of marriage is the criteria for showing the exact place of the girls for which they were socialized from long period of time. Marriage, simply, limits girl's life up to either kitchen or in the reproduction process. For boys, marriage is linked with his earning whereas primary concern for girl's marriage is her beauty. This, in a way, is the way of objectifying a woman. It means, "she," here, refers to an object or well programmed robot with remote control with either father or husband or son with shift in time. The programming is set by male dominated society. Anything beyond this programming are considered as stigma for girls with easy attack on character. It comes through societal biting remark, which is a way of mass targeting the personal or private issues of girls that blocks them to cross the boundary and question the established patriarchal institutions. the girls life is limited to kitchen or four all of the house.

The picture of field shows that the identity of girl is never accepted independently. Neither, she can claim for her own home which changes through marital exchange. The practice of marriage is a way to handle power regime from girl's parents to her husband. There is also seen gap between social practice and legal system in case of early marriage train in the society. The legal attempt of government is unable to address this social issue. The practice of marriage is completely favoring male's supremacy placing girls in the subordinated position.

5.4 The Position of Muslim Women in Power Sharing and their Control over Desires

The data collected shows that the struggles of women get magnified when the women go through child rearing phase since the load of children as well as the household works gets added. The number of children is never the direct decision of girls but the increase in work pressure is the issue concerned with women directly. The views of respondents lead to the conclusion that either son's preference or the number of son used to influence the number of children in the family. This means the direct pressure from family, relatives and society is in frontline for deciding the number of children. This represents the institutional role in carrying out the private decision which definitely figures out a picture of male dominated society.

The respondents (Muslim women) were not comfortable sharing their private matter regarding the use of contraceptive devices. They feel this as their private issue for which they are not open to talk and there is lacking in their confident to expose their own sufferings. The ornaments and its use easily become the part and partial in the life of girls. From the childhood, they were socialized for such practices. The phrase *singar aurat k gahana* (ornaments as girls suitable costume of decoration) is commonly set among the girls or women in the society. This social belief restrict woman to either parlor or inside home. Also, the symbolic belief of ornaments fill up as a demonstration of colorful life and its association with the husband. This means that the use of ornament becomes absent for the widows. Even the color of dresses become black and white in the case husband die.

Some of the especial instruments like keeping big hairs or selective dressing pattern are like imposition given by religion, society as well as family. This leads them to the demand of hair clips, ribbon, lipstick, facial creams, etc. as their day-to-day dresses. These items of extra dress up material is set up as girl's fundamental needs for complete function of their life. The extra item of dress up is questioned in the case the husband is death. The silence issue of girls for their own issues, lack of confident of girl for public exposure, lack of decision making positioning for women, the direct dependence of women for men in case of their beauty or dress-up or living style show the powerlessness among women. The position of girls in the family is seen as

subordinated position or they are just the member assisting the family without any decisive role.

5.5 Private-Public Spheres Picturing the Indoor-outdoor Concentration of Muslim Male and Female

In the field visit, the clear picture seen is of female seclusion which is still proactive and mainly given high degree of preference. Sexual segregation is religiously promoted and tolerable in the working sites. Muslim women are strictly taught to keep distance from male which eventually isolate female from out-door as the tradition concentration of male in public sphere is higher. Sex separatism is the formula to give *parda* to women and is the final cause to limit Muslim women inside four wall of the house. Co-active public participation is the one of the obstructed area in Islam which gives a different socialization and fittings for women inside the four wall of the house.

In most of the cases, women are not permitted to work out-door. However, there are selective fields where women are engaged. Muslim women are seen in the entrepreneurship linked with occupation where women are their only customers, that is, the women involvement are in the area of profession where female can only engage. The working of women in cosmetic shops (bangles shop) or ladies trailer of beauty parlor are some of the examples from the field to illustrate my statement. The in-depth analysis show the caste-based occupation is also another parameter which highly influences the occupation of Muslim women. According to David Seddon (2017) statistical report in book *The Muslim Community of Nepal*, the data show *darzi* or *churihaar* are the occupational category among the Muslims (Seddon, 2017). Also, in the field, this is one of the major occupation where the Muslim women are mainly attracted. However, the attraction towards the course like beautician is the injected profession from the surroundings. The only thing common in all the occupation is that the rare participation of women in the occupation is also sex-selective (similar sex centered).

