

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Though Nepal occupies very small portion of physical landscape, 0.3% of Asia and 0.03% of the world, this beautiful Himalayan country, in contrast to its physical size, has broader and unique cultural diversity. That is why, diverse ethnicity, multi-religiosity and multi-lingual characteristics are found here. Different castes groups, more than 100 identified ethnic groups and their diverged cultural practices help enrich Nepal's cultural heritage. May it be the polyandry system of Sherpas of the north or the hierarchical caste system guided by the *Hindu Varna Vyavastha*, ranging from high Himalayas to the plains of Terai, this small country observes the castes, cultural, religious, lingual and other diversification. That's why; Nepal is the syncretism of all these diversities (Regmi, 2003). Different cultural groups adhere on their own religions. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Animists and others inhabit here with religious harmony (Siddika, 1992).

Nepal's cultural process has been characterized by synthesis, flexibility and eclecticism. Nepali religious tradition has evolved along syncretic and symbiotic lines. The intricate texture of Nepali religious culture is woven from the main strands of Hinduism, Buddhism, Tantricism and Bon animism. The influences of these various religions are harmoniously blended in Nepali life and culture (Siddika, 1992).

Before we come to know about the Muslims of Nepal, it is essential to identify who the 'Muslims' are. Muslims are the followers of the sacred path of the Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam in the seventh century. A Muslim is 'a person whose religion is Islam'(Oxford Dictionary). The word 'Islam' is commonly understood by Muslims and others to mean surrender; i. e. of the believer to the God (Lewis, 1976). So, Muslims are the performers of the act of surrender to the God. Guided by the belief system of Monotheistic principles, Muslims repose their faith on oneness of Allah. They believe that "all faiths have, in essence, one common message: the existence of a Supreme Being, the one and only God, whose Sovereignty is to be

acknowledged in worship and in the pledge to obey his teachings and commandments" (Ali, 2002).

Muslims' doctrine and duties are guided by the holy *Qu'ran*, the sacred text of Islam that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God; and *Hadith*, the compilation of the sayings, approvals and disapprovals of the Prophet. Belief in God, his Angels, his Prophets, his scriptures and the last day of judgement, are the fundamental creeds of Islam. Similarly, faith towards the one God (*Shahadah*), the performance of prayer (*Salah* or reading *Namaj*), the giving of alms (*Zakat*), the observance of fasting (*Siyam* or *Roja*) and the performance of pilgrimage (*Hajj*) are the "five pillars" in Islam, which are mentioned in the holy texts as obligatory mandates for every Muslim (Siddkia, 1992, Thapa, 1997, Umri, 2004).

Muslims are more or less distinct from other religions that flourished in Nepal during the course of time. Though Muslims are inseparable part of Nepal, their religious influence was never dominant in Nepalese setting if we go through the Nepali history. Their cultural influence was limited within the sphere of Nepalese ruling class. After the entrance of Muslims as permanent residents in Nepal during the Malla period, Nepalese royals were highly influenced by the Indian *Nawabs* and Emperors. Malla Kings adopted not only the dress patterns, arts and architectures; they also followed the ruling system of Indian Muslim Emperors (Regmi, 1969, Bajracharya, 1973).

However, the entire Nepalese peoples and cultures were not highly influenced by Islam and Muslim culture. This is because, the spread of Islam throughout the world started only in the 7th century and Nepal was in its direct contact only in the 12th century, comparatively later than other religions.

During the Medieval period, the prosperity of *Moughal* emperors of the south in Nepal played an important role for the Nepali Muslims to live a prosperous life (Samsodhan Mandal, 2019 BS). During the Modern period, after the demise of political power of the Moughals in Indian sub-continent, Nepali Muslims felt that they were psychologically defeated. The rise of British Empire in Asia affected the whole Oriental civilization. European culture (especially British culture) brought cultural changes in the colonial

countries. Muslim culture, too, was under the crisis. Muslims couldn't transform themselves in the changing situation. The rejection of modern education and their attempts for preserving Muslim culture and religion separated them from the rest world. Nepali Muslims also felt the circumstances (Fadzakir, 2001).

The political asylum of Indian Muslims in Nepal during the Indian Mutiny created a sense of refugeeness in Nepali Muslims. So, Nepali Muslims were gradually separated from the mainstream Nepali political scenario. Besides that, they were in a minority position by population, whose political issues were never heard (ibid).

We can find examples of the dominant religious groups' oppression towards the other groups in the history. After the death of King Narendra Dev, in the Lichchhavi Dynasty, Shankaracharya from India came to Nepal, who burnt about 84 thousands Buddhist religious books and forced monks and nuns to marry and start domestic life. His attack was against the minority religious group of Kathmandu Valley. As Lowdin Per (1998), mentions, "According to legend, Shankaracharya, the Hindu reformer, is said to have visited the valley and defeated the Vajrayana priests who were responsible for the worship of Pashupati, whereafter he drove them out of the temple and substituted Brahmans. This legend reflects a Hindu revival and corresponds to a similar development on the Gangetic plains, where Buddhism declined during this period. It is still said that the Buddhists had defiled the God by throwing their refuse over him; they had reversed the sacrificial order, taking the offerings first themselves and then throwing the refuse onto the God." (Per, 1998)

Islam, itself is considered as a strict religion by non-Muslims. So, the followers of Islam are looked distinctly by them. Muslims are physically similar to Teraians (Madheshi) or Indians. Majority of the Nepali peoples are Hill peoples, who generally treat Muslims as outsiders. Scattered in different parts of the country among other non-Muslims, Muslims are in the minority position by population too. Similarly, due to the Hindu based hierarchical castes system, Muslim community in Nepal was always in a minority position. Muslims were ranked as impure but touchable caste (*pani na chalne tara chhoi chhito halnu na parne jaat*). The caste system, which is not practised in Muslim community itself, was burdened over them by outsiders in Nepal.

These are the main reasons, being the third largest population by religion; Muslims are still minority in every spheres of the state. Up to the present context, Muslims of Nepal are obliged to follow constitutional and civil laws, rather than their personal laws. As Prof. Abdul Qaiyoom (quoted in Siddika, 1992) says, “There are some points where constitutional and civil laws defy Muslims’ personal law e.g. Law of inheritance, marriage, divorce. In this direction also the government should consider over this matter, and like in India, Muslims should be given freedom to lead their private life according to their own personal laws.” Similarly, there are more serious issues of political recognition and religious equity of this community that need to be addressed more poignantly. Beside these, there are economic, educational and other problems in Muslim communities, which are still left out to be solved. Coping with these all problems, Nepali Muslims have the most dedicated issue of maintaining Muslim identity in a totally non-Muslim setting.

Increasing Urbanization and Modernization processes, globalization and its impact in a developing country like Nepal; the mixing up of different cultural groups in the capital city of the country have created new cultural phenomena in Kathmandu valley where every man has got an identity of “International man”. In this situation no particular cultural group can exists solely with its full cultural identity.

Kathmandu Muslims, despite their unique cultural identity, are more or less affected by other cultural influences. They are culturally highly influenced by the local group, Newars. Most of the Kathmandu Muslims easily speak Newari language in their daily activities. Similarly, Though Kathmandu Muslims feel hesitation to talk directly about the inter religion marriage; many Muslim males in Kathmandu have married with Newar females. So, there is marital relation between Kathmandu Muslims and Newars. Beside this, influences of Newars on dress pattern, food habits and other aspects of life-styles can be seen among Kathmandu Muslims. They enjoy Newari jatras and festivals with enthusiasm. Muslim youths have Newar friends of their circle. Hence, Kathmandu Muslims have a harmonious relation with the local Newars and vice- versa.

Beside Newars, peoples from almost all the castes and ethnic groups inhabit here since Kathmandu is the dreamland of opportunities. Kathmandu valley, till now, is the power zone of the country and all the facilities are centralized here. This kind of unequal power and facilities distribution has made people from different parts of the country attracted towards the valley. In the recent years, the number of peoples fleeing towards Kathmandu was increased due to the Maoist problem, a new political situation developed in the country. So, more or less, other peoples' socio-cultural influences can be seen in different aspects of Kathmandu Muslims' lives. Attitude towards education, women, family planning, dress pattern, food habit and other much more aspects have been changed after the contact with different peoples.

The main issue this research tries to focus on is Muslims' existing lives that go along with Islamism (Internal factor) and the current socio-cultural situation (External Factor) in a parallel way. Kathmandu Muslims are guided by Islamism, whereas, in the same situation, they are also coping with the modern Kathmandu culture, which is totally different with their doctrine of Islamism. In this context, they are also going through some changes in their daily lives. So, this research study has been especially designed to target this minority group in the Kathmandu valley. The research is based on following research questions:

- 1) What is the Socio-cultural and economic background of Kathmandu Muslims?
- 2) How do the Kathmandu Muslims understand Islamism?
- 3) What kinds of socio-cultural and economic aspects have been changed in Kathmandu Muslims?
- 4) What are the causes of change?
- 5) What is the status of Kathmandu Muslims?

1.2. Objectives

This research mainly proposes to examine Continuity and Change of Kathmandu Muslims in urban setting especially in the present changing contexts. To meet this general objective, following specific objectives have been set:

- a) To highlight the religious/ traditional cultural practices among Kathmandu Muslims.

- b) To examine the changed realised by Kathmandu Muslims in their socio-cultural and economic practices.
- c) To assess the women's status in Kathmandu Muslims.

1.3. Rationale of the Study

This study attempts to cover the coping strategies of Muslims of Kathmandu Valley under the urban scenario. It mainly focuses on the survival strategies of Kathmandu Muslims in the changing situation. Similarly, the study encompasses the changing position of Muslim women. Beside this, the study tries to investigate the attempts of Kathmandu Muslims for their continuation of identity.

Muslims occupy the third largest religious population in Nepal (CBS, 2001). Kathmandu Muslims are one of the oldest inhabitants, whose history goes back to 600 years. They have lived the life of dignity and have played crucial roles in different phases of Nepali history. However, these days, Muslims are in a minority position in each sphere. Changing social and cultural situation of Kathmandu valley has played vital role in shadowing over Muslims. They are in a shading light of the mainstreaming process in the country. The existing situation of Muslims has been guided by Islam religion as an internal factor. At the same time they have been attempting to maintain their distinct cultural and religious identity in a non-Muslim environment, which is noteworthy even for non-Muslims.

So, this study tries to focus on their attempt for maintaining Muslim identity as well as their changing process. It can be useful to know more about Muslims from this particular area.

Two sets of variables, dependent and independent, were used to study the Continuity and Change among Kathmandu Muslims. The first set consisting of Socio-cultural factors like education, family pattern, dress pattern; economic factors like occupation and institutional sources like Islamic fundamentals etc. On the basis of these factors, the effect on dependent variable i.e. continuity and change among Muslims was studied

1.5. Organization of the Study

The first chapter 'Introduction' provides the background, objectives, significance, conceptual framework and organization of the study. The second chapter is 'Literature Review'. The previous studies, done by different persons both individually and institutionally are reviewed with their major findings. Similarly different articles, books, journals and dissertations were also reviewed. The third chapter deals with the 'Research Methodology'. In this chapter study area and rationale for selection, research design, sampling procedure, nature and sources of data, different data collection techniques and tools, limitations of the study and researcher's personal experience of the fieldwork are described.

Fourth Chapter deals with socio-economic and cultural background of the study population. It includes demographic situation, categorization of Kathmandu Muslims, age and sex wise distribution of the respondents, their settlements history, ancestral arrival, occupational and marital status. Fifth chapter analyzes 'Continuity and Changes among Kathmandu Muslims'.

Finally, the sixth chapter states 'Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation' of the study. The bibliography and annex are also incorporated at the end of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Muslims: Meaning and Origin

A Muslim (Arabic, Persian: Mosalmoon; Urdu, Turkish: Musluman; Albanian: Mysliman; Bosnian: Musliman) is an adherent of the religion of Islam. So, they are generally required to observe the duties ordered by Islam, obeying of which unite Muslims into a community. [Islamic law](#) (*sharia*) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on virtually all aspects of life and society (Hamidullah, 1970). Muslims all over the world adhere to Islam and its fundamental creeds.

Beginning as the faith of a small community of believers in Arabia in the seventh century, Islam rapidly became one of the major world religions. The core of this faith is the belief that Muhammad (c. 570-632), a respected businessman in Mecca, a commercial and religious centre in western Arabia, received revelations from God that have been preserved in the Qur'an. The heart of this revealed message is the affirmation that "there is no god but Allah (The God), and Muhammad is the messenger of God." The term *Islam* comes from the Arabic word-root *s-l-m*, which has a general reference to peace and submission. Specifically, Islam means submission to the will of God, and a Muslim is one who makes that submission (Wuthnow, 1998).

The history of Islam centers around one person, Muhammad (also spelled Muhammed or Mohammed). He was born around 570 A.D. and was raised by his extended family after the death of his parents. As he grew, he became dissatisfied with polytheism and came to believe in one God, Allah. He began to have religious visions around age 40. During these visions, Muhammad would receive "messages" or "revelations" from Allah. He would memorize them and teach them to his followers. These visions are now recorded in the Qur'an (or Koran). Muhammad continued to receive these visions and messages until his death in 632 A.D. (Wenner, 1998).

Islam includes many religious practices. Adherents are generally required to observe the [Five Pillars of Islam](#), which are five duties that provide base to Muslim community. In addition to the Five Pillars, [Islamic law](#) (*Sharia*) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on

virtually all aspects of life and society. This tradition encompasses everything from practical matters like [dietary laws](#) and [banking](#) to [warfare](#) (Staff, 2003). These creeds are said to be spread over by Prophet Muhammad though the Islamic creeds did not begin with the prophet hood of Muhammad, nor were these invented by him. Islamic beliefs are eternal truths that neither change nor develop.

Nepali Muslims also repose their faith on oneness of God and Prophet Muhammad. Their socio-cultural and economic performances are also guided by Islamic beliefs based upon *Quran* and *Hadith*.

2.2. Women in Islam

“For each (community) we have appointed a divine law and a way of life. Had Allah willed He would have made you one community. He may try you by that which he has given you. So vie one with another in good works” (The Qur’an 5:48).

It is very clear from the text of the above verse from the holy book that Allah has graced different peoples with different ways and rituals according to which they have to shape their religious and secular lives. Allah didn’t intend to appoint one uniform law for every people, past and present. Had he intended it, he could have made only one community but he chose otherwise and appointed different ways for different peoples at different times (Engineer, in Chatterji ed. 1990).

For Muslims every thought and every action has both spiritual and ethical consequences, and thus has religious significance. The spiritual dimension is therefore crucial to all institutions of society in Islam, and to every public and private act (Badawi, in Holm et. al. ed.1994).

Muslim conception of ‘Men and Women’ is based on the same theme as mentioned above. For them, Allah created two forms of human for special purpose, so to play their respective role. In the religion of Islam, a woman is an independent entity, and thus a fully responsible human being. Islam addresses her directly and does not approach her through the agency of Muslim males. A woman assumes full capacity and liability once she has attained maturity and has received the message of Islam.

