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Secular Nepal: Understanding the Dynamics of Religious Nationalism and Secularism

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Abstract

This study has examined the process how Nepal became a secular state. Revolution for democracy in 2006 dethroned the King; Maoists waging decade long armed conflict signed a peace agreement and joined mainstream politics. Soon after the peace agreement Nepal “the only Hindu Kingdom in the world” with some 80% following inhabitants was officially declared a secular state. The case of Nepal is exceptional which moves from religious to secular country where the propensity is for more determined religious nationalism elsewhere. This study has sought to separate interdependent variables while attempting to explain secular change. Political instability, weak state capacity, illegitimacy of the ruler, external and internal pro-secular lobbying together made this change possible.

High level personal interviews conducted in Nepal in July 2015 are primary sources of this study. A widely held belief among a section of people is secularism was an interest of Western Christian Community and some Nepalese political actors are paid for it, therefore secularization is not acceptable in the country. Major political parties insist that the concept of secular state was the principle of communist/party, which in the past was suppressed by Hindu monarch. A section of non-Hindus consider secularism as contextual need and concept of interim constitution hence there is nothing more behind the secular change.

Findings suggest that Nepalese are mystified with the understanding of secularization and effects it may bring. Some opportunist political parties are now politicizing ‘religion’ to defend their positions. However, ‘Nepal as a Hindu State’ was one of the most recommended subjects received by the Suggestion Collection Committee after the draft of constitution was corresponded publicly. Numbers of mass protests and public gatherings were observed in various parts of the country to oppose recently promulgated ‘secular constitution’.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Constitutionally Nepal was always identified as a Hindu state.¹ Popular uprising for democracy in 2006 ousted the King bringing former Maoist rebels who waged a decade long civil war into mainstream politics through peace agreement. As a part of that deal, ‘the only Hindu Kingdom in the world’² with some 80% following inhabitants, Nepal was declared a secular state³. Despite multi-religious features, Nepal, a tiny South-Asian nation was broadly observed as one of the most religiously harmonious place in the world.⁴ Year 2006 was significant to Nepal for three different transitions: from civil war to peace; from autocratic monarchy to democracy and from Hinduism to secularism. Secularization was one of the crucial challenges for drafting process of new constitution in Nepal in 2015.⁵

Despite increasing scholarly discussion in secular/religious concept there is no uniform usage of this particular term, therefore it needs some clarification. For the purpose of this study I would accept a somewhat older definition of secularization. Secularization is defined as historical process in which religion loses social and cultural significance resulting the role of religion restricted in modern societies thus faith organizations are left with little social power.⁶ However, religious nationalism is the promotion or support for an assimilative, homogenizing national identity based on the ethos and culture of given religion.⁷ In other words, religious nationalism is the relationship of nationalism to a particular religious belief dogma or affiliation.⁸

Nepal was ruled by a Hindu Monarch for nearly two centuries and half until it came to an end in 2006. As said earlier, an interim government formed after the popular revolution in 2006 not only dethroned Gyanendra Shah but also the interim constitution drafted in March 2007 stated “Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, and inclusive and a fully democratic State.”⁹ Many non-Hindus citizenry happily welcomed this declaration and perceived it as a justice and recognition given to them by the state. *Statistical year book of Nepal 2013* shows Hinduism as the largest religion with 81.3 percent followers followed by

¹ The constitution of 1962 (article 3.1) and the constitution promulgated in 1990 (article 4.1) identified Hinduism as the religion of state.

² Gellner, D. N (1997) *Ethnicity and Nationalism in the World’s Only Hindu State*, p.3.

³ Nepal passes secular constitution amid protests

⁴ Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Harmony in Nepal

⁵ Rangdrol, 2007

⁶ Concepts of Religion in Debates on Secularization, p. 27

⁷ Religious Nationalism in a Global Age: The Case of Hindu Nationalism, pp. 141-142

⁸ Rangdrol, 2007

⁹ Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007

Buddhism 9.0 % , Islam 4.4 % , Kiratism 3% , Christians 1.4% and 0.9% others. Although many minorities and ethnic groups were satisfied with the declaration of the parliament many Hindus leaders instantly protested against the declaration of secular nation and demonstration and rallies were hold in various parts of the country.

1.1 Secularization: Global Brief

Religious nationalism has been often used as a strong factor for political interest. Gulf countries seem to be ‘one’ with the religion where Islam is the dominant religion in the region. This way, Islam seems as a factor and source for their unity. Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism are major religions in South and East Asian countries where religion is also regarded as foundation to enhance nationalism and increase political purposes. Islam in Pakistan, majority Hindus in India, Sri Lanka’s affection towards its monks, and terrorist activities against modern government in Afghanistan are the major examples of religious nationalism.¹⁰ Similarly various rebel groups with violent uprising in Myanmar against ‘Buddhist government’ and the popular protest of Buddhist monk in Thailand for a more religion-friendly nation are also the outcomes of the religious-secular motives.