The out-door occupational enrollment of women is not an easy subject. They are subjected to psychological attack with various personal comments that questions her self-esteem and self-respect. Moreover the suffering of women is also from physical additional overload which get summed after joining outside sphere along with in-door

pressure. In-out pressure added for women. In addition to managing the home, they need to operate the out-door work as well after the international migration. The picture at present is not the result of conscious change (desirable change) for women rather it emerged as the effect of international migration. Another issue to shadow working of women in public is with easy stigmatization of lower class labeling.

The next level interpretation shows that the age is an important factor to confirm easy entrance in the market. This means the women belonging to middle age or old age group go to market easily as with compared to teen or adult group. The new faces (newly married girls) are less likely to cross the house of the door while the middle aged-group women are the first option to go for market shopping after the male. The story of Rabida Khatoon (54) is the hallmark to demonstrate the political picture of women and the level of their participation. Political participation is more seen like forcibly rather their self-selective. The negligible participation of the women in the Governmental spheres are the clear picture of the Muslim women gendered based public institution grew out of gendered based socialization of Muslim women.

5.6 Property Issue and Gender Practice in Muslim Community

The collected data show that there is no any practical provision where girls can claim for the inheritance of property. However, there are some conditions where daughters get the share of property. These conditions as respondents mentioned are in the case the parents have only daughters or the part of the share of the property can be transferred to daughter by the solo parents decision due to their dissatisfaction towards the care of the sons. The daughters are never in the list of preference of transferring the property until and unless the first option fails to meet. The society takes it disgraceful if somebody stays with their daughter despite having sons. To stay at daughter's home for the couples with sons are marked as the loss of the status in the eye of society.

The girls (or daughters) are never given or claim for their own right but the practice always make the girl as dependent either from the sides of home. The words of Rasiya Khatoon show how she feels dependent on her parental home in the case any problem come to her husband house. They are like a help-seeker rather than claiming of their

own bold position. The subordinated position of the girls is the placement for which they prepared socially and psychologically.

Women are kept in the front-line for the preservation and storage of property but there is no control of property for them. The role of women is passive like that of watch-dog. The transfer of property, according to Sattar Mansoor, is the matter of profit due to legal policy favoring women. However, this legal provision is ineffective in making girl self-dependent due to their subordinated role for storing property. They lack possession and control in the property.

The practice of dowry underprivileged women in many ways although it separates some share of wealth with the names of girls as ornaments or jewelries. It has made girls like burden for the family. The Muslims are being one of the disadvantaged economically with larger number of children size never in the position to afford this practice. Son is taken as a sense of profit from bread-earning or marriage point of view while daughter is symbolic representation of other home property or burden in the sense of marriage or the loss of wealth from the family (due to dowry). It further motivates the practice where sons are taken as the first preference in terms of education or any other similar investments. This picture de-motivates the parents for celebration when baby girl comes in the family.

Chapter Six

Summary and Conclusion

The study focuses on the conviction that there is hierarchical relation created on the basis of “sex”, while carrying out socio-cultural practices among Muslims like other community. The six different domains are inquired to show the association of gender with religion. These domains are: socialization and gender roles; practices of marriage; belief and faith system; sexuality; inheritance of private property; and women position in public and private domains were under subject area of research to explore gender relations in Muslim community.

6.1 Summary

This research is qualitative in nature based on methods like in-depth interview, focus group discussion, observation, and key informant interview. My research is explorative research to explore the gender relations in Muslim community. It follows purposive sampling to collect data from highly scattered Muslim community—a minority group of Nepal. The study is context-specific that carried out in Kalaiya, Bara. It did not expect to match the case of gender construction in entire Muslim community throughout the geographical region of Nepal. The prime attention of the proposed research, therefore, is to document, explore and analyze the gender relations within Muslim community following religious faiths, myths, beliefs and practices by strictly considering the dynamics within Muslims and diversified settings of Nepal.

The authors like Upadhyay (2014), Seddon (2017) and Sijapati (2011) have projected the Muslim community of Nepal as one of the highly heterogeneous and unique minority groups. The peculiar features of Muslims in carrying out rituals, norms and cultures make them distinct from any other religious groups (like Hindu and Buddhist) or geographical identical groups (like *Madhesis*’ and *Pahadis*) of Nepal. My field study was accomplished in Tarai region where about 97 percent of Muslim population are concentrated (Seddon, 2017). The research was carried out in Tarai belt—Bara district which lies in province no. 2. The major Muslim castes like Ansari and Mansoori resides in the research site. There is also dichotomy of Barelvi and Deobandi in the place, who are two different ideological groups within Muslim with slightly distinct culture.