Islam treats women as equal to men. Islam holds that women are equal to men in their origin, their humanity their honour and their accountability before God. Men and women are two equally important component parts of humanity, and the rights and responsibilities of both sexes are equitable and balanced in their totality. Roles of men and women are complementary and collaborative. Staff (2003) also argues that, although their obligations might differ in certain areas of life in accordance with their physical and psychological differences, each is equally accountable for their particular responsibilities. Ignoring these differences is surely unrealistic, but there is no reason to assume from them that one sex is either superior or inferior to the other in any way.

2.3. Historical Background of Nepalese Muslims

2.3.1. Arrival of Muslims in Nepal

There is not a single argument among scholars about the actual date of the arrival of Muslims as dwellers in Nepal though all of them are agreed that Muslims were entered in Nepal in the late 15th or early 16th century during the reign of King Ratna Malla. However, entrance of Muslims from Arab as traders had begun soon after the rise of Islam as a religion in Arabia in the eighth century that has been mentioned in 'Hudood-Al-Alam', an Islamic book published in 789 A. D. Nepalese musk were exported to Arabia via these Muslims at that time (Regmi, 1969).

Furthermore, the strong point to prove this is the Tistung inscription of Lichchhavi king Amshu Varma, where it has been mentioned that musk, wool, iron, copper, bronze utensils etc. were the items, used to be exported from the then Nepal. And, musk was the most important of all. The admiration of Nepali Musk on the inscription of King Yadav Krishna of South-India also proves that Nepali musk were famous exported items from Nepal (Bajracharya, 1973). However, it is not clearly stated whether the trade link was direct or through some kind of intermediary agents because Arabian traders had a direct link with China, Tibet and India; and Nepal, too, had a direct trade relationship with these three countries. Nepali international tradesmen were called "Sarthwa" at that time (see *ibid*). These Nepalese traders had played a transactional role of trade between Nepal and Arabian countries. So, it can be said that though Muslims as permanent residents had entered in Nepal

during the rule of Malla dynasty, Nepal, already had a contact with Muslims and Islamic world during the Lichchhavi period.

The initial phase of the mediaeval period of Nepali history lacks the adequate information about Muslims though Nepal had to bear the repercussions of Muslim invasion in North-India in the twelfth century (Regmi, 1969). Since Nepal had religious links with India, many Indian scholars took shelter in Nepal after Muslims destroyed the universities of Nalanda and Vikramsheela. The attack of Muslims over Buddhism in India created such situation that Nepal became the centre of Buddhist philosophy and learning.

Nepal felt the first direct impact of Muslim invasion in India in 1324 B.S. Gayasuddin Tughlaque, the Muslim emperor of Delhi, attacked Simra region and destroyed Simroun Gadh, the capital city while returning back from smashing up the rebellion of West-Bengal. King Har singh Dev of Simroun Gadh had to leave off his state and move up to the Mountains. However, this battle was not fought with an intention to broaden the physical landscape of the empire. In fact, while Gayasuddin was returning back via Tirhut, King Har Singh Dev misunderstood of the upcoming possibilities of attacking his state. So, he first, attacked over the Muslim troop (Samsodhan Mandal, 1962). The political power balance of Kathmandu valley was quaked due to this attack. That's why this battle is noteworthy in the history of Nepal. As Nepali (1965) also mentions, "The beginning of the 14th century saw a great political confusion in north Bihar. In 1323, Emperor Tughlak Shah led his victorious forces into Tirhout. Hari Singh Deo, a descendant of Nanya Deo, who ruled over Tirhout, was defeated by the imperial forces. He, therefore, fled Simroun Garh, his capital and escaped to Nepal and conquered it. The arrival of Hari Singh Deo resulted in a fresh assertion of Hinduism and the introduction of the people from the plains. Hari Singh Deo and his successors, like their predecessors were content to be the nominal heads of the State, while the actual rule rested with the Mallas themselves." (Nepali, 1965)

Another Muslim invasion took place after 25 years of the first attack. In 1349 B.S. Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas of Bengal invaded the Kathmandu valley. This attack, too, was not motivated with the territorial expansion rather it was an attack of Muslims against Hindus and Buddhists. The invaders looted and destroyed many temples and monasteries. Pashupatinath

Temple, Swayambhu Chaitya (Buddhist Monument) and Pinbahal Chaitya of Patan were looted, broken and set fire. The terrific situation of seven days made people flee towards the jungle. It took several years to regain the physical loss of infrastructures. It is said that 11 years were spent to recover the Temple of Pashupatinath and 22 years to replace the Swayambhu Chaitya (Aryal and Dhungyal, 1975).

During the reign of Mughal emperor, Akbar the great, the religious harmony among Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists was maintained through the liberal policy. This kind of religious harmony not only brought positive changes between the relationship of Nepal and Indian Muslims but also began to cast the influence of Muslim culture on Hindu culture of Nepal. Nepali ruling class, especially, was influenced by the administrative pattern, defence system, dress pattern; and art and architecture of the Mughal emperors (Bajracharya, 1973). These aspects of the later part rulers of the Malla dynasty were highly influenced by the Muslim culture since they adopted it admiringly.

Hence, Nepal was directly or indirectly under contact of Muslims and Islamic culture from the end of the Lichchhavi dynasty. Although, Muslim traders were under contact in its initial history and had to face effects of Muslim invasion several times during the earlier phase of the Malla dynasty, Nepal's territory was never claimed nor were Nepalese authorities influenced politically for their purposes by the Muslims. Instead, while Hindu based Nepalese authority started adopting Muslim style on some aspects of ruling strategies, game of power balance, art and architecture, religious rivalries between Nepal and Muslims of India were ended happily.

2.3.2. Impressions of Muslim Culture on Nepalese Ruling Class

Kathmandu valley, the power zone of the then Nepal, was fully impressed with the Muslim style of ruling, dress and architectural pattern in the later part of the Malla dynasty. Bhaktapur inscription of King Yaksha Malla tells that Bhaktapur was surrounded by the walls and made like a fort (Gadh) in 1453 B.S. which was inspired by the Mughal style of defence system. Later, Kantipur and Lalitpur also adopted the style. At four corners of the Lalitpur palace, towers were erected as kots in Mughal style and were named 'Choukot'.

Another influence on the defence system was the installation of cannons. Following the style of the Moughal emperors, Malla kings had started using cannons as weapons. Not only Kathmandu valley but Gorkha and Lamjung, too, had begun to use cannons. That's why, though comparatively smaller in area, Lamjung was succeeded in becoming more powerful than Gorkha (Bajracharya and Shrestha, 1977).

Muslim dress pattern was also highly influential among the Nepali rulers during the Malla period. From head-gear to shoes, the influence of Moughal dress pattern was traceable. We can get evidences from the portraits and statues of the Malla Kings. Muslim dress pattern also influenced the Shah Kings in the Nepalese history. The statue of King Prithivipati Shah, the ruler of Gorkha, reflects the proof.

Mahindra Malla, one of the famous King of Malla dynasty, was suggested by the Moughal emperor Humayun, of Delhi to mint the silver coins with the King's name, "Mahindra Malla". 'Mahindra Malli Mohar' is famous in the Nepali history. Since then, Nepali societies and cultures were highly influenced by the Persian, Arabic and Urdu cultures (Thapa, 1990).

Nepali high class authority was highly influenced by the Persian language. There are so many inscriptions, found in the Kathmandu valley still today, where the Urdu script has been inscribed. King Pratap Malla had inscribed some Urdu words on his coins. History says that he was well known in Urdu language followed by other fourteen languages. Many administrative posts were created on the Moughal base. Munsif, Kotwal, Buxi, Kaji, Dewan etc are some of those posts, derived from the Urdu language.

Moughal's court system was followed by the Nepali royals. There were Muslim courtiers and counsellors in the Nepali courts, too. But number of these courtiers was comparatively less. Actually, these Muslim courtiers were used to be welcome in the royal courts to remain safe from any kinds of rebellion by the native courtiers. As Baburam Acharya opines that the Malla King Bhaskara Malla had invited Muslims with political objective to protect him from the aggressive relatives and high class officers. (Acharya 1965 as quoted in Siddika, 1994). This kind of political strategy for power balance sometimes used to be fatal for the

authoritarian too since seeds of rivalries would be germinated among the Newars, Hindus and Muslims courtiers.

In the beginning of the modern age of Nepali history, King Prithvi Narayan Shah adopted the Muslim strategy of military system for the unification of Nepal. He had posted Kashmiri Muslims as spies who used to gather and pass secret information in his favour.

As this type, Nepali royals were highly influenced by the Muslim patterns of the game of rule. There are many evidences we can find, while reading the history of Nepal, which support the claim. We can analyse these kinds of Muslim Influence over the Medieval and Initial phase of the Modern period from two angles. First, it was necessary for small states to be safe from the Muslim invasion since Nepal was not a single state. Second is to gain favour of the great empire of the south, so that the next state couldn't dare attacking.

2.3.3. Settlement History of Muslims in Nepal

As it has been already mentioned that Muslim's settlement history in Nepal goes back to the 15th century, we have to enter again into the medieval history of Nepal. As D. B. Bista mentions that the first Muslims to enter in Nepal were the Kashmiri Muslims, whom the envoy of King Ratna Malla had invited from Lhasa. These Muslims were actually Indian businessmen who used to come to Tibet for the trading purpose of carpets, rugs, shawls, and other things (Bista, 1967). Similarly, Bal Chandra Sharma, one of the historians of Nepal, states the date of the first arrival of Muslims in Nepal. According to him Kashmiri Muslims were the first Muslims to enter in Nepal in 1491 A.D. at the time of King Ratna Malla (as mentioned in Siddika, 1994). Similarly, Baburam Acharya, one of the prominent historians of Nepal says that a Muslim saint (Muallim) came to Nepal in 1524 A.D. and built the mosque in Kathmandu known as Kashmiri Taquia (see *ibid*). These Muslims were few in numbers and were welcome here as traders for trading purposes. They were not permitted to spread their religion nor were they allowed to slaughter the cow.

During the rule of King Pratap Malla, the second group of Muslims were entered in Nepal in the 17th century. They were Indian Muslims and were invited here as artisans, musicians, courtiers and traders. King Pratap Malla was very fond of art and literature. He was a great

scholar and linguist. He was greatly impressed by Muslim art and literature. So, he permitted to build a mosque (now called Nepali Jame Masjid), which we can see even today at the side of Ghantaghar.

Muslims as traders also came at the time of King Jaya Prakash Malla, the last Malla King of Kathmandu. This was the third group of Muslims to enter in Nepal. These Muslims had gained fame on trading and were successful trade linkers between India and Tibet (Samsodhan Mandal, 1962). Despite that, these Muslims had the ability to maintain international relationship with other countries due to their proficiency in languages and trade link. In the mean time, King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha was aiming to attack Kantipur for his unification mission. And, King Jaya Prakash Malla was in a weak situation to face the attack. So, he had sent his Muslim courtiers to ask the help of British Company Government. The British Government accepted his request and Captain Kinlock came to help him. Similarly, during the period of King Siddi Nar singh Malla of Patan, Muslim traders were in a high position for their trading.

Muslim's settlement was not limited within the territory of three states (Kantipur, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) of Kathmandu Valley. Rulers of Hill states, Baise and Chaubise rajyas also had good relationships with Moughal emperors and Muslims of the south. King Ram Shah of Gorkha succeeded to impress the Moughal Badshah Jahangir by sending him arrow shooters from his state. This kind of relationship helped Muslims to settle in Gorkha as 'Churoute' (Bangle-sellers). Descendants of these Muslims are still found as 'Hill Muslims'. Similarly, Mukund Sen of Palpa had also good relation with the Nawabs of Audh and Gorakhpur as well as Aurangzeb, the emperor of India.

Towards their declining period, Muslim Nawabs of India were also interested for shaking the hands of friendship with Nepalese states in order to strengthen the power against the East India Company. Later, when these Nawabs were defeated by the Britishers and fled towards the safe places, Nepalese states were also options for their destinations, where they settled in, permanently.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah at the time of Unification made good relationship with the Muslims. Muslims were welcome for military supplies like guns, canons and other weapons. He had also posted Muslims as his secret agents. After the victory over the Kathmandu Valley, he expelled Christian missionaries since they were becoming religiously influential over Nepali people. But, he gave permission to live the Muslims of Kathmandu Valley because they were not religiously influential to the Nepali people and were living their lives as per Nepal's law.

Another entrance of Muslims from India, that is applicable here, is the coming of Muslims at the beginning phase of the Rana regime. In 1857 A.D., British Company Government faced a public mutiny (Thapa, 1990). The Britishers suppressed the mutiny ruthlessly and rebels had to flee from their places. Among those who fled, some were Muslims and were given political asylum in Nepal by the Rana Prime minister Jung Bahadur. Some of them returned back to India after Jung Bahadur demanded for tax since he knew that they had brought their share of properties along with them and wanted to acquire some of it. Begum Hazrat Mahal of Oudh died in Nepal, who had fought against the Britishers from Lucknow and was defeated there.

Lord Canning of East India Company government requested Jung Bahadur for his help in suppressing the mutiny, which Jung Bahadur easily accepted. Jung Bahadur, himself, led the Nepali troops. After the successful grounding of the mission, the Britishers were very much pleased with Jung Bahadur and returned back four districts of Nepal: Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur as gifts, which were captured by them at the time of Nepal-British war of 1814-1816 (Regmi, 1969). Since these places were hot, densely forested and Malaria affected, Hill people of Nepal dared not settle there. So, Indian immigrants were permitted to live there. Among these Indian immigrants were Muslims too, in a considerable number. Hence, Muslims also started their settlements in the Terai area of Nepal.

Immediately after this, in 1860, Company government's decision of expanding the railway track line helped enrich the strategic planning for economic development in the Terai of Nepal. Terai was densely forested and less populated. So, Rana regime had adopted a planned strategy for developing the Terai as agricultural and economic centre for the trade link with

India. Terai jungles were used for supplying the huge amount of woods and logs to India. To fulfil the vacancy of workers there, a huge population of migrants were needed. The government of Nepal promised to grant rights of ownership in land and regulated low rates of rent and taxes (Thapa, 1990). Since the hill people of Nepal were less interested to migrate to the Terai, Nepali government opened border for Indians to migrate. A huge amount of Indians immigrated there and among them, a considerable number were Muslims.

Nepal provided religious asylum to the Tibetan Muslims after the Chinese invasion over Tibet in 1960. Tibetan Muslims, few in numbers, are settled in the Kathmandu Valley since then.

Hence, if we go through the Nepali history, we can find the Muslims settlement in different phases of medieval and modern periods. Muslims have a distinct history and hold a strong position in the history of Nepal.