As the purpose of this study is to investigate how Nepal a Hindu Kingdom turned into a secular nation, acknowledgement of the context around the world is significant. Albania, India, Turkey and most recently Nepal are the only countries in the world whose constitution officially mentions that they are secular nations.¹¹ In Nepal, after years of transition and amid protest of considerable Nepalese population against secularization, Nepal promulgated its new constitution on September 20, 2015. It mentions “Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state.”¹²

The word secular in the constitution now has been more controversial. Since, the article (4) contradictorily has further explained ‘secular’ as “‘For the purpose of this article, 'secular' means protection of religion and culture being practiced since ancient times and religious and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For Albania see: The Constitution of Albania 1991, Article 7, For India see: The Constitution of India 1950 , Preamble, For Turkey see: Constitution of Turkey, Article 2 and For Nepal see: Constitution of Nepal 2015, article 4

¹² Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Part 1, Article 4

cultural freedom.”¹³ One can argue this explanation of ‘secular’ as protection for religion and culture being practiced since ancient time means the state is still loyal to Hinduism and other indigenous religions that have been practiced nationwide and fair to other newly introduced religion and other religion which considerable Hindu population discuss as foreign. There is another point to note about its inherently diverse ethnic inhabitants, many of the ethnicities practice their own indigenous religion. An uprising in the name of ethnic movement was observed nationwide after the Maoists armed conflict ended with peace agreement. Among them a considerable number of ethnic groups were advocating for a secular state.¹⁴

1.2 The Nepalese Context

This study looks at the turn of a Hindu state to Secular with the hypothesis that there has been some monetary inducement by international authorities to Nepalese political parties. This concept mostly arose here due to two reasons. First, a segment of Nepalese people have shown their dissatisfaction against the declaration of secular state arguing the decision was made by a group of politicians without a due procedure where no consultation was made with the majority Hindu population. The Hindu section argument was that the introduction of secular idea was not only deceitful but also undemocratic. Second, Nepalese political parties were unable to rationalize that the very idea is transparent. The process of secularization was condemned by some Hindu authorities in such a way that they were reported to have said Nepal’s Secular fate was occurring just under an ugly architect of overseas powers.¹⁵

Furthermore, the number of Christian population have been increased rapidly after Nepal was turned secular and Hindu activists claim that it is happening due to force conversion of Hindus. Subedi has mentioned Christian conversation rate in 2013 was 8.74 percent against 2.19 percent population growth rate in Nepal.¹⁶ According to his article, ethnic movement in Nepal and the conversation scale have become the two wheel of the same cart as they share the same source of funding.¹⁷ This article further notes “It is claimed that *the Nepal*

¹³ Ibid. Article 4, Explanation

¹⁴ Some of these ethnic groups while protesting in the street shouted this slogan

¹⁵ Various interviews and press release from Hindu activists published and broadcasted in print and electronic media form the date of declaration to until the year 2015/2016

¹⁶ For details See: Envoy Sparks Storm Of Conversion Controversy; Ritu Raj Subedi, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/568>, Retrieved, 15.03.2016, Rising Nepal is the official and popular government daily newspaper, published by Kathmandu Nepal

¹⁷ Ibid.

Transition to Peace Fund that is backed by some Nordic and Western European nations who are promoting ethnic/indigenous cause and Christianity in Nepal simultaneously.”¹⁸

1.3 Religious- Secular Discourse in Nepal

The term secularism refers to the notion that states should remain separately from any religion or religious beliefs. However it is not easy for any state to completely be free from belief system given its historical, cultural and religious upbringing. Hindu religion has a long history in socio-political practices in Nepal. The strength of Hinduism in Nepal enjoyed and relied in following four pillars, “the unquestioning power and authority of the Hindu King of Gorkha, the supremacy of Hindu ethos in national life, social integration through Hindu social system based on caste division, and recognition of Nepali as the language of government, administration, and in more recent times, education.”¹⁹ Scholar Rabindra Khanal in his paper *Secularism: in Nepal an Assessment of Future Challenges* writes the concept of secularism is two dimensional approach. He articulates that, “externally imposed secularism and a reactive Hindu nationalism that claims to be based in indigenous political culture, both of these dimensions need to be balanced while discussing the challenges of secularism in Nepal.”²⁰ Nepalese society is socially complex given its ethical, moral and traditional values based in Hindu religion which is supported by state itself. Therefore, centuries long ethos and values will not allow NGO induced secularism to be successful.²¹ That said, although Nepal is declared as secular in the constitution state’s association with religious issues are difficult to transform. On the other hand, minority religious groups such as Christians are looking forward more privileges from the government in exercising Christianity in the country. Hinduism is prone to caste system where Christianity is getting popular among those who feels suppressed by the caste hierarchy. In secular Nepal, a balance between these two extremities do not seem easy.