The work of Seddon (2011) failed to analyze the cultural practices of Muslim women with dichotomy of urban and rural areas. Neither, Seddon (2011) captured the variations and dynamics within Muslim women nor he debugged the context specific gender ingredients working at different degree while dealing with heterogeneity within Muslims. In my research field site, there is no any concern of *triple talaq* (Islamic Divorce) among Muslim women in practice, which according to Seddon is a major problem among Muslim women living in Nepalgunj (Seddon, 2011). The primary focus of this research is to delineate the seeds of gender within Muslim community by closely considering the diversity within Muslims.

The literature of review that I carried out as a part of my research revealed that most of the researches on gender focus on gender affiliation with socio-cultural practices. They invariably portray gender from a single generalization drawn from suffering linked with “sex.” Literature review brings the grand universal understanding of gender that fails to pick the context-specific roots of gender practices. The readings seemed flop to sum up the cross-cultural and trans-locational (‘real time and place’ context) frame where different ingredients of gender are attached at different period of time. This research finds that an ideal model to deal with gender construction among Muslim community cannot be fruitful to address the versatile and unique positioning of Muslims of Nepal. There required a contextualized and grounded research to fill up the knowledge gap.

6.2 Key Findings and Conclusions

The study shows that the manifestation of gender among Muslim community is complex as it is within and out of religious syllabus. The research mainly engaged in investigating the religious beliefs, faiths, myths, and practices within Muslim community which contribute in gender construction. The six major domains were inquired for exploring gender practices in Muslim community. This provided insight of gender construction in Muslim community living in Kalaiya, Bara.

The first domain explores how socialization among Muslim community contributes in gender construction. This focused on probing the role of cultural scripts as argued by Little and McGivern (2013) in creating gap between male and female. An introduction of *pardah* for Muslim girls as a religious obligation creates a well

defined differences in between male and female. It further supplies a strict guidelines for dress up preferring a long and loose dressing patterns. There is huge gap in schooling between Muslim girls and boys. The boys somehow are in the categories to enjoy a few opportunity of education while girls are limited to basic religious schooling or nearby primary schooling at government schools. There are several factors that are resulting in such huge gaps. The factors like: *purdah* practice, non-Islamic environment de-motivating girls schooling, larger family size leading to selective educational investment preferring boys over girls, and dowry practices asserting girls as other property are the common among Muslims.

The second domain relates the role of faith and belief system within Muslims community that contributes in gender construction. The basic Islamic belief of visualizing girls and boys in pair is dominant in asserting different categorization of works and in defining the distinct spheres for boys (public spheres) and girls (private spheres inside *purdah*). Another common belief relates the religious restriction of family-planning which further resulted lager family size in many cases.

The third domain shows how the gender is manifested through the marriage practice among Muslims. There is a train of early marriage practice within Muslim community. The practice of marriage widens the gap between male and female. It limits the life of girls in kitchen as well as in reproduction process for continuing family generation by giving the birth to son who ultimately considered as future of family. The practice of dowry which is considered as “sin” in Islam, is one of the widely demanded marriage criteria of Muslim community living in Kalaiya. The dowry practice, in a way, is making boys as favorite over girls.

The fourth domain is related to investigating the position of women in power sharing and their control over desires. The Muslim women are positioned in supportive role in decision making. They never exercise an independent identity detaching herself out of father’s or husband’s direct control. The Muslim women is similar to an “object” or “a programmed robot” in the family for deciding the issues like: number of children, dress-up style, marriage issue, going out of home and so forth.

The fifth domain explores the in-door and out-door positioning of Muslim women by probing the picture of private-public spheres. In Muslims community, there is a strong

belief to symbolize girls with “prestige.” This, in turn, is supplying a long list for “what to do” and “what to not do” for girls. The notion of “prestige” among Muslims is linked to indoor placing of girls within *pardah*. Therefore, the public exposure of girls are stigmatized as a loss of character of girls and eventual loss of dignity of entire family. However, there are several other factors which are influencing the entrance of markets for girls like: age factor, marital status, geographical positioning, educational back ground, , types of occupation, and access to market.

The sixth domain investigates how the inheritance of property defines the gap on the ground of sex among Muslim community. The practice of inheritance of property has no correlation with religious documents of Islam—the Quran. The findings neither match in the way as argued by Engel’s claiming the world historic defeat of the female sex (Engel, 1884). The women are considered as “other house property” before her marriage, while, after her marriage (in elderly phase most probably), she is used as depositor of property without any direct control in exchange (buy or sell). Also, there are some conditions where daughters are selected for transferring parental property. in the cases where there is no son or parents are not happy with son’s care, the parents forcefully choose this option. Although, the practice is rare as the parents feel disgraceful with loss of status living at daughter’s home.