2.3.4. Status of Nepali Muslims

Short but a clear figure of the history of Nepali Muslims has been sketched by Prof. Dor Bahadur Bista (2002). According to him, Nepali Muslims were entered in Nepal during the reign of King Ratna Malla at the end of 15th century from Tibet. They were welcome here as traders, musicians, cook, artisans etc. Bista further mentions that Muslims don't owe a special race or origin rather they were separated for some reasons in a mode of time and started following a unique cultural and religious tradition. According to him, Nepali Muslims are divided in to two categories. The first category consists of, 'Saied', 'Sekh', 'Pathan' and 'Moughal', who are originally Muslims from the time of Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. 'Ansari', 'Miya', 'Nawafmochi' etc are in the second category, whose ancestors were Indian Muslims (Bista, 2002). He further says that though Muslims from Kathmandu and Terai speak Urdu, language has never become obstacle since they also speak local language easily.

Similarly, Prof. D. R. Dahal (2005) provides a brief overview of the social composition of population of Nepal based on the data of *Population Census, 2001*. In his own words, "The CBS recorded two cultural groups within Musalman: i) Musalman and ii) Churoute. The big Musalman populations live in the Terai, and the small Hill Musalman group, popularly known as Churoute, lives in the western hill districts" (Dahal, 2005). According to Prof. Dahal, The Terai Muslims have the similar cultural and behavioural performances as that of other Terai peoples, which is highly influenced by Indian culture of the border. Influences can be seen in their dress pattern, language, occupations and other economic activities. Similarly, more or less influences of Hill peoples can be seen in Hill Muslims. These Hill Muslims' ancestral occupation is bangle-selling. However, there are Muslims in a considerable number, who are engaged in peasantry and other occupations. These Muslims speak Nepali and Churoute language, which is a mixed language of Nepali and Urdu. Prof. Dahal presents this article in the view that, "*Understanding of social composition of the population is an essential foundation to assess larger societal and compositional trends*" (ibid). He views that Nepal's historic cultural diversity should be considered as an inherent source of cultural and social wealth.

Blustain (1977) shows the caste ranking and political power among the Hindus and Muslims of Liglig Dumre, a multiple caste village in north-central Nepal. He has investigated the role of Muslim in a Hindu caste society. He found that, "the nature and the role of Muslim ideology couldn't be ascertained independently of a full examination of the political, economic and ritual relationships in the village" (Blustain, 1977). He views that Muslims' role could not be explained independently in a Hindu caste based society. The political power of the village lies on to the high castes non-Muslims, where Muslims are ranked the lowest castes of the untouchables. In this situation, ideological aspect i.e. religious beliefs and practices of the minority groups is automatically dimmed or shadowed.

Shamima Siddika, a non-Nepali Muslim from Bangladesh, and the first Bangladeshi student in the Tribhuvan University, has done her Master's Thesis on sociology on "Sociological Study of Muslims; a case of Nepal." The overall study of Muslims of Nepal can be found in her dissertation. Her own words show, "the Hill Muslims, being insignificant in number, are overwhelmed by non-Islamic if not anti-Islamic social environment.....Some Muslims even

get their heads shaved clean on the occasion of a death in the family which is purely non-Islamic custom and nowhere in the Islamic world this practice is followed" (Siddika, 1992). Hence, she tries to show how hill Muslims are being assimilated with other communities. She presents her arguments on the basis of observation during her field study in the Hill areas, where there are Muslim settlements. According to her, she observed the Muslim women, putting vermillion (Sindoor), which is neither guided by Islam nor practised by any other Muslim societies in the world. Similarly, she found some Muslims who had shaved hair after their relative was dead, which is a direct influence of Hindu religious beliefs.

Shamima further argues, *"Religion provides in Nepal the basis of social stratification. Hinduism being the state religion of Nepal, Nepali-speaking Hindus have formulated all-encompassing social model in which each of the different participating social units is given a caste name and a definite rank within a hierarchy, no matter how divergent such groups may look or be in their beliefs and practices. Such a model was the officially recognized view in Nepal for centuries and is reflected in the first legal code promulgated in 1852, known as the Muluki Ain..... Caste hierarchy of the Muluki Ain is a linear conception. An exceptional position is occupied by Muslims. The Muluki Ain distinguishes between native Muslims and foreign Muslims, i.e. between Hill Muslims (Churoute) and the Muslims of Kashmir, etc. In the hierarchical enumeration Kashmiri Muslims come first, whereas the Hill Muslims occupy the lowest rank among the impure castes"* (ibid).

The situation has, now, changed. Recently, Nepal has been declared a secular country, where all the religions have equal importance. So, the Hindu domination of caste system is slowly in its descending position. Muslims too have the equal opportunities as that of a High caste Hindu.

Quraisha Banu (1978), in her unpublished dissertation of M.A., History, entitled, "Introduction to Muslims in Nepal", mentions that Muslims have already assimilated in Nepalese setting, though, at the same time, they are maintaining their own identity. In her own words, "many Muslims in hilly and Tarai regions, don't know the Kalima's (Article of Faith) most important injunctions and neglect its major issues. In some places, they also follow the customs and festivals of Hindus and other religions around them" (Banu, 1978). At

the same time, she also states that," these Muslims though in a Hindu country are free to follow their religion. So, Muslims in Nepal take pleasure in belonging to Islam as Nepali and they are proud of it" (ibid). Banu's logics nearly meet to the point of Siddika. She argues that Muslims are in a minority position by population, that's why they have to cope with other non-Muslims in any way for surviving. Muslims in Hills have undergone through the influence of other non-Muslims. Influences can be seen on their dress patterns, occupations, languages and consciousness about education. However, Muslims have given continuity to their religious activities and are always free to do so from the aged back despite their settling among non-Muslims.

2.4. Continuity and Change: Theoretical Overview

Change is inevitable. There is nothing in this world that remains constant and doesn't bear any kind of change. Every material and non-material things accept change. Not only the bodily structures of any natural or man-made things but also the attitudes, feelings, beliefs and other non-material things change during the time span.

'Continuity' especially refers to man's attempt for preserving his beliefs, ideas and expressions in material or non-material forms. As culture is a man made thing, it is the main source of continuity of anything. Tylor presents the definition of culture as, "culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871 as mentioned in Jha, 1983)). Tylor's definition of culture emphasizes the acquiring of all capabilities by man as a member of society, which means continuation of all those capabilities from the previous generations to the next.

The terms 'Continuity' and 'Change' should be overlooked as the two phases of a coin. As Chhetri quotes Barth's statement, in order to understand change we need to, "describe all of society in such terms that we see how it persists, maintains itself, and changes through time" (Barth, 1981 as quoted in Chhetri, 1990). The statement supports the claim that continuity and change go through the same line.

Monastic or Unifactoral theories asserted that major social changes were caused by a single factor. The most frequent candidates have been race, the survival of the fittest, climate and/ or geography, technological innovation, or the economic relations of production (Goode, 1977).

For many generations, social scientists opined that white race of the Western societies was the genuine race and centre of the world civilization. They believed that, "races were real divisions of the human family, that each race developed a particular kind of culture, and that the evolution of human society seemed to suggest that the "more backward" races couldn't develop the higher type of civilization that the Western societies represented". Though "long generations or centuries of stagnation in white race were interpreted as a temporary degeneration of racial stocks, caused by intermixture with other races" (ibid).

Darwin's notion of the survival of the fittest (1859) in natural science was also applied to human societies. Herbert Spencer's (1820-1903) *Social Darwinism* sought to apply the principles of natural selection to human societies. He viewed that social change is a natural, evolutionary process that leads inevitably from simple to complex forms (Jha, 1983).

Later, the unilinear evolutionary process was applied for describing human society and culture. E. B. Tylor (1820-1903) in Britain and L. H. Morgan (1818-1881) in USA studied culture through this process. As evolutionary ethnologist, Tylor was of the opinion that mankind as a whole must have passed, by a process of cultural evolution, from a primitive, prehistoric stage through a middle stage, and finally to the more advanced civilized state (ibid: 30).

Arnold J. Tonybee, in his work "A Study of History" asserts that high civilizations are created only when societies face a moderate degree of environmental challenge. Geographical determinists claim that any specific sequence or set of changes in the social structure can mainly be attributed to geographical factors (Goode, 1977).

Goode further points out the problems of these monastic theories of change. He says:

These monastic theories all suffer from a major difficulty in both theory and measurement. Their central theoretical difficulty is that they claim that all social change is caused by factor X. If the critic suggests that other factors (values, temperament, technical skill, literacy) might also contribute, the author responds by claiming that factor X includes *those* factors as well. Thus, for example, if the critic argues that the values of a culture make a difference, then the firm believer in the overriding influence of economic relations argues that values, too, are determined by economic relations! If the critic of a racial theory claims that cultural level and education make a difference in social change, the race theorist proclaims that race determines *these*, too. In short, factor X causes all the stages in human relations, all the different kinds of social structure, because X *is* everything, and surely everything does cause everything (Goode, 1977).

Marxist theory of economic determinism examines social change in terms of production. According to Marx, factors of production determine the relationship of production which creates 'class' in the society. Marx's very famous statement, "history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle" is based on his theory of class conflict. According to the Marxist view, in the feudal past, the most important relationship was the ownership of land, but in the modern period of industrialization it became the ownership of capital, that is, money to control factories and businesses. It is the struggle for that control that causes all the great changes in social structures over time. After the revolution occurs, that ushers in a new type of society in which all property is communally owned and the large political apparatus of the state decreases in size.

Class struggle is the ultimate means to lead the society towards change. Marx has given the name 'revolution' to this kind of struggle as Ritzer says, "Marx was a humanist who was deeply hurt by the suffering and exploitation that he witnessed among the working class under capitalism. His humanism led him to call for a revolution that would overturn the economic system, which was exploitative of the vast majority of people, and that would lead to the creation of a more humane socialist society. Although he called for revolution, Marx did *not* believe that the change *had* to be bloody" (Ritzer, 2000).

Revolution is the most rapid and drastic way to a culture change. Generally, revolution takes place violently though Marx, as mentioned above, is not of the opinion that revolution should be violent. It brings loss of the existing authority and establishes the new.

Diffusionism theory flourished in the 1920s. As Goode clears the hypothesis of this theory, "few inventions or discoveries are ever made; most of what we see in any culture is simply borrowed from another. That is, social change occurs by *diffusion* from one society to one or more other societies" (Goode, 1977). The British school of thought of Diffusionism advocates that ancient Egypt was the core to human civilization from where it was diffused to other parts of the world.

According to Ember et.al. (2002) there are three patterns of diffusion: direct contact, intermediate contact and stimulus diffusion. Elements of a society's culture, in the first pattern, may be first taken up by neighbouring societies and then gradually spread farther and farther afield. Diffusion by intermediate contact, in the second pattern, occurs through the agency of third parties. In stimulus diffusion, knowledge of a trait belonging to another culture stimulates the invention or development of a local equivalent (Ember et. al., 2002).

According to Goode (1977), Sorokin's theory of Immanent Change argues that the forces and factors that operate in any social or cultural system are never static. Each part is different at every successive time point, because all the other causes that affect it are also changing. These changes are called *immanent* because they emerge from the interplay of forces within the society itself (Goode, 1977).

Acculturation, a process of change, refers to the changes that occur when different cultural groups come into intensive contact. The term *acculturation* is used by anthropologists to describe a situation in which one of the societies in contact is much more powerful than the other. Thus, acculturation can be seen as a process of extensive cultural borrowing in the context of super ordinate-subordinate relations between societies. The borrowing may sometimes be a two-way process, but generally it is the subordinate or less powerful society that borrows the most (Ember et. al., 2002). Although acculturation is usually in the direction of a minority group adopting habits and language patterns of the dominant group,

acculturation can be reciprocal--that is, the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group. Assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, members' hip in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification. Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups come into continuous firsthand contact; the original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct (Kottak, 2007).

Although Muslims are generally thought strict followers of their religious orders, in the process of surviving in a non-Muslim society, Kathmandu Muslims are more or less affected by the acculturation process. This can be seen in their behaviors such as wearing dress, speaking different languages, participating in non-Muslim festivals etc. However, their religious beliefs are still their assets to maintain Muslim identity, which has not been changed.

The word 'Assimilation' denotes more or less adoption of the dominant culture by the people from subordinate culture. Cultural assimilation (often called merely *assimilation*) is a process of integration whereby members of an ethno-cultural community (such as [immigrants](#), or [ethnic minorities](#)) are "absorbed" into another, generally larger, community. It can be also defined as the process of cultural diffusion, by which a subordinate group is absorbed into a dominant group; the process through which two or more groups come to share the same social and cultural patterns. This implies the loss of the characteristics of the absorbed group, such as language, customs, ethnicity and self-identity. Assimilation may be voluntary or forced, as is often the case regarding ethnic minorities.

Modernization theory is a description and explanation of the processes of transformation from traditional or underdeveloped societies to modern societies. In the words of one of the major proponents, "Historically, modernization is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African continents" (Eisenstadt 1966). Modernization theory has been one of the major perspectives in the sociology of national development and underdevelopment since the

1950s. Primary attention has focused on ways in which past and present premodern societies become modern (i.e., Westernized) through processes of economic growth and change in social, political, and cultural structures (*retrieved from, encyclopedia of sociology summary.htm*). Modernization is a transformative process; societies must drop traditional ways of thinking, traditional ways of human relations. In a word, societies must drop traditional structures, cultures and values, and adopt those of Western Europe and North American societies today. Nepalese societies have been also going through the process of modernization adopting the western thoughts and cultures. Cultural influences of the west can be seen in new generation. These influences have torn the concepts of castes, ethnicity and racial identities to some extent in Nepal.

Urbanization refers to a process in which an increasing proportion of an entire population lives in cities and the suburbs of cities. Historically, it has been closely connected with industrialization. When more and more inanimate sources of energy were used to enhance human productivity (industrialization), surpluses increased in both agriculture and industry. Larger and larger proportions of a population could live in cities. Economic forces were such that cities became the ideal places to locate factories and their workers. Much of Third World urbanization is the result of overpopulation in the countryside. In villages babies have been living and not dying. A husband and wife who farm 15 acres might have three sons and three daughters. All now live and grow up. But there is not land enough for them to have the farms they need to marry and raise a family. This lack of land for burgeoning rural populations forced them to leave the village and migrate to cities (*retrieved from urbanization.htm*).

Rapid urbanization process in Kathmandu valley has not only gathered a huge population from the different parts of the country but also redefined Kathmandu valley in a new cultural context. Muslims, as are one of the oldest inhabitants in Kathmandu valley, are also undergoing through the process of urbanization.