Continuous street protests, and demonstrations against the declaration of secular state Hindu activists in recent years clearly marks that one section of the population in the country are not happy with the declaration. The most sensational debate ongoing in Nepal today is multi-cultural features of any society should be addressed by its authority but it should not humiliate the majority in the name of change.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Rangdrol, 2007, *Religious Nationalism in Nepal*

²⁰ Rabindra Khanal in his paper *Secularism: in Nepal an Assessment of Future Challenges* 2013

²¹ Ibid.

Therefore, secularism in Nepal has raised numerous questions and confusion among the citizen and policy makers regarding the acceptance of secularism where large section of population follow Hinduism widely in their socio-cultural activities.²² Since, Nepal was ruled by several Hindu Monarchs for two and a half centuries and there is a significant interconnections between society and religion where Hinduism continues to dominate the various societal and cultural dimension of the community. The state continues to control over trusts and regulates temples and foundations spending huge amount of budget on religious rituals and functions.²³ Despite declaration of secularism cow slaughter and conversion of religion are still punishable by law and Hindu communities still widely perceive Christianity as ‘cow eating religion.’

1.4 Secularism: A Contested Term

As discussed earlier, secularism has become a contested topic among the scholars of social science. For an ordinary observation it has been common discussion among the social scientists that secularization is a decrease in terms of religious belief as a result of increase in interaction with the various aspects of modernization such as individualism.

However, drawing on the work of Gole Letizia articulates the discourse of secularism has switched to ‘an unpacking of security as a religious-free neutral and universal development of European modernity.’²⁴ She has further mentioned, ‘secularization makes sense only within the context of a particular historical transformation of western European Christianity: the generalization of secularization as a universal process correlated with modernization and transferred to other world religions and other cultural areas is highly problematic.’²⁵

When it comes to Nepal’s case a section of people mostly ethnic minorities who are following Buddhism and Kiratism were along the Christians who marched for secular Nepal. Therefore it can be acknowledged that religious activism adopted by these minority religious and ethnic groups and their voices for secular Nepal are connected. But neither state nor these actors who favor secularism seem to have no commitment for what kind of secularism they are interested in and how they are going to implement it amid large section of Hindu population

²² Letizia, *Shaping Secularism in Nepal*, 2012, 67.

²³ *Ibid*, 68.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 70.

²⁵ *Ibid*.70

who are unhappy with this decision. Farsightedness and action plan among all actors involved is dire in order to mitigate further damage that this ideological differences may bring.

1.5 Statement of Problem

This study focuses on the process that turns Nepal to a Secular state in 2006. It is to deepen the understanding about the growing interventionist acts of foreign power structures in the land of Nepal and evaluate to the degree of which policy makers of Nepal were attracted by international elements. It particularly emphasizes on the curiosity that the possibility of monetary inducement that might have attracted the politician while declaring a Hindu nation as Secular.

1.6 Research Questions

Theoretically this study explains how the Hindu religion was weakened to the extent it fails to oppose secularization in the country. The main question to answer in this study is, how Nepal became a secular nation? In order to look at various dimensions of this process and explain further the interest behind secularization this study possess following overarching questions:

- a. How the process of Secularization started, and adopted in the interim constitution in 2007?
- b. Who were the actors involved at the time of declaring secularism in Nepal?
- c. How political parties leaders and policy makers response about their motivation in declaring Nepal as a secular country?
- d. Has there been any international resistant, inducement or influence in Nepal to make it a secular nation?

1.7 Organization of the study

In the beginning this study has discussed introduction and history of Nepal which has unfolded its social, cultural and religious roots since the creation of Nepal in 18th century. The second chapter has offered specific background about the origin and development of Christianity in Nepal in connection to its fast growing followers. Chapter three has described methodological frameworks along with tools and techniques and opportunities and challenges of the research. Similarly, chapter four has outlined the theoretical framework within the religious-secular discourse and interest and motivation of 'secular' project in inserting

secularism in Nepal. With reference to all four chapters discussed, chapter five has shown typical data collected, its analysis and major findings.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Second chapter presents the background of the context to this study. Chapter three discusses the Methodological issues adopted in this study. Fourth chapter builds the theoretical framework. Chapter 5 presents the answer to the research question and highlights the findings of the research. The final chapter summarizes the study as well as presents significant recommendations.

Chapter 2: Background Information

2.1 Introduction

Despite centuries of European colonial advancement Nepal struggled to stay hermit and isolated from any foreign invasion. This chapter unfolds short history as well as the persistency afforded by the Kingdom to remain as “Chosun” throughout the era of imperialism with rest of the world. Further it introduces Nepal as an isolated country and provides information on how Christianity was exported to this Land and its advancement from a handful presence of Christian followers to surprisingly large numbers in a short period of time. It also explores on why Christians dislike Nepal is an official Hindu Country and strive to see it as a secular country. In so doing, I have partitioned the whole history of Nepal into three stages between the timeline of 1769 and 2006.