6.3 Future Research Agenda

The result of the study explored that the practice of gender among Muslim community is very much unique in nature. My findings suggest that the unique practices of gender in Muslim community are the byproduct of Islamic faiths and beliefs submerged with non-Islamic patriarchal environment carrying several patriarchal norms, values and cultures of which they have been long the part. The socialization among Muslim community is the first phase where gender-loaded elements are injected through cultural scripts among children. The Muslim girls are taught to practice *purda*, which finally restrict their public gesture and schooling in non-Islamic environmental set up. In Muslim community, there is common myth that restricts to go for family planning which results to larger family size. The larger size of the family forces the parents to go for calculative investment for education favoring male. This educational favoritism rejects the Islamic notion of equality of education for male and female. Similarly, the practice of dowry, which is considered as “sin” in

Islam, is one of the widely demanded marriage criteria within Muslim community living in research site. The overall configuration sidelines girls from parental property and even from her autonomous self-identity. Lived reality of everyday practices of Muslims contradicts in many ways with the religious text—Quran—asserting equality between male and female.

The next and very important finding of this research is that, the religious influence on Muslim women is not marking an equal impact throughout the community. It differs according to orientation of family as well as difference in geographical settings even at the same place. The study suggests that the Muslim girls or women close to market area are somehow go beyond the religious scripts and are very less following *purdah* system. There is variation in the level, extend, nature and intensity of practicing *purdah* among Muslim women living in Kalaiya. The research revealed the contradictory picture of Muslim women where some of them are found as entrepreneurs in public spheres while there are other many others who consider it offensive to openly (without *purdah* or *burqa*) face the public or to work in public sphere. There is also difference in the intensity of internalizing the belief and faith system with variation in religious education attainment. This also reflects the dynamism in practicing gender among Muslims.

To sum up, the research shows the need of context-specific and grounded research for Muslim community of Nepal. Such context-specific research can only capture the dynamic and heterogeneous aspects of Muslim community of Nepal. The research paper illustrates the essence of utilizing emic and etic viewpoint for marking more comprehensive study for Muslims of Nepal. It also demonstrated the need for greater concern with ‘real’ rather than ‘ideal’ model of study by cross-cultural and trans-locational (‘real time and place’ context) examination.

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Annexes

Annex I. Checklist for Interview

Respondent's personal introduction

1. Name:
 2. Sex:
 3. Education:
 4. Age of Marriage:
 5. No. of Children:
 - 5 a) No. of boys:
 - 5 b) No. of girls:
 6. Source of income:
 - 6 a) Occupation:
 - 6 b) Level of income:
 7. Castes Belonging Within Muslim:
-

Annex 1: Preliminary Question for parents:

8. Are you sending your children for schooling?
9. Where do they go for schooling?
 - 9 a) Schooling Choice for son
 - 9 b) Schooling choice for daughter
10. How is the perception regarding educating sons/daughters?
11. What is the practice of dress-up for boys and girls?

12. What are the major sports in which girls and boys are involved?
13. What kinds of behavior are expected for girls and boys?
14. What are average age for marrying your children ?
 - 14 a) Average age for son's marriage:
 - 14 b) Average age for daughter's marriage
15. What do you notice while selecting your daughter-in-law or son-in-law?
 - 15 a) Required criteria from daughter-in-law:
 - 15 b) Required criteria from son-in-law:
16. What are the social challenges regarding marriage of son and daughter? What does it mean to be the parent of son or daughter for marriage?
17. What are the expectations and presumptions regarding newly married wife coming in the family?
18. What is your experience after marriage? What kinds of changes are introduced in the role after getting marriage?
19. How is number of children decided in the family?
20. How is the issue regarding family planning decided?
21. What are the tasks men/women prohibited to perform?
22. Is the equal sharing of load in rearing children for husband, wife or other family members?
23. Is there special practice of offering gifts for women during marriage?
24. What is the scene regarding sharing of inheritance of property for son and daughter?

Annex 2: Preliminary Question for Key informants

1) Religious Scholars

- 1 What are religious beliefs for schooling daughters?
- 2 What are Islamic belief regarding dress up for male and female?
- 3 How does schooling and education is perceived in Muslim community?
 - 3 a) Is the picture of Muslims living in Kalaiya are in accordance with religion or any drift?
 - 3 b) What may be possible factors?
- 4 . What is religious beliefs for marriage?
5. How does religion categorize the possession regarding parental property?
 - 5 a) Do male-female get equal share?
6. What is religious faith regarding indoor/outdoor work for male and female?