Bhattachan (2006) asserts two oriental concepts: 'Sanskritization' that was developed by the prominent Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas and 'Bahunbad', developed by Nepali sociologist Dor Bahadur Bista. He says that oriental social scientists are still borrowing the western concepts, theories and methodologies to understand the changes of their own societies. As

Bhattachan clarifies the definition of Sanskritization given by Srinivas, "Sanskritization is a process of upward social mobility of the low-caste Hindus by imitating Brahminic lifestyle" (Bhattachan, 2006). In his article, "The Concept of Sanskritization", Bhattachan, first, analyzes the concept of Sanskritization, an oriental concept developed by an oriental sociologist M. N. Srinivas. He quotes Srinivas saying, "*Sanskritization means not only the adoption of new customs and habits, but also exposure to new ideas and values which have found frequent expression in the vast body of Sanskrit literature, sacred as well as secular. Karma, dharma, papa, maya, samsara and moksha are examples of some of the most common sanskritic theological ideas, and when a people become sanskritized these words occur frequently in their talk*" (Srinivas, 1962). In the second part of article, Bhattachan makes criticism of the concept of Sanskritization. Bhattachan accuses the concept as a 'Brahminocentric Concept'. In his own words, "*Srinivas himself being a Brahmin, his interpretations are colored by his "high caste" status. He glorifies upward mobility, not only of low caste but also of tribal and other groups and relates it with the integration of society*" (Bhattachan, 2006). Finally, Bhattachan applies the concept of Sanskritization in Nepali contexts. According to him, the concept was popular in Nepal in the sixties and seventies. Foreign social scientists and native sociologists/ anthropologists belonging to dominant castes such as Dor Bahadur Bista and Prayag Raj Sharma had used this concept to explain socio-cultural changes during that period, which he opines was a false impression on them. He argues that changes in Nepalese minority groups are not due to Sanskritization, instead due to the internal colonization or suppression and oppression by the ruling Hindu Bahun –Chhetri against those minority groups.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Area and Rationale for Selection

Although significant number of Muslim population resides in rural areas of Kathmandu Valley, this study only focuses on the urban Muslims. Muslims in Kathmandu are not new inhabitants because Nepali history shows their presence from the aged back. Muslims had entered in Kathmandu valley at the time of King Ratna Malla in late 15th century (Bista, 2002). So, the history of the Muslims of Kathmandu valley is of about six hundred years. They have been completely intermingled with the local and other migrated communities in this area.

Kathmandu valley, as is the capital city of Nepal, has become the melting pot for all castes and ethnic groups. Besides Newars, the largest local group, peoples from different castes and ethnic groups and from all parts of the country reside here as permanent or temporary dwellers. That is why; all kinds of cultural practices can be found here. In spite of the mixed up of diverged peoples and cultures, Kathmandu valley has maintained all kinds of harmony within these peoples.

Kathmandu used to be the capital city of the only Hindu Kingdom in the world; however, the country is declared a secular country. Muslims as dwellers had entered in Nepal, where Hindu rulers were in power. Similarly, their culture was flourished in Nepal in a completely Non-Muslim setting.

The rapid urbanization and modernization process of Kathmandu valley have shaded this culturally unique group. Muslims, to cope with a Non-Muslim setting, are also adopting Non-Muslim practices, which Islam does not allow. At the same time, to give a separate identity of the self, they have been coping with the Kathmandu culture. Residing at the core of the country, they are still in a minority position and haven't been studied on any aspects. So, this research attempts to study about the Muslims from this particular area.

3.2. Research Design

Generally speaking, the keywords "research design" address the question of how to plan a study (Flick, 2006). This study is an Anthropological study and has been designed on the

ethnographic approach. The research has adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design was used in order to analyze and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data collected from primary and secondary sources. As per nature of the research, data related to historical facts, social, cultural and economic practices, women's status in different socio-cultural aspects were collected based on existing situation. On the basis of the data, the history, socio-cultural and economic practices and women's status were analyzed to describe continuity and change among Kathmandu Muslims.

3.3. The Universe and Sample

The total Muslim population of Kathmandu district is the universe of this study. There are all total 11,982 Muslim populations in Kathmandu district (CBS, 2001).

This study was carried out in five clusters of Kathmandu inside the Ring Road area where the density of Muslim population is higher. These clusters are: Bagbazar, Putalisadak, Indrachowk, Kalimati and Swoyambhu. Stratified Random Sampling was applied on the basis of Age and Sex of the respondents, where everyone had an equal chance of selection as a respondent. Out of 11,982 total Muslim populations, only 107 (0.89 %) Muslims were chosen as the respondents. Considering the large population and the limitation of the research and limited resources, 89 in 10000 respondents were chosen for sample.

Muslims from three age groups (Youths, adults and elders) were chosen as samples to know their attitudes and experiences on continuity and change in a comparative way. 75 (15 from each mosque) Male respondents from the age group 15-34 (youths), 35-54 (adults) and 55 above (elders) were interviewed from five renowned mosques of Kathmandu. The age group was further divided in to five groups: 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55 above.

Five renowned Mosques of Kathmandu were visited from the above mentioned places. These mosques were: Nepali Jame Mosque, Ghantaghar, Kashmiri Taqia, Ghantaghar, Iraqi Jame Mosque, Indrachowk, Kalimati Jame Mosque, Kalimati and Swoyambhu Jame Mosque, Swoyambhu.

Most of the informants were interviewed at the Mosques before or after the prayer. Those who could not manage time immediately were requested to make an appointment at their leisure.

3.4. Nature and Sources of Data

This study derived mostly qualitative data although some useful quantifiable data were also collected. Thus, the interview result is based on the qualitative information supplemented by some quantitative data. Primary as well as secondary sources of data were used in the present study.

The source of the primary data was the field work, field observation and case studies. The general informants were interviewed to know about their socio-cultural and economic aspects such as their family type, settlement history, marriage, education, occupation, religious activities and their experiences of change on these aspects. Similarly, Key informants like historians, *Maulanas*, executive members of the mosques (religious temple) and teachers of were interviewed. From these key informants, the researcher was able to gather information on Islamic laws, basic tenets of Islam, historical, socio-cultural and economic aspects, Muslim women's position as well as religious performances of Kathmandu Muslims.

The sources of Secondary data were mainly DDC offices, CBS data, related books and journals, unpublished and published documents, Master's and PhD dissertations, settlement inventory, various maps and topographical maps. Maps were also useful to find out the location of Mosques and Muslim settlements.

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

It is said that "the researcher should be encouraged, where possible, to use more than one method when investigating a topic"(Denscombe, 1998). Several data collection techniques were employed for the collection of the relevant data. Data collection methods for the present study are given below:

3.5.1. Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to collect information from the respondents. The schedule was mainly based on the general information such as education, occupation, marriage, settlement history, socio-cultural practices, attitudes and experiences of Kathmandu Muslims; and changing women's position in Kathmandu Muslims.

3.5.2. Observation

The researcher also observed rituals, religious and economic activities of the Muslims, which helped to validate the information gathered through interview schedule and key informants' interview. Events like praying Namaj, presence of Muslim youths at prayer, absence of Muslim women at Mosques, women's involvement in different occupation, dress patterns and other aspects were analytically observed during field study. The observation has helped the researcher to find out the details of socio-cultural aspects of Islamism as well as changes on their socio-cultural behaviours and women's position in Kathmandu Muslims.

3.5.3. Interview with Key Informants

Eight Key Informants with different background (see Annex-) were interviewed as key informants to know about historical backgrounds, socio-economic and religious activities of Muslims of Valley. They were asked how the Kathmandu Muslim society was changing during the course of time and what the causes behind the change were. Similarly, they were also asked to know about the Muslims' doctrines and duties, Islamic creeds and obligations. Perception on women's position in Kathmandu Muslims was also asked to them to understand the changing position of Muslim women in Kathmandu. Information received from these interviewees was used to analyze for background information and crosscheck of the information provided by the general informants.

3.5.4. Case Study

A case study is a qualitative analysis involving a very careful and a complete observation or a holistic study of a person, a situation or an institution. A social unit in a case study may be a person, a family, a caste, an ethnic or a cultural group of the entire community or an institution. The researcher has collected case-studies on individual level regarding continuity and change. Eight case studies have been done on attitudes and experiences (on marriage,

education, dress pattern, religious activities, women's position, and political awareness) of Muslim youths which represent the feeling of youth about continuity and change among urban Muslims.

3.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data are systematically compiled in a descriptive way. Most of the descriptive data are arranged in thematic sequence, as the data on this study are mainly descriptive in nature. Thematic sequences of the data are, then, analysed to meet the objectives of the study. The quantitative data are presented in simple tables.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

-) Urban area of Kathmandu Valley has been chosen as the study area in this study. So, the study has been confined only on the urban Muslims of Kathmandu Valley.
-) The objective of this study is not a detail ethnographic study of Muslims instead it only attempts to investigate the continuity and change on socio-cultural and economic aspects of Kathmandu Muslims. So, the findings and recommendations may not truly applicable in other parts of the country.
-) The researcher is a non-Muslim, completely unknown regarding the Muslim traditions. So, there can be some problems on dealing with their cognitive issues. So, the findings are also based on the limitations.
-) The results of this study may be non-conclusive but will be simply a small building block and insight into the Muslim community in Nepal.

Except these, regarding a student, the research is affected by the limitation of time and money. Despite these limitations, this study can provide valuable examples and starting point for other studies on the Muslims of Kathmandu valley.

3.8. Being an Outsider: A Personal Experience of Fieldwork

Muslims, for me, were always a topic of fear from my childhood. A tall thin man with long beard wearing *pyjama* and *Lungi*- still recalls my childhood- seeing whom I used to run away. I was up brought in Terai though I never got any chance to peep Muslim community through my childhood eyes. Nor were there any Muslim friends of mine in the school. The reason of fear behind my mind was set because of my elders' trick to make me an honest boy.

They used to say, "*Musalman* comes from the maize farm, kidnaps children and takes them to India hiding in a sand-bag; and sells there". My heart would start beating fast hearing this. So, there was always a sense of fear about encountering with a Muslim. This '*Musalman*' always scared me throughout my childhood.

I was quite surprised when I first saw two Mosques erected in front of the Palace of the then only Hindu King in the world. To my surprise, I knew that those mosques tended to have great historical importance. Since then, I was curious to know more about Nepali Muslims. Besides, Muslim's dress pattern, their devotion towards Allah, their faith and other so many things about them always created curiosity in my mind and I used to be surprised. Barth's perspective, "watch and wonder" inspired me to watch and enjoy the Kathmandu Muslim community.

I gave way to my determination after my final year's examination of Master's of Anthropology. I went to Kashmiri Taqia and Patan Jame Masjid with my friends, talked and discussed with Muslim elders at Indra Chowk and Mangalbazar before entering in to my proposal. At last, I was able to shape my ideas and the topic was chosen, "Walking through the Path of Faith: A Study on Continuity and Change among Kathmandu Muslims from an Anthropological Perspective".

Hot days of April and June, a student and he is nothing more than the student, Kathmandu seems so busy. In fact it is busy. And, Muslims are busier here since most of the Muslim residents of Kathmandu are businessmen. Arranging time with them, meeting them, and talking with them and so many things to do with them....thanks! to all those, who, despite their busyness granted me their precious time and provided me the information.

As Chhetri opines, "The personality of the researcher, his/her position in the society, institutional, national, and/or community affiliations, and the religious, cultural, political, economic ideologies he/she is indoctrinated into (because of life experiences or formal training) are the kind of contexts that influence an individual researcher's field-work" (Chhetri, 1990). Similarly, he mentions socio-cultural contexts or situational factors of the

research area as other factors, which influence the research (ibid). This field-work also carries out some sort of such experiences.

I always tried to be concentrated on the questionnaire, while conducting interviews with general informants. But, I had to wait for more minutes to get the right information, while I had to spend more time for unexpected information. I once spent three and half hour with a respondent while my average time was forty-five minutes.

Suspicion of the general respondents as the data collection was for governmental use, stroked frequently during the field-work. But, unlike others' experiences of field-work in the rural areas, I was never asked whether I was from any NGOs or INGOs nor were voices regarding any kind of expectations heard. As Wolf cautions, "The research project cannot offer anything to the social system. At most, it can be functional. The researcher should take care not to make promises about the usefulness of the research" (Wolf, 2006). However, the researcher had to frequently clarify the motive behind interviewing them.

I still recall one incident at the Islamic library, Ghantaghar. Two Muslim young people talked with each other after I introduced myself and told about my mission. "Why are these non-Muslims interested in studying about Muslims these days?" The spoken language was, perhaps, Urdu (though it sounds Hindi while speaking). The other laughed. There was quite a sense of satire and it was, perhaps, indicated towards the **hot social inclusion issues**. I remembered the "rejection of visualism" and "emphasis on indigenous Anthropology" by post-modernism in ethnographic studies. How worthwhile will be the findings of the study, which is done by completely an outsider? I immediately recovered myself thinking that it was just a learning process for an emerging researcher. Ultimately, I was relieved and I stepped for my further walk.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY POPULATION

Attempts have been made to show the distribution of Muslim population Kathmandu districts in the initial phase of this chapter. Similarly, different groups of Muslims in Kathmandu valley have been described in brief. And finally, socio-cultural and economic backgrounds such as age, sex, occupation and marital status of the respondents have been shown in table and described in brief in the later part of this chapter, which is totally based on the data gathered from the field-work.

4.1. Muslim Population in Kathmandu

Kathmandu holds the 17th position for Muslim settlements, where 1.11% of the total population are Muslims (see annex-5). Most of the Kathmandu Muslims are the descendants

of those Muslims who had entered in Nepal as traders, artisans, cooks and courtiers at the time of Malla and Shah dynasty. Similarly, some are the descendants of Muslim refugees, who had entered in Nepal during the Indian Mutiny and Chinese invasion over Tibet. Although considerable numbers of Muslims from outside Kathmandu are living as permanent or temporary dwellers in Kathmandu in recent years.

Out of 10, 81,845 total people of Kathmandu Valley 11,890 (8,145 male and 3,745 female) are Muslims, which constitute only 1.11% of the Kathmandu population (CBS, 2001). So, we can say that Muslims in Kathmandu Valley obviously fall on the minority groups by population. The female population constitutes only 31.49 % of the total Muslim population in Kathmandu.

Generally it is said that, a Muslim is the follower of Islam. In this sense, the CBS data seems paradoxical. In the case of Kathmandu district, the number of Muslim people is less than the population distribution according to religion (Islam). There are 11,890 Muslims in Kathmandu district, at the same time there are 11,982 (8,214 Male and 3,768 female) peoples who adhere on Islam as their religion (CBS, 2001). So, the followers of Islam as a religion are comparatively larger in number than the actual number of Muslims in Kathmandu.

Another thing that is interesting to notice is that Urdu language, which is considered the mother tongue of Muslims, is spoken by very few peoples than the actual number of valley Muslims. Only 3,834 (2,297 Male and 1,537 female) peoples speak Urdu as their mother tongue (CBS, 2001) although there are 11,890 Muslims in Kathmandu valley.

4.2. Categorization of Kathmandu Muslims

Muslim communities in Kathmandu Valley reflect the combination of overall Muslim groups of Nepal. This categorization of Kathmandu Muslims is based on the information provided by General informants and Key Informants as well as literatures studied.

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Figure – 2: Categorization of Kathmandu Muslims

Source: Field Survey, 2009

(also see Ansari, 1981, Siddika, 1992)

Figure 2 shows the categorization of Muslim groups in Kathmandu Valley. Muslims in Kathmandu Valley can be divided into two broad categories: 1) Muslims migrated from Tibet and 2) Muslims migrated from India.

4.2.1. Muslims Migrated from Tibet

This category of Muslims is also divided into two sub-categories:

i) Kashmiri Muslims:

Kashmiri Muslims claim to be the oldest Muslim settlers in Kathmandu Valley. The descendants of Arab-Muslims, Turkish, Afghan, Mughal and Indian Muslims to some extent fall on this category whose ancestors were migrated from Tibet for trading purposes in the Lichchhavi and Malla period. Since Nepal was the transactional trade route to link India and Tibet for those traders, Nepal came in contact with these Muslims who, later, were welcomed here by the rulers as traders. King Ratna Malla had invited them in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Kashmiri Muslims in Kathmandu Valley are few in Number in comparison with Terai and Hill Muslims. They feel superior to other Muslims and don't allow burying the dead body other than Kashmiri Muslims in their graveyard near Swoyambhu. These Muslims are mostly engaged in the business, some are in the governmental services and other occupations. These Muslims are economically more secure than other Kathmandu Muslims.

ii) Tibetan Muslims:

The above mentioned Kashmiri Muslims are also known as Tibetan Muslims since they were entered in Kathmandu Valley from Tibet. Beside this, another group of Tibetan Muslims entered in Kathmandu during the invasion of China over Tibet. These Muslims had come along with other Tibetan Buddhists, who were granted political asylum in Nepal. These Muslims are so few in number and are economically high in position. The effect of mixture of both Tibetan and Kashmiri Muslim culture can be seen on their cultural performances. These Muslims speak Tibetan language too beside Urdu and Nepali. Tibetan Muslim Women still wear Tibetan dress. Though change among these Muslims is also noteworthy.

4.2.2. Muslims Migrated from India

This categorization of Kathmandu Muslims can be also divided into two sub-categories:

i) Terai Muslims:

Terai Muslims are completely the descendants of Indian Muslims, whose fore-fathers were entered in the Terai belt of Nepal from the Northern part of India. These Muslims were

entered in Nepal during the Indian mutiny of 1857 and settlement program in the “Naya Muluk”, the four districts of Nepal that were provided to Nepal by the British as reward. Muslims from the districts of Terai have migrated to Kathmandu seeking opportunities for better livelihood. Terai Muslims, in Kathmandu Valley can be categorized into two groups: temporarily migrated from Terai districts and permanent residents from Terai. The first group of Terai Muslims are mostly found as labours, traders, students and involved in other occupations. The permanent settled Muslims from Terai are well established in the urban scenario. Most of them are established traders, governmental service holders, religious personalities, political figures and professors. Terai Muslims seem more liberal in the changing context of Kathmandu Valley though they have their own religious identity, which they are maintaining here too.

ii) Hill Muslims:

Hill Muslims were entered during the Medieval and the initial phase of the Modern period of Nepali history. They were mainly welcomed here as architects, artisans, weapon-manufacturers, courteriors and traders. The Baise, Choubise and Hill states of the then Nepal had good relationship with the Indian Muslims and had adopted several administrative and ruling strategies of Moughals. So, Muslims were able to settle there. These Hill Muslims are also known as ‘Churoute’, the bangle sellers. Kathmandu also observes the settlement of Hill Muslims, who, are categorized as temporarily resided and permanent residents. These Muslims, too, are concerned seeking their better livelihoods. These Muslims’ assimilation with other non-Muslims is also noteworthy.

4.3. Socio-Cultural and Economic Background of the Respondents

4.3.1 Religious Sects

Islam consists of a number of [religious denominations](#) that are essentially similar in belief but which have significant theological and legal differences. The primary division is between the [Sunni](#) and the [Shi'a](#), with [Sufism](#) generally considered to be a mystical inflection of Islam rather than a distinct school. According to most sources, approximately 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and approximately 15% are Shi'a, with a small minority who are members of other [Islamic sects](#) (Wenner, 1998).

According to the key informants, there is no difference between those two sects among Nepali Muslims as they both believe in Sufi path. During the study, the researcher only found all the respondents were Sunni.

4.3.2. Age and Sex

Age means somebody's existing time and sex means biological difference of human being. Age and sex factor reveal their demographic situation and scale of maturity on their respective field. People's perception, way of thinking, making decision, seriousness about life differs according to the age and sex. The ages of the respondents who were taken for the interview had ranges from 15 to 74. They were grouped at an interval of 10. The female who were interviewed during the study were contacted with the help of male respondents. The table below presents age-group and sex of the respondents.

Table-1: Distribution of the Respondents by Age and Sex

Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-24	14	18.66	3	9.37	17	14.01
25-34	17	22.66	7	21.87		21.48
35-44	19	25.33	6	18.75		21.48
45-54	15	20	6	18.75		21.48
55 above	10	13.33	8	10.66		21.48
Total	75	70.05	32	29.88	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The age of the respondents were divided into 5 categories and also into female and male separately. Thirty two females and 75 male respondents from these five categories of age group were chosen. The table shows that highest number of male respondents was from the age group 35-44, whereas females were from 25-34. Distribution of the respondents in different age groups helped to analyze continuity and change from the perspective of different generations.

4.3.3. Settlement History

During the field study, most of the informants interviewed, were permanent residents of Kathmandu valley and only a few were Hill or Terai Muslims, who were migrated from other Hill and Terai areas of Nepal. Following tables show the original settlement as well as ancestral settlement in the past and causes for their migration in Nepal.

Table-2: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Birth-Place

Muslims	No.	%
Born in Kathmandu Valley	89	83.17
Came from Other Districts	18	16.82
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The table shows that 83.17 % out of 107 respondents were the permanent residents of Kathmandu valley, who were born here. These Muslims' ancestors had resided here up to the range of 3 to 20 generations. Similarly, 16.82 % had come from other districts of Nepal and were known as 'Hill' or 'Terai' Muslims. These Muslims were either migrated here for different purposes such as trading or business or resided here temporarily for jobs or small business.

4.3.4. History of Origin

History also shows that ancestors of most of the Nepali Muslims had entered Nepal from either India or Tibet. Some of them had come from Turkey, Arabs and Afghanistan; however,

they also had entered through India or Tibet. During the field survey, we had talked about the ancestral settlement of the respondents before their entrance in Nepal. The following table shows the ancestral settlement of the respondents before they came here as permanent residents.

Table-3: Distribution of the Respondents according to History of Origin

Ancestors Migrated from	No. of Respondents	%
Afghanistan	2	1.86
India	76	71.02
Kashmir	12	11.21
Tibet	11	10.28
No Idea	6	6.60
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

If we examine the above table, we can find that the largest number of respondents' ancestors had entered Nepal from India. Ancestors of 71.02 % respondents had come here from there. Similarly, 11.21 % respondents reported that their ancestors had migrated in Nepal from the then Kashmir, which is now, a part of Indian Territory. 10.28 % respondents' ancestors were from Tibet where as ancestors of 1.86 % respondents were from Afghanistan. 6.60 % respondents reported that they had no idea about their ancestral settlement before they entered Nepal. These Muslims' ancestors had migrated in Nepal in different phases during the Malla, Shah and Rana regime in Nepal. Some Tibetan Muslims, who were given political asylum in Nepal, also migrated here after the invasion of China over Tibet.

4.3.5. Occupational Status

Almost all the Muslims in Kathmandu valley are involved in trading activities. But the occupations vary from small shops to large industries. Similarly, few are engaged in governmental and NGO sectors. The following table shows the occupational status of the respondents.

Table-4: Distribution of the Respondents according to Occupation

Occupation	No. of Respondents	%
Traders	60	56.07
Labourers	8	7.47
Service Holders (Governmental/ NGO)	6	5.60
Teachers	8	7.47
Students	8	7.47
Housewives	16	14.95
Priest	1	0.93
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows that 56.07 % out of the total respondents were engaged in trading activities. Their trading activities vary from bangle selling to computer dealers. Similarly, 7.47 % respondents were engaged in different kinds of labouring such as plumbing, work of construction, carpentry and tailoring, 7.47 % in teaching and 7.47 % were students. Likewise, 5.60 % respondents were involved in governmental/ NGO services. Similarly, 14.95 % female respondents were mere housewives, who were not directly involved in any kinds of economic activities. Only one respondent was involved in religious activities. He was the priest of the Kalimati Jame mosque.

4.3.6. Marital Status

The Asian notion of Marriage emphasizes that it is a more or less permanent association of one or more male with one or more female for the purpose of giving social sanction to progeny satisfaction for biological and social needs and fulfilment. The following table shows the marital status of the respondents.

Table-5: Distribution of the Respondents according to Marital Status

Marital Status	No.	%
Married Within Religion	96	89.71

Unmarried	11	10.28
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows that 89.71 % out of 107 respondents were married and 10.28 % respondents were unmarried. All the 32 women were married.

CHAPTER V

WALKING THROUGH THE PATH OF FAITH: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE AMONG KATHMANDU MUSLIMS

For deeper understanding on continuity and change among Kathmandu Muslims, this chapter tries to examine and analyze their socio-cultural and economic practices. The initial part of the chapter focuses on continuation of Socio-cultural practices based on the Islamic creeds and fundamentals. Similarly, the latter part analyzes about the change prevailed among Kathmandu Muslims on different aspects like family structure, marriage, education, occupation, food and dress patterns etc.

5.1. Continuity

5.1.1. Islamic Fundamentals

Islam strongly emphasizes the oneness of Allah. So Monotheism is the first and foremost essence in Islam. The second fundamental tenet of Islam is the belief in survival after death. The consequences of all the actions in this life are held in store for another life. So, Islam refers to obey the Allah to be rewarded in the next life.

Belief in the messengers of the God is another fundamental creed of Islam. Islamic belief in the scriptures of God is another fundamental tenet. Scriptures of Abraham and Moses, the Torah, the Psalms of David and the Gospel of Jesus are some examples, which were revealed by the God and sent through the messengers. Though, none of these books exists except the

Holy Qur'an which was revealed to the prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is the ultimate authority in all matters of dispute and of difference of opinion among the Muslims. Belief in the Angels of God is the last fundamental tenet of Islam.

These beliefs are the fundamental tenets of Islam which shape and guide the Islamic world. A man, who accepts these tenets, is accepted as a Muslim. Regarding these fundamental tenets, a Muslim should also discharge some obligations or requirements. These requirements are called the "five pillars" of Islam.

Kathmandu Muslims, either they be from elder generation or youths, follow the fundamentals of Islam. They all believe that following of Islamic creeds is the duty of a true Muslim and hence can maintain their identity.

5.1.2. Religious Activities

The 'Shahdah': This Arabic word gives the meaning of 'Declaration of Faith', faith towards the one God. According to the respondents, Muslim pronounces 'Laa ilaaha il'la-Laah Muhammad Rasool Allah' that mean there is no deity worthy of being worshipped except Allah (God) and Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

The 'Salah': Prayer in Islam is essential. This is a formal obligatory prayer which is required to do by every Muslims five times a day. Islam doesn't call upon Muslims to merely perform this act of worship; rather; it wants of them to purify their souls.

28.03 % out of total respondents reported that they could read Holy Quran and 58.87 % told that they could read it. Similarly, 13.08 % reported that they could read the text a little.

'Zakah': The word 'Zakah' means purification and growth. It is the principle of Islam that all things belong to Allah. So, the acts of earning and spending should be acceptable to Him. Muslims pay the poor-tax. According to the informants, the poor-tax, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, can only be spent on: i. The needy ii. The poor people involved in debts iii. The collectors of the tax, in the shape of emoluments paid to them iv. Manumission of slaves v. Neo-Muslims who need financial help. Kathmandu Muslims, during Id, their greatest festival, also perform Zakah.

‘Siyam’: ‘Siyam’ is the fasting that involves abstinence from eating, drinking, sexual intercourse and other prohibited habits such as smoking, through the daylight hours of the lunar month of Ramazan.

‘Hajj’: The annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation for physically and financially able Muslims. There were only 3.73 % respondents who had visited the sacred Mecca for Hajj. Other 5.60% reported that there was at least one member in their families who had visited Mecca for Hajj. Those who had visited Mecca had done Hajj only once in their life. However, 92.2% respondents reported that they wanted to visit the sacred Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

5.1.3. Muslim’s Festivals

Muslims’ festivals are guided by Islam. There are many festivals celebrated by Muslims. Each festival has its own meaning and procedure of celebration. Id is one of the most important festivals of Muslims. Roza is observed by every Muslims during this very month. Ramajan month begins with the first day of the bright fortnight. But the Roza starts only after the visible crescent moon in the sky and it is very strictly and sincerely observed by the Muslims up to the last day until the crescent moon reappears at the end of the month.

Muhurrum is the first month of Islamic calendar. Tajiya is the day of sorrow. The Muhurrum festival is also marked as the anniversary of martyrdom of Iman Hussain, the younger son of the daughter of the Prophet. Tajiya procession is taken out and decorations are ultimately buried.

Miladun Navi or Barwafat is celebrated or associated with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. It falls on the 12th day of the month, Rabi-Al-Auwal of the Islamic calendar.

Shab-I-Barat is observed by eating fine and delicious foods, keeping a vigil for the night, visiting the graves of dead relatives and praying for the welfare of both the living and spirits of the deads.

Bakar-Id is an important observance of three days, which begins on the tenth day of the Dhu-al-Hijah. Muslim people sacrifice animals (*Halaal*), usually goats, and buffalos. Slaughtered animals are then, shared with poorer members of the society. Prayers are read at specific times during this observance. It is also a celebration to start the Hazz.

All the respondents said that they celebrate their all festivals. They also reported that they invite their non-Muslim friends and neighbours at their festivals and wish each other.

5.2.7. Namaj Praying

Muslims believe in oneness of God and Allah is the ultimate god. So, Muslims always pray for Allah. Similarly, all the religious activities performed by Muslims are mainly based on Allah's orders. Kathmandu Muslims also repose their faith in oneness of Allah. All the religious orders are accorded with Quran, the Holy book and the Kalma. Religious prayer or praying Namaz is the basic obligation for all the Muslims. That's why; Kathmandu Muslims are not exceptions of it. All the respondents reported that they all pray Namaz. But, Kathmandu Muslims, due to their business in

different trading activities, are not regular visitor of Mosques at the time of praying. The following table shows the frequency of visiting Mosques by our respondents. Since no women in Nepal go to Mosque in order to pray, the following table is based on male Muslims.