2) Muslim Girls

1. What differences do you notice in schooling in between boys and girls?
2. How do you supposed to be dress up?
 - 2 a) Do you freely select the dresses?
 - 2 b) What conditions are there before you go for dress up choice?
3. What are the scene regarding public spheres for girls?
 - 3 a) Do you ever participated in public programs?
4. What are mainly preferred sports of your choice?
 - 4 a) What kinds of friend circle (mixed or female) you select for playing?

5. Who spent most of the time in kitchen in the family?
6. How do marriage of girls are perceived among family?

3) Muslim Women Enrolled in Public Spheres

1. How does it experience working in public sphere?
2. What are husband response for outdoor working of wife?
3. How does family perceive your working in public sphere?
4. What kinds of social assistance or pressure do you face working out of the door?
5. How does it make difference for managing indoor and outdoor works?

Annex 3: Preliminary Question for Focus Group Discussion

1. How is schooling perceived in Muslim community for boys and girls?
 2. What kinds of challenges do parents face schooling their daughter?
 3. How are differences in practices of marriage for male and female?
 4. What are practices regarding inheritance of property for male and female?
 5. What is the picture of indoor and outdoor positioning of men and female?
 6. Who possess the maximum control in decision making of the family?
-

Thank You!

Annex II. Photos from Research Field (Kalaiya)



Plate A: Researcher and religious scholars sitting in *Jamme Masjid* in Bhawanipur, Kalaiya (Field Photo: Falgun 24, 2076)



Plate B: Muslim girls attending Islamic education at *Kalaiya Madarshah* (Field Photo: Falgun 25, 2076)



Plate C: Researcher and Rehana Khatoon, sitting outside her house but within the boundary of house. (Field Photo: Falgun 26, 2076)



Plate D: A Muslim woman in *parda* wearing *burqa* in Kalaiya market. (Field Photo: Falgun 28, 2076)



Plate E: Muslim women running bangles shop in Kalaiya Market (Field Photo: Falgun 27, 2076)



Plate F: Aasiya Khaton (33) is the owner of ladies tailor located in Kalaiya ward no. 1 nearby by market (Field Photo: Falgun 28, 2076)

Annex III: Policies relating to social justice and inclusion:

- (1) to keep on making appropriate arrangements for the livelihoods of the helpless single women, while according priority to them in employment on the basis of skills, competency and qualification,
- (2) to make self-dependent the women who are vulnerable, subjected to social and family exclusion and victims of violence self-reliant by making their rehabilitation, protection and empowerment,
- (3) to ensure enjoyment of requisite services and facilities at the reproductive stage,
- (4) to evaluate economically the work and contribution such as maintenance of children and care of families,
- (5) to take into consideration primarily of the best interests of the child,
- (6) to identify the freed bonded labours, *Kamlari, Harawa, Charawa*, tillers, landless, squatters and rehabilitate them by providing housing, housing plot for residence and cultivable land or employment for their livelihoods,
- (7) to create an atmosphere conducive to the full enjoyment of the political, economic, social and cultural rights, while enhancing the participation of youths in national development, to make their personality development, while providing special opportunity in areas including education, health and employment for the empowerment and development of the youths and provide them with appropriate opportunities for the overall development of the State,
- (8) to make the indigenous nationalities participate in decisions concerning that community by making special provisions for opportunities and benefits in order to ensure the right of these nationalities to live with dignity, along with their identity, and protect and promote traditional knowledge, skill, culture, social tradition and experience of the indigenous nationalities and local communities,
- (9) to make special provisions for opportunities and benefits to minority communities to enjoy social and cultural rights, with maintaining their identity,
- (10) to make special provisions for equal distribution of economic, social and cultural opportunities and benefits to the *Madhesi* community, Muslims and backward class, and for opportunities and benefits to the indigent citizens within such communities for their protection, upliftment, empowerment and development,
- (11) to make special provisions for opportunities and benefits for the protection, upliftment, empowerment and development of the citizens of the oppressed and backward regions and for the fulfillment of their basic needs,
- (12) to accord priority to the indigent within all sexes, regions and communities in the provision of social security and social justice,

(13) to make planned investment in sports and sport-persons in order to prepare healthy, competent and disciplined citizens, and to develop sports as a means of consolidating national unity and enhancing national prestige at the international level,

(14) to adopt a single door system for the establishment, approval, operation, regulation and management of community-based and national or international non-governmental organizations and to involve such organizations only in the sectors of national need and priority, while making investment and role of such organizations transparent and accountable.

Source: Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 51

(Nepal Law Book Commission 2015)