Table- 6: Time Schedule of Male Muslims' praying Namaz at Mosques

Respondents from	Once a day	More than 1 time a day	5 times a day	Only on Fridays	Total
Nepali J. Mosque	12 (48 %)	5 (20 %)	4 (16%)	4 (16%)	25 (33.33 %)
Kashmiri Taqia	10 (40 %)	6 (24 %)	3 (12%)	6 (24%)	25 (33.33 %)
Iraqi J. Mosque	4 (40 %)	2 (20 %)	2 (20 %)	2 (20 %)	10 (13.33 %)
Kalimati J. Mosque	5 (50 %)	3 (30%)	1 (10 %)	1 (10 %)	10 (13.33 %)
Swoyambhu	2 (40 %)	1 (20 %)	1 (20 %)	1 (20 %)	5 (6.66 %)

J.Mosque					
Total	33 (44 %)	17 (26.66 %)	11 (14.66 %)	14 (18.66 %)	75 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows the frequency of praying by the sampled male Muslims from the five mosques of Kathmandu. As per Quran and Hadith, it is compulsion for every Muslims to pray for five times a day. Muslims read Namaz in the morning, afternoon, mid-day, evening and night. The respondents reported that, all the Muslims in Kathmandu valley are engaged in business or some kinds of trade work and there is no time for them to attend the prayer 5 times a day. However, all almost all of them attend Namaj this or that way, which shows continuity on their religious belief of praying.

5.2. Change

5.2.1. Family in the Past and Present

Of all human beings family is the most important primary institution. It is a small social group consisting ordinarily of a father, mother and one or more children. Family, in definition, is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children (MacIver et.al. 1998).

Family structure of respondents must be analyzed, because, it is the basic social institution of human being that provides the first identity to the individual in the society. It is the base where economy, education, health and other sectors have close relation.

If we examined the overall family patterns in the Nepali context, we can find joint family as the dominant pattern. Most of the Nepali families are based on agrarian societies. So, there is need of labour division in the families. Similarly, the family properties remain safe in the joint families. However, peoples in the urban areas generally prefer nuclear families. Nuclear

families are economically easy to maintain. There is less economic burden and privacy of life can be maintained in a nuclear family.

Muslims' family structure, if we examined the Islamic texts, is theoretically larger in size since a Muslim male is permitted to apply polygamy. However, it cannot be applied in the context of Kathmandu Muslims because they do not practice polygamy.

Following table shows the respondents' family structure and their attitude on family structure.

Table-7: Respondents' Family Structure and Preference

Family Structure	Your Family Structure		You Prefer	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Nuclear	29	27.10	48	44.85
Joint	77	71.96	58	54.20
Extended	1	0.93	1	0.93
Total	107	100	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

If we comparatively analyze the above table, we can find that 27.10 % of the total respondents have the nuclear family structure; where as 44.85 % prefer it. Similarly, 71.96 % respondents reported that their family structure is joint but only 54.20 % of the total respondents preferred joint family. The table shows that the number of Kathmandu Muslims who prefer nuclear family is in an increasing position. Most of the respondents who preferred nuclear family were youths. According to them, Nuclear family is easy to maintain and economically secure. There is happiness in the family where husband and wife with their

children feel comfort and less burdened. There is less chance of quarrelling and generation gap

Those who advocated for joint family were of the opinion that there is always help and support from elder members in the family. There is also economic support from other members of the family. Most of the elder respondents were of the opinion that within the joint family, one's older age is secured due to the proper care of the children.

So, we can find changes in family patterns among Kathmandu Muslims, which is not an exception in the urban lives, instead a need for survival strategies. Nuclear familial structures are, now, the choice of most of the urban peoples.

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5.2.2. Attitude on Marriage

There is a distinct process of marriage in Muslim community, which is guided by the Islamic belief system. Kathmandu Muslims also perform the marriage ceremony with the Islamic process. So, the marriage procession has been given continuation in Kathmandu Muslim community. However, attitudes about Marriage have been changed during the period of time. The following table shows the respondents' attitude on the right age for marriage:

Table-8: Respondents' Attitude on the Right Age for Marriage

Right Age	No. of Respondents (For Boy)	%	No. of Respondents (For Girl)	%
14-18	4	3.73	31	28.97
19-23	41	38.31	65	60.74
24-28	57	53.27	7	6.54
29-33	1	0.93	0	0
No Opinion	4	3.73	4	3.73
Total	107	100	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

If we go through the above table we can find that most of the respondents' attitude on the right age for marriage for a Muslim boy is between the ages of 24 to 28. And, for a Muslim girl, most of the respondents recommended the age of 19 to 23. More than 80 percent of the respondents had married under the age of 23 and nearly half of them had married under the age of 19. But, now the attitude has changed. Only 3.73 % of the total respondents opined the age below 19 as the right age for a Muslim boy to marry. However, 31 % of the total respondents are still of the opinion that the right age for a Muslim girl to marry is under the age of 19.

Most of the respondents opined that both the spouse should be matured physically and mentally before marriage. According to them, the age they proposed for the Muslim boy and girl, were the right age for marriage regarding these maturity. These attitudes of the respondents represent the changing attitudes on marriage and right age for marriage in the whole Muslim community of Kathmandu valley. Kathmandu Muslims, staying with other non-Muslims and observing the assimilation of different cultures in the urban setting of Kathmandu valley, are ready to be liberal in marital affairs.

Similarly, almost all the respondents were positive towards inter-caste marriage. They opined that if the marriageable male and female are agreed, they can marry each other. Daughters are generally not preferred to get inter-caste marriage. It was because their daughter once married with non-Muslim, she transformed into other religion. But if son-in-law accepted Islam, they could be accepted in Muslim community. In any inter-caste marriage where spouse accepted to be Muslim are normally accepted in the community.

5.2.3. Family Planning

Generally any kind of family planning is strictly prohibited in the Muslim culture. Islam prohibits the means of family planning because birth of children is considered the gift of Allah. A person is supposed to be cursed by the Allah himself if anyone even thinks about the means of family planning.

Table-9: Respondents' Attitude on Family Planning

Attitude	No. of Respondents	%
Positive	87	81.30
Negative	1	0.93
No Opinion	22	20.56
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Though respondents did not like to disclose the details of their use of family planning measures for their privacy, they were positive towards family planning. Elder Muslims said that they did not use any means of family planning. However, middle aged men and youths were positive and said that they used temporary means of family planning for the safe sexual intercourse and prevent unwanted pregnancy. The table shows that 81.30 % out of 107 respondents were positive towards the family planning. However, most of them advocated the temporary measures of family planning. Similarly, 48.03 % male respondents were using temporary means of family planning. 3 females reported that their husbands were using the temporary means. Likewise, 25.49 % were using none of the measures. Similarly 2.94 % were planning for it. Most of those, who were not using or planning to use family planning

measures were unmarried youths. Only one respondent was against family planning. He opined that children were the gifts of God and Islam totally prohibited the family planning. Similarly, 20.56 % respondents did not disclose their opinion on this subject matter, and most of them were women.

5.2.4. Occupational Trend in Present Context

Although, almost all the Kathmandu Muslims are involved in trading activities, ranging from bangle selling to software dealers, the trend of Muslims' occupation is varied these days. The general conception about Muslims' occupation among non-Muslims is that they are bangle-sellers (*Churoute*). But, now-a-days, change can be seen on their occupations. More or less, there are still bangle sellers, but Muslims are involved on other occupations too, such as cosmetic and fancy shop, pharmaceutical companies, electronic shops, computer shop and others.

Beside these trading activities, some Muslims are also involved in teaching profession. Few are in the sector of governmental services. Kathmandu Muslims are well aware of the economic trend in Kathmandu valley and they are not only involved in trading activities but also have started to grasp the opportunities for being minority group.

Out of total respondents, 63.55 % reported that their profession was changed in comparison with their ancestors. Similarly, 36.44 % reported that they had given continuity to their ancestral profession. Similarly, 27.10 % reported that they had to support the family of up to 5 members by their earnings. In the same way, 67.28 % respondents had to manage the family of up to 10 members. Similarly, 1.86 % respondents had to manage the family of more than 10 members. 3.73 % respondents had no answer.

Likewise, 53.27 % respondents reported that they could manage their family with the earning they made. Similarly, 13.08 % said 'no' while answering this question where 29.90 % could hardly manage their family with their earning. Of the total respondents, 3.73 % didn't give the answer.

Similarly, 34.57 % of the total respondents said that they saved some amount from the earning after managing the family where 44.85 % reported that they could not save any from their earning. Similarly, 17.75 % said that they saved very little amount form their earning. Only 3.73 % didn't have any answers.

5.2.5. Language

The mother tongue of Muslims is Urdu. Almost all the Muslims reported that they use Urdu language for domestic purposes. But, in the outer spheres, they also speak Nepali, Newari, English, Hindi and other languages for dealing with the customers and others. After Urdu and Nepali, the most common language of Kathmandu Muslims is Newari, which is a direct influence of Newars. As English language is the need of today and is a compulsory subject in schools, especially Muslim youths are also more or less proficient in it. The following table shows the language proficiency among the respondents.

Table-10: Distribution of the Respondents according to Their Language Proficiency

Languages	No. of Respondents	%
Urdu	107	100
Urdu + Nepali	105	98.13
Urdu + Hindi	85	79.43
Urdu + English	51	47.66
Urdu + Newari	48	44.85
Urdu + Maithali	11	10.28
Urdu + Arabic	8	7.47
Urdu + Bhojpuri	5	4.67
Urdu + Tibetan	4	3.73
Urdu + Tamang	1	0.93
Urdu + Awadhi	1	0.93
Urdu + Tharu	1	0.93

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above data represents the trend of language proficiency of Kathmandu Muslims. Language has become one of the factors for coping with other non-Muslims in Kathmandu

for the Muslims. All the respondents were able to speak Urdu language. However, most of them said that they could not write it in the original script. Proficiency of English was among 51 respondents and most of them were youths. Newari is another language which was spoken by 48 respondents. It clearly shows that, there is some sort of cultural influence of Newars among Kathmandu Muslims. Muslims migrated from Terai also speak Maithali and Bhojpuri. This is because of the cultural contact with other non-Muslim societies. Similarly, Tamang, Tibetan, Awadhi and Tharu languages were also spoken by Kathmandu Muslims according to their birth places.

5.2.6. Celebration of Non-Muslim Festivals

Beside the celebration of Muslim festivals, our respondents also reported that they also celebrate non-Muslim festivals. The following table shows the respondents' numbers, who celebrate different non-Muslim festivals.

Table-11: Distribution of Respondents according to the Celebration of Non-Muslim Festivals

Festivals	No. of Respondents	%
Holi	54	50.46
Tihar	41	38.31
Christmas	21	19.62
Newari Festivals/ Jattras	19	17.75
Chhath	11	10.28
New Year	10	9.34
Dashain	1	0.93
Saraswati Pooja	1	0.93

Source: Field Survey, 2009

As shown on table, 50.46 % of the total respondents said that they celebrate Holi, the festival of colours mostly celebrated by the Terai Hindus. Similarly, Tihar is also observed actively by our respondents. Similarly, 38.31 % of the total respondents reported that they actively participate in different activities of Tihar like firing crackers, eating delicious dishes and lighting. However, they said that they didn't take tika from their sisters as other non-Muslims

do in Tihar. Christmas was celebrated by 19.62 % of the total respondents. Of the total respondents, 17.75 % reported that they participated in Newari festivals and jatras. Similarly, Chhath was celebrated by 10.28 %, New Year was celebrated by 9.34 %, Dashain by 0.93 % and Saraswati Pooja by 0.93 % respondents. According to our respondents, during non-Muslim festivals their non-Muslim friends and neighbours also wished them and invited them to participate on their joy.

5.2.7. Education

Educational status of Muslims in the context of overall Nepal is very low in percentage. Muslims are generally strict on their religious beliefs and attitudes. So, education was not necessarily their need or compulsion. But, things have, now changed. Kathmandu Muslims, though, are not high enough educated in percentage, the thinking about education is now changed among them. They have taken education as a means to change the wrong sides of Muslim society. So, they prefer their children to study. Most of the respondents recommend modern schools rather than madarsa for their children's education.

Table-12: Distribution of the Respondents according to Their Experience of Education and Their Children's Education

School Type	Respondents Studied		Respondents' Children Study	
	No.	%	No.	%

Government	39	36.44	34	31.77
Madarsa	17	15.88	15	14.01
Private School	6	5.60	42	39.25
Informal Education	14	13.08	-	-
Illiterate/ Not started Yet	31	28.97	16	14.95
Total	107	100	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Out of total respondents, 36.44 % reported that, they had studied in government schools. But, the children of only 31.77 % of the respondents study in government school. Similarly 15.88 % respondents had studied in Madarsas, where 14.01 % respondents' children study in Madarsa. A large difference can be seen on private schools. Only 5.60 % Muslim respondents had gone to private schools, where children of 39.25 % respondents go to private school. These types of differences between respondents and their children show the changing attitude of education among Kathmandu Muslims.

THROUGH EDUCATION, I CAN WIN

Kamran Iftihar (Pseudo name), 23, is a student of B. Sc. in Tri-Chandra College. He did his schooling from a private school in Kathmandu valley securing 75 % in exam of School Leaving Certificate.

"I wanted to be a doctor. I tried my best for the entrance of MBBS for two years, but wasn't succeeded." He says who is now attending the second years' classes of environmental science. "The government should have considered for Muslim students", he spills his dissatisfaction towards the government.

"The world is very much competitive. I have gained religious knowledge from home but for the outdoor performances, my family also preferred me for the quality education. I haven't fixed my future plans yet but I have to be updated to compete with others," Kamran proudly says. He opines that it is the education, through which he can win the world.

35.51 % respondents preferred modern education for Muslim children. Similarly, only 14.01 % respondents preferred Madarsas for the next generation. 50.46 % respondents preferred both, but they were of the opinion that their children should get quality education.

5.2.8. Food Habit and Dress Pattern

There is not any distinct food habit among Kathmandu Muslims. They eat normal Nepali food like Daal, Bhat (Rice), curry and pickles. There is not any kind of system of touchables or untouchables like high caste Hindus of Nepal. So, there is not such restriction of eating touched by others. They generally take more spicy foods. Meat is not restricted in Islam. So, most of the Kathmandu Muslims are non-vegetarian. However, Halaal meat (Meat slaughtered by Muslims) is compulsory for them. They generally don't take meat slaughtered by non-Muslims. Though Islam prohibits taking alcohol, Muslims take liquor in Kathmandu.

Table-13: Distribution of the Respondents according to Their Food Habits

Food Habit	No. of Respondents	%	Taking Intoxicant	No. of Respondents	%
Vegetarian	6	5.60	Don't Take	38	35.51
Non-Vegetarian	101	94.39	Sometimes	63	58.87
			Used to	6	5.60
Total	107	100		107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The above table shows that most of the Muslim respondents are non-vegetarian. 94.39 % of the total respondents are non-vegetarian and only 5.60 % are vegetarian. Muslims in

Kathmandu valley eat Halaal meat of goat, chicken, fish, buffalo However, some Muslims reported that they didn't take pork.

Similarly, 58.87 % respondents reported that they sometimes take intoxicant, whereas 35.51 % said that they didn't take intoxicant. Most of the respondents who sometimes used to take intoxicant said that they took it only when they were among friends or during the parties or any kind of occasions. Likewise, 5.60 % said that they used to take intoxicant but they had left out the habit.

Change can be seen on dress pattern among Muslim youths. Not only the style of wearing dress has changed but also their attitude about dress has changed. In our sampling of three age groups (15-34, 35-54 and 55 above) i.e. three generations in the Muslim community, three kinds of dress pattern was observed. The elder persons

YOU ARE FREE TO CHOOSE

Aftab Alam (Pseudo name), 35, had worn white Kurta- Salwaar and Muslim cap while coming for prayer in Nepali Jame Mosque. He visits this mosque every Friday for prayer.

"I generally prefer shirt and pant but at the time of prayer or any Muslim festivals, it is better to wear Muslim dress, at least, for the Muslim identity" says Aftab while talking about his dress habit.

I was up brought in that family where parents like their children to wear typical Muslim dress. Yet, I was educated in a government school, where I had to wear ordinary dress." Aftab recalls his early days.

He is more liberal in choosing and wearing dress. "It's better to wear Muslim dress but it depends on one's interest and need. Not only a Muslim but anyone, cannot wear the dress of his/her interest in a private office" he says.

"If the government makes such policy in order to maintain everyone's identity in public spheres then it will be easy for those who want to wear the dress of their own culture, do accordingly." Aftab opines.

"Muslim students should not be obligated to wear school-dress compulsorily if they want to wear Muslim dress in school premises" he opines.

Table-14: Distribution of the Respondents according to Their Dress Pattern

Dress Pattern	No. of Respondents	%
Shirt/ Pant (Male)	26	40.19
Muslim Dress (Male)	27	28.43
Jeans/ T-shirt (Male)	22	9.80
Kurta/ Salwar/ Sari/ Blouse (Female)	32	21.56
Total	107	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Twenty six male respondents said that they generally wear shirt and pant. Similarly, 27 reported that they wear Muslim dress as their normal dress. Most of the young respondents (22 in number) said that they were fond of wearing jeans and t-shirt. However, they were also conscious about Muslim dress.

Only 14.95 % out of 107 respondents opined that every Muslim should wear Muslim dress compulsorily. The effect of media, company with non-Muslim friends and modernization, can be seen in their dress pattern. Some Muslims said that Muslim children should be freed to wear Muslim dress at the schools if they want to wear. They should not be obliged to wear other dress compulsorily.

Muslim women these days wear similar dresses as other non-Muslim women wear such as Sari, Blouse, etc. They also wear Kurta, Salwaar and Dupatta. Kurta -Salwaar is famous among the Muslim women no matter they are old or young.

Sixty percent of the total male respondents reported that they liked to shave their facial hairs and 40 % were fond of beard and moustache. Those who wanted to shave their facial hairs opined that they felt comfort and handsome without facial hairs. Those who wanted to keep facial hairs were mostly old aged respondents and said that facial hair was the Muslim identity and they were proud of it.

CHAPTER VI

KATHMANDU MUSLIM WOMEN'S STATUS

This chapter tries to assess Muslim Women's economic, occupational and educational status. Similarly it tries to analyze the rights of Muslim women of Kathmandu. Muslim women's rights are determined by the Quran. This chapter comparatively analyzes their rights examining how Kathmandu Muslim women are following the text and what kinds of changes are prevailed.

6.1. Economic Status

Kathmandu Muslim women do not own an independent economic status, same as other women of Nepal, since Nepali women's economic status is always viewed through her husband's or parents' economic status. This can be because Muslim women don't have any kind of financial responsibilities. According to Islamic law, no economic responsibilities are imposed on her. She is not responsible for the support of her own children, her father or any other close relation. In fact, she doesn't have to support even herself since she is taken care by her father before her marriage, by husband after marriage and at her old age, she is looked after by her husband.

But, in practice, it is seen nowhere in Kathmandu valley that Muslim women are totally indifferent in playing vital role for the economic betterment of the family. Unlike other Muslim societies in the world, Kathmandu Muslim women are directly or indirectly involved in economic activities and are fully conscious about their familial economic conditions. They

are either involved in some kind of direct economic activities or support their male members to do so.

6.2. Educational Status

Educational status of Kathmandu Muslim women is very low. The following table shows the educational status of Muslim women in Kathmandu Valley.

Table- 15: Distribution of the Female Respondents according to Educational Status

Education	No. of women	Percentage
Illiterate	15	46.87
Primary	3	9.37
Lower secondary	3	9.37
Secondary	2	6.25
Intermediate	3	9.37
Bachelor	2	6.25
Home study	4	12.50
Total	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

It is a general trend in Kathmandu that Muslim girls are not allowed to get education up to higher level. They are either taught at *Madarasa* up to primary or lower secondary level or are forced to leave the further study and prepare for marriage. Girls from well-to-do families are arranged female home tutor for their study. The effect of education was directly seen in Muslim women while conducting field study. Those women, who had attended college education, were involved in occupations directly linked with public spaces, whereas most of the illiterates were housewives.

MY WONDERFUL MOMENT

“Stop her!”

“Don’t go ahead!”

“Don’t allow her to speak any more!”

Voices from the audience began to rise while she had just started speaking about the issues of divorce within Muslim society at a function in Academy Hall.

Among them were Maulanas and religious personalities who insisted against her speech. That’s why; she had to leave the stage in the middle of her speech.

Seema Khan (Pseudo name), 36, is often called “Taslima Nasarin” of Nepal. She holds the presidential position of Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Forum, which was established about

However, attitude towards female education is changing in Kathmandu Muslims. That is why; girls are, nowadays, given priority to get education.

6.3. Occupational Status

The word 'Occupation', in a broader sense, is directly linked with economic context. So, the economic status of an individual can be measured by his occupational status, to a wider context. It is generally thought that, higher the occupational status is owned, better the income is gained. Muslim women if compared with Muslim males are very few in numbers, who are engaged in the activities of outer spheres. Beside the religious restrictions there are other social and cultural prohibitions, which forbid Muslim women to come out of the private spheres. However, despite these situations, Kathmandu Muslim women are coming to the limelight. Mostly, educated Muslim women are engaged in public activities but there is still a huge mass of those women whose territory is within kitchen and house.

However, Kathmandu Muslim women are limited within the private spheres rather than public. Most of the Muslim women in Kathmandu valley either are engaged in the inner space of the house or are in a supportive role, which help their male members for the trading activities.

Table- 16: Distribution of the Female Respondents according to Occupational Status

Occupation	Age Group	No. of women	Percentage
House wife	25-75	16	50
Trading Activities	25-60	11	34.37
Teaching	25-40	4	12.50
Social Service	36	1	3.12
Total		32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2009

The trend of occupational status of the Kathmandu Muslim women can be analyzed from the above table. There are 16 Muslim women, who are mere housewives. This is 50% of the total females, sampled in the survey. The age ranges from 25 to 70 years. Women, involved in different trading activities like bangle selling, fruit shop, fish shop etc are in the second highest number. Four women are engaged in teaching profession and 1 is in social service. Age factor has played an important role. There is not a single Muslim woman above 60, who is involved in trading activities. All the women talked above 60, told that they were either taken care by sons and daughter-in-laws or by husband. Women, involved in trading activities are in a supportive role. They don't own their separate business; instead help husband or son on their business.

I WILL GIVE IT CONTINUITY

Having been severed from her husband, Abeda Ansari of 34 abides in her natal home, Bagbazar.

Her father, the proprietor of a saloon, had migrated to his wife's natal home when he got married. Ansari gained her education up to class eight at a private school in Kathmandu. After the accomplishment of the education up to class, she was sent to Lakhnow for her higher study where she had completed her intermediate level.

After the completion of her study of higher secondary level, she returned back to Kathmandu and started teaching in a private school, owned by her uncle. "Indeed, it was great assistance from my family in the process of performing tasks while doing job. Professor Habibullah, my uncle, especially encouraged and assisted me in teaching profession", says she. She had contributed her co-operation in the school for nine years.

Women involved in teaching profession are below the age of 40. This shows that educational status is an important factor for choosing profession in Muslim society. Women, involved in those professions, which are directly based on public spheres, are less in percentage, though the trend is positive. Participation of Muslim women beyond the private space is in increasing position, which is a positive change, observed by researcher during the field work.

6.4. A Look on Some Rights of Kathmandu Muslim Women

6.4.1. Right to Nikah

According to the respondents, the selection of spouse by a Muslim girl independently is almost forbidden. It is the guardians of the girl who play vital role in making decision for the marriage. However, it is said that Muslim girl should give her consent for the final acceptance. If she refuses the proposal, her decision becomes final.

Widow marriage or remarriage of a divorced woman is accepted in Islam. An explicit consent is necessary in the case of such marriages. However, in the case of a virgin girl, her silence is considered as her consent.

Here seems a paradoxical situation for a Muslim girl while choosing her future husband. A Muslim girl is generally denied the right to speak and express her opinion in any important issues, problems or decisions of life. She can't give her utterance to her own will or desire. In such circumstances, her parents understand her 'silence' as her consent for the marriage. Similarly, love marriage or marriage with non-Muslim for a girl is strongly denied.

These all rules have been followed more or less in Kathmandu Muslim society. Girls are not allowed love marriage. Not a single case of love marriage or inter-religion marriage by a girl was noticed during the fieldwork. Although it was said that there might be some such cases,

the whole Muslim society did not like to reveal. Even the key informants did not want to disclose such cases.

6.4.2. Right to Dowry

According to Islamic law, in order to give Nikah its validity, the bride has to be paid dower by the groom.

However, Muslim grooms nowadays in Kathmandu, demand dowry from the bride's natal home. This has, now, become a fashion among Kathmandu Muslims. Dowry system is prevailed in Most of the Nepalese tribes and Kathmandu valley hasn't remained apart from it. The economically high class Muslim families have an impromptu competition in receiving and giving dowers. It has really become hard for middle and low class Muslim families to maintain relationship due to dowry system.

Since the received gift by a bride is far less in comparison with the amount of gifts given to the groom, the rights of a Muslim girl to her dower has remained just in the rules, not in practice.

6.4.3. Right to Property

Kathmandu Muslim women's property right is quite different from the Islamic rules. Muslim society shows the legal aspects of not getting parental properties by a female member of the family. Since, Nepal's law is not in favour of such system, Muslim society blames Nepalese law while talking the right of Muslim women on parental properties. So, a Muslim woman in Kathmandu valley is totally deprived from the right of property except the gift she gets at her marriage.

It was found during the study that those women, who worked in the outer spheres, used to spend the earnings they made, to fulfil the household necessities or for the study of children rather than spending on their free will.

6.4.4. Right to Divorce

In Muslim society, marriage is regarded as a civil contract and as such can be dissolved. Therefore divorce is a natural corollary to the concept of marriage.

According to the key informants, before taking the final and desperate step, some attempts are made as follows:

- a) The two parties involved try to settle their disputes and solve their problems between themselves.
- b) If they fail, two arbitrators, one from husband's relations and other from the wife's commissioned to try to make peace between them and settle their differences.
- c) If this attempt also fails, divorce is applied.

While answering the question, "Who should have the right of divorce?" there are three alternative answers: the first option is both should have right of divorce, the second option is husband should be empowered to do so and the third option is women should have. Islam adopts the second option. In a Muslim family, husband is considered the supervisor, maintainer and bearer of the burden of responsibilities. So, Islam tells that husband has the right to decide whether it is possible to bear the burden of family responsibilities in collaboration with the wife or not. So generally speaking, there is more decisive role of a Muslim male in comparison with a Muslim female regarding divorce.

According to our key informants, Kathmandu Muslim society has not faced divorce (*Talak*) as a serious problem. The situation of *Talak* appears mostly in uneducated and economically poor families. So, if compared with other districts such as Mahottari, Saptari, Banke, Kathmandu Muslims almost don't face the problem of divorce. It is the cause, Kathmandu Muslim women are not generally tortured by *Talak*, however, these kinds of cases are solved internally if appear anywhere. So, the case of divorce doesn't come out from the family in Kathmandu. It was one of the reasons; the researcher could not find any such cases of divorce during his field work.

6.5. Veil System: A Glance at Kathmandu Muslim Women

The exposure of female body is considered a source of sensual pleasure to man in Islam. So, Islam emphasizes on modesty and avoidance of unnecessary beauty and adornment in order to attract men. It is thought that observing proper dress is not only the protection of own honour and reputation but contribution greatly towards peace and order in society. Islam justifies the reason behind wearing veil by Muslim women for chastity and their greater need of privacy and protection.

Except in the company of close relatives, a woman is required to cover her entire body with loose fitting garments with the exception of her face and hands. However, talking about Kathmandu Muslim women, *Hijab (Purdah system)* is not necessarily practised by them. Almost total change in reference with text can be seen in practicing Hijab in Kathmandu valley. The Purdah system in Islam is generally criticised for not letting Muslim women appear publicly. In this sense, Kathmandu Muslim women are free.

Although, veil system is not practised, Kathmandu Muslim women wear very simple dress. Influence of non-Muslim women can be seen in their dress pattern. Sari, blouse and Kurta-salwaar with *dupatta* are mostly worn by them. Few old ladies were found practising veil system though they are much less in number. Hence, in the context of Kathmandu, veil system (Hijab) has not remained anymore as an obstacle for Muslim women to make any public activities.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1. Summary

The study “Walking through the Path of Faith: A Study on Continuity and Change among Kathmandu Muslims from an Anthropological Perspective” was conducted in Kathmandu district aiming to assess the continuity and change of Muslims, the third largest religious group of Nepal at the study area. The study was carried out in the sequential steps of research methodology such as defining research problem, reviewing literature, designing research, collecting, analyzing and interpreting data and reporting. For the study, various research problems were identified to reach the goal of the research. The research aimed to find out socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Kathmandu Muslims. Similarly, it tried to describe change prevailed among Kathmandu Muslims on their different aspects. The research also aimed to show women’s status among Kathmandu Muslims in order to understand continuity and change.

Muslims have been residing in Kathmandu valley for about 600 years. After the entrance of Muslims as traders during Malla period, Muslims started living here as permanent residents. Muslims during the Malla and Shah Rulers had entered as businessmen, artisans, courtiers and cooks. However, at the time of Rana regime, they came here as refugees, whom Nepal had provided political asylum. Hence, Muslims became the permanent residents of Kathmandu valley.

There are mainly four types of Muslims according to their previous settlement history before their entrance in Kathmandu valley. Kashmiri Muslims are considered to be the first Muslims to enter in Kathmandu valley. They had entered in Nepal from Tibet during the rule of King Ratna Malla. Similarly, Muslims from Hill and Terai have come here; whose descendants are the Indian Muslims. Tibetan Muslims are other Muslim groups, who came in Kathmandu as refugees. These Muslims are very few in number.

Out of 10, 81,845 total population of Kathmandu Valley only 1.11% are Muslims. So, we can say that Muslims in Kathmandu Valley obviously fall on the minority groups by population. The female population constitutes only 31.49 % of the total Muslim population in Kathmandu. A Muslim is the follower of Islam. However, in the case of Kathmandu district,

the number of Muslim people is less than the population distribution according to religion (Islam).

Out of 11,982 total Muslim populations, only 107 (0.89 %) Muslims were chosen as the respondents. The highest number of male respondents was from the age group 35-44, whereas females were from 25-34.

The study also revealed that, 83.17 % out of 107 respondents were the permanent residents of Kathmandu valley, who were born here. These Muslims' ancestors had resided here up to the range of 3 to 20 generations.

The highest numbers of the respondent were engaged in trading activities. Their trading activities vary from bangle selling to computer dealers. Similarly, 63.55 % out of total respondents reported that their profession was changed in comparison with their ancestors. Similarly, 36.44 % reported that they had given continuity to their ancestral profession.

The study also shows that, 89.71 % out of 107 respondents were married and 10.28 % respondents were unmarried. All the 32 women were found married.

Talking about Kathmandu Muslims' performance on Islamic creeds, religious activities and celebration of Muslim Festivals, they are guided by the religion. Almost all of them used to attend Namaj, which shows continuity on their religious belief of praying.

However, changes can be seen on their socio-cultural aspects like attitude on education, marriage, family pattern, family planning, occupation, celebration of Non-Muslim festivals, food habit and dress pattern.

Talking about Kathmandu Muslim Women; unlike other Muslim societies in the world, Kathmandu Muslim women are directly or indirectly involved in economic activities and are fully conscious about their familial economic conditions. It is a general trend in Kathmandu that Muslim girls are not allowed to get education up to higher level. They are either taught at Madarasa up to primary or lower secondary level or are forced to leave the further study and

prepare for marriage. Girls from well-to-do families are arranged female home tutor for their study.

Educational status is an important factor for choosing profession in Muslim society. Women, involved in those professions, which are directly based on public spheres, are less in percentage, though the trend is positive.

Muslim women's rights have been determined by Islamic law. However, changes can be seen on those rights in the context of Kathmandu Muslims. Women are paying dowry to Grooms, which is opposite of the Islamic rule. Similarly, veil system is not practised among Kathmandu Muslim women, where the Islamic order is to practice veil.

In sum, this study reveals that Muslim Society of Kathmandu are able to maintain their religious identity, coping with the Non-Muslim society. They have also adopted some Non-Muslim practices, however, they have not given up any fundamental creeds of Islam.

7.2. Conclusion

Muslims are the third largest religious group by population if we go through the statistical data. Muslims are spread all over Nepal. They are known from different names in different parts of the country. Those who live in Hills are known as Hill Muslims and in Terai, they are known as Terai Muslims. Hill Muslims are also known as 'Churoute' (the bangle sellers), the name given to them according to their occupation. Similarly, there are also Kashmiri Muslims whose fore-fathers were entered from Kashmir and Tibet in Kathmandu valley. Tibetan Muslims were the refugees, whom Nepal had provided political asylum after the invasion of China over Tibet. All of these Muslims can be found in Kathmandu valley as permanent and temporary residents. Among a huge mass of permanent and temporary peoples in Kathmandu valley, Muslims in a small number, are always out of the limelight of every opportunities and the chances of benefits sharing. Besides that, they are in a situation of identity crisis. Kathmandu culture has become very liberal and Kathmandu is facing a rapid process of modernization, urbanization and westernization. So, in this context, Kathmandu Muslims' adaptive strategies are also noteworthy.

Kathmandu Muslims' attempts of continuation can be seen in their cultural and religious performances. They follow the religious activities according to the rules and orders of their religious texts. Similarly, fairs and festivals are celebrated as per the Islamic rules. However, some changes have been occurred on their daily lives. Their economic activities are influenced by the non-Muslim societies of Kathmandu valley. Similarly, change can be observed on the dress pattern, language, and their praying schedules. Attitudes of looking at Muslim women by the Muslim community have been changed.

Kathmandu Muslims's lives are influenced by two distinct factors: their religious fundamentals and their social setting. Islam, as their religion, is the internal factor which has shaped their religious identity. At the same time, the social setting they are living is a completely non-Muslim, that plays the role of external factor. Undergoing through these two factors, Kathmandu Muslims are maintaining their religious identity however; changes can be examined on their socio-cultural and economic practices.

7.3. Recommendation

The study identified the scope for further study on different aspects of Kathmandu Muslims. Upcoming researchers can focus their study on other aspects like detailed ethnographic study of Kathmandu Muslims or adaptation of Kathmandu Muslims on Non-Muslim setting. Similarly, they can find topic on changing occupational trends on Kathmandu Muslims or Women's changing position.

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ANNEX- 1: Interview Schedule

Walking through the Path of Faith: A Study on Continuity and Change among Kathmandu Muslims from an Anthropological Perspective

Section A: General Information:

Interview Location:

Interview Date:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Name of respondent: | 2) Address: |
| 4) Religious Sect: | 5) Age: |
| 6) Sex: | 8) Marital status: |
| 10) Number of family members: | 11) Contact No: |

Section B: Historical and Family Background:

- 12) How long have you been staying here in the Valley?
- 13) How long have your ancestors staying here in the Valley? generation
- 13.1) From where and when did you/your ancestors migrate?
.....
- 13.2) Do you know why did they migrate?
.....
- 14) What is your family structure? Nuclear Joint Extended
- 14.1) Which structure do you prefer and why?
.....

Section C: Marriage:

- 15) Whom did you marry (if you are married)? Muslim Non-Muslim
- And from where? Kathmandu Valley Out of Valley
- 16) Has any member of your family married with non-Muslims? Yes No
- If “Yes”, how many and in which caste?
.....
- 17) What is your perception towards inter-caste marriage in Muslim community?
Positive Negative No opinion
- Why?
.....
- 18) At what age did you marry?
- 19) What age do you think is the right age for marriage? Boy Girl
- Why?
- 20) What is your perception towards family planning?
Positive Negative No Opinion
- Why?
- 21) Do you use any family planning measures? Temporary Permanent
- None

Section D: Occupation/Profession:

- 22) What is your current occupation/profession?

 From how long?
- 23) What had been your ancestors' occupation/profession?

- 24) Is your occupation/profession run by yourself or somebody else?
 If others, Please mention
- 25) Are you satisfied with your occupation/profession? Yes No
 If 'No', what is your further plan?

- 26) Are you involved in other occupation/profession too? Yes No
 If 'Yes', what and why?

Section E: Economic Condition:

- 27) Who is the bread winner of your family?

- 28) How many people does/do s/he/you support?

- 29) Can s/he/you manage the family with the earnings made?

- 30) Does/do s/he/you save any?

Section F: Language:

- 31) Which is your mother tongue?

- 32) Normally, which language do you use to speak with other Muslims?

 And to speak with non-Muslims in Nepal?
- 33) How many languages are you able to speak, what are they and how efficiently?

<u>Language</u>	<u>Writing</u>	<u>Speaking</u>	<u>Reading</u>
<u>Urdu</u>
<u>Nepali</u>
<u>Newari</u>
<u>English</u>

- 34) Why did you learn to speak other languages?

- 35) What is its importance?

Section G: Festivals:

- 36) What are the major festivals of Muslims?

- 37) Do you celebrate all the festivals of Muslims? Yes No
 37.1) If 'No', which festival/s and why?

- 38) Do you invite/wish other non-Muslim neighbours/friends at your festivals? Yes No
 38.1) If 'Yes', do they participate? Yes No
 38.2) If they don't, (in your opinion) why?

- 39) Do you celebrate non-Muslim festivals? Yes No
 39.1) If 'Yes', which festival/s?

- 40) Do your non-Muslim neighbours/friends invite/wish you at their festivals? Yes No
 40.1) If 'Yes', do you participate? Yes No
 40.2) If you don't, why?

Section H: Mosques and Religious Activities:

- 41) Do you pray *Namaj*? Yes No
 How many times a day?
- 42) Where do you go for *Namaj*? why there?

- 43) How many mosques are there around your locality? (Please name them)

- 44) How often do you go to the mosque?

- 45) Are you a *Haji*? Yes No
 45.1) If 'Yes', how many times have you gone for *Haj*?

- 46) Are there other *Hajis* at your home? Yes No
 46.1) If 'Yes', who?

- 47) Can you read the holy *Quran*? Yes No
- 48) Do you follow *Shari'ah* Law?
- 49) Do you find any changes in the religious/cultural practices of Muslims in the Valley? Yes
 No
 If 'Yes', what and why?

Section I: Education:

- 50) Where did you go for study?
 Government School Private School Madarasa
 Other
- 51) Where the children (boys and girls) of your family go for study?
 Government School Private School Madarasa
 Other
- 52) What do you think boys/girls should go to conventional school or religious school?

 Why?

Section J: Food Habit and Dress Pattern:

53) Are you vegetarian or non-vegetarian?

54) What do you eat mostly?

55) What is your opinion taking intoxicant?

56) Which kind of dress do you wear normally?

57) Do you think Muslims should compulsorily wear their dress? Yes No
Why?

58) Do you think the young generation is more liberal in choosing/wearing dress? Yes No
In your opinion why?
.....

59) Do you shave your facial hairs (if male)?
Moustache Beard Both None
Why?

60) What do you say wearing veil by female Muslims?
.....

Section K:Others:

61) Do you think the urban Muslim society is changing? Yes No
If 'Yes', how?
.....

62) Do you think other communities influence the Muslim community in the Valley? Yes No
If 'Yes', how?
.....

63) Do you find any influence of other communities in your lifecycle? Yes No
If 'Yes', what?
.....

64) Do you think the Muslim community influences other communities in the Valley? Yes No
If 'Yes', how?
.....

65) How is your relationship with other non-Muslims?
Very Good Good Bad Very Bad No-Answer

66) Are you interested in Nepali politics? Yes No

67) Do you think the Muslim community is well represented in the Nepali Politics? Yes No
If 'No', what should be done?
.....

68) Do you think the policy of present government is favourable to your community? Yes No
If 'No', what should be done?
.....

69) How comfortable do you feel in the present Secular State?

.....

70) Do you think the young generation is able to maintain the Muslim identity?

Yes

No

How?

71) What is your opinion on International Muslim Movement?

.....

72) At last, what have you to say?

.....

ANNEX- 2: Checklist for Key Informants Interview

1. What is the historical background of Kathmandu Muslims?
2. What are the fundamental tenets of Islam that Kathmandu Muslims are following?
3. What is the present Socio-cultural and economic status of Kathmandu Muslims?

4. What aspects of Socio-cultural and economic factors are changed compared to that of the past?
5. How are Kathmandu Muslims coping with Non-Muslims?
6. What is the Kathmandu Muslim Women's status?
7. What aspects have been changed on Kathmandu Muslims' lives?

ANNEX-3: List of Key Informants

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Abeda Ansari | (Teacher, Indradhanush International School, Bagbazar). |
| 2. Atah Ullah Khan | (Secretary, Millet-E- Islamia, Ghantaghar). |
| 3. Mohammad Ashraff | (Secretary, Nepali Jame Mosque, Ratnapark). |
| 4. Mohammad Habibullah | (Professor, Tribhuvan University). |
| 5. Rahamtullah Miya | (Journalist, Press Council Nepal). |

6. Ramjan Ali Miya (Maulana and General Member of National Muslim Forum, Nepal).
7. Saied Nehal Shah (President, Kashmiri Taqia, Ghantaghar).
8. Seema Khan (President, Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Forum).

ANNEX-4: Distribution of Muslim Population in Nepal

S. N.	Districts	Total populatio n	Muslim population	%	S. N.	Districts	Total population	Muslim population	%
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1	Rautahat	545132	106111	19.47	39	Myagdi	114447	163	0.14
2	Banke	385840	73254	18.99	40	Gulmi	296654	419	0.14
3	Kapilvastu	481976	87573	18.17	41	Nuwakot	288478	384	0.13
4	Parsa	497219	76567	15.40	42	Bajura	100626	132	0.13
5	Mahottari	553481	74783	13.51	43	Kanchanpur	377899	386	0.10
6	Bara	559135	75051	13.42	44	Rukum	188438	141	0.07
7	Sunsari	625633	69187	11.06	45	Bajhang	167026	23	0.01
8	Rupendehi	708419	61563	8.69	46	Kalikot	11510	8	0.07
9	Dhanusha	671364	56124	8.36	47	Achham	231285	154	0.07
10	Saptari	570282	47610	8.35	48	Doti	207066	124	0.06
11	Sarlahi	635701	47364	7.45	49	Jajarkot	134868	80	0.06
12	Siraha	569880	40926	7.18	50	Terhathum	113111	66	0.06
13	Morang	843220	37081	4.40	51	Rolpa	210004	121	0.06
14	Nawalparasi	562870	21722	3.86	52	Dhankuta	166479	91	0.05
15	Jhapa	633042	19367	3.0	53	Kavre	385672	208	0.0

				6					5
16	Bardia	382649	10671	2.7 9	54	Solukhu mbu	107686	52	0.0 5
17	Kathman du	1081845	11982	1.1 1	55	Sindhuli	277259	132	0.0 5
18	Tanahu	315237	3227	1.0 2	56	Mustang	14981	7	0.0 5
19	Dang	462380	4610	1.0 0	57	Ilam	282806	127	0.0 4
20	Arghakha nchi	208391	1916	0.9 2	58	Jumla	69226	28	0.0 4
21	Gorkha	288134	2636	0.9 1	59	Khotang	231385	77	0.0 3
22	Chitwan	472048	3636	0.7 7	60	Panchth ar	202056	64	0.0 3
23	Kaski	380527	2620	0.6 9	61	Bhojpur	203018	55	0.0 3
24	Udayapur	287689	1735	0.6 0	62	Manang	9587	2	0.0 2
25	Syangja	317320	1835	0.5 8	63	Ramech hep	212408	44	0.0 2
26	Kailali	616697	3413	0.5 5	64	Taplejun g	134698	26	0.0 2
27	Surkhet	269870	1157	0.4 3	65	Dadeldh ura	126162	23	0.0 2
28	Lamjung	177149	712	0.4 0	66	Dolpa	22071	4	0.0 2
29	Salayn	60643	224	0.3 7	67	Okaldhu nga	156702	27	0.0 2
30	Palpa	268558	899	0.3 3	68	Sindhup alchok	293719	45	0.0 2

31	Makwanpur	392604	1264	0.32	69	Sankhuwasabha	159203	23	0.01
32	Lalitpur	337785	1053	0.31	70	Darchula	121996	12	0.01
33	Pyuthan	212484	645	0.30	71	Rasuwa	44731	3	0.01
34	Parbat	157826	392	0.25	72	Mugu	31465	2	0.01
35	Dhading	338658	625	0.18	73	Baitadi	234418	9	0.00
36	Baglung	268937	494	0.18	74	Dolakha	175912	5	0.00
37	Dailekh	225201	393	0.17	75	Humla	40595	1	0.00
38	Bhaktapur	225461	333	0.15		Total	22736934	954023	4.22

(Source: CBS Data, 2001)