According to the history, King Prithivi Narayan Shah who hailed from a small Kingdom in Gorkha (a district in contemporary Nepal some 140 kilometer from the capital Kathmandu) conquered many scattered tribal kingdom and united the land as Nepal in 1769.²⁶ Since then Shah dynasty had remained as the head of the state until the last King Gyanendra Shah who was overthrown by a popular peoples uprising in 2006. Nepalese political history has passed through an interplay between the absolute Monarchy, the pro-democracy political parties and the family regime of Rana. Shah dynasty was at their absolute ruling until 1846 before Rana’s autocratic regime dominated the monarchy. Rana hereditary regime not only put the monarch in bay but also block Nepal from outside world for the purpose of their vested interests.²⁷

Meanwhile an anti-rana movement based in India alliance with the King as a result Rana regime was overthrown in 1951. Thus a multi-party system was adopted as soon as King Mahendra sworn the crown in 1959. Soon next year in 1960 King Mahendra again suspended the newly elected parliamentary force and imposed sole rule of monarch which later held an election under the monarch administration and form a ruling system called Panchayat system.²⁸ The Panchayat is an advisory council of people who favored absolute monarchy in the country. This was in brief about the three stages how the political course was exercised among the active Monarch, Rana Regime and the democratic political forces. Now, in the next paragraph, I have outlined when Christianity had entered and how it flourished in Nepal.

²⁶ For an overview of the timeline of the history of Nepal please see <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391> , Retrieved on 2016.3.10

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Western Christian missions have been repeatedly condemned as sole and only responsible force to impose secularism in Nepal by the supporters of pro-Hindu activists.²⁹ It is for the purpose of the hypothesis in this study that political parties in Nepal have been influenced by the Christian World, here I have attempted to dig out some facts and figures on Christianity in Nepal.

2.2 The Dawn of Christianity in Nepal and Struggle for Religious Freedom

John Barclay in *The Church in Nepal: Analysis of its Gestation and Growth* writes that Father Cabral a Jesuit priest was the first recorded Christian to visit Nepal in 1628. He further articulates that Malla rulers of the Nepal Valley³⁰ permitted some Capuchin monks to stay in their kingdom in 1715 but once Mallas were conquered by Shah in 1769 all of those residing were deported and all converted Christian nationals were also expelled to neighboring India.³¹ As mentioned earlier Nepal was closed land for all foreign entrance and so for the Christians for almost two centuries i.e. until 1950. Since Nepal was open for outside world various western organization started to operate in the land with various ‘community development’ works. One of them is, United Mission to Nepal (UMN), which is a Christian non-government organization working exclusively in Nepal from 1954.³² Plenty of scholars have commented that Christian individuals and organizations at different points of time have faced difficulties in operating their missions which results in unclean record of inter-faith tolerance. David Rangdrol brings the annual report from Hudson Institute of Religious Freedom where Nepal was ranked at poor position in the issue of religious freedom.³³ He further interprets an opinion poll which discovered 65 percent of people from non-Hindus background voted on the option that only a secular state can guaranty the freedom and rights of minority religion in the country.³⁴ Christians and other pro-secular section in the country have found themselves dominated and ostracized from the majority and therefore they always looked for a much comfortable existence. Christianity in Nepal may have struggled so much under a Hindu monarch and always waiting for a right time for a breakthrough, and they have finally found

²⁹ Interview notes, 2015

³⁰ Until Prithivi Narayan Shah annexed tiny tribal states along the Himalayas, the Mallas ‘chieftain and petty rulers’ used to rule over the Nepal valley, today’s capital Kathmandu was known as Nepal valley and was further divided into three tiny kingdoms named Kantipur, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur until those Gorkhali conquered and unified as Nepal along with other similar 80 scattered kingdoms

³¹ Barclay, John. "The church in Nepal, (2009) 189.

³² <http://www.umn.org.np/page/our-history>

³³ Op cited, Rangdrol 2007, 45

³⁴ Ibid. 45.

the track in 2007. The suffocation of; perhaps living as a ‘second class’ religion must have motivated them to raise their voices for a secular state.

2.3 Maoists Civil War and Its Consequences

End of active Monarch which was also far known as the Panchayat system³⁵ followed by multi-party democracy offered the land with many possibilities for freedom of expression. Mushrooming communist ideology had drawn Nepal into a height of political and social awareness. One of the dominant characteristics of Hinduism the caste system arrived in the major debate. The reality of social exclusion came in the surface. With most popularity gained by the communist parties one of the front later named as Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) lunched an armed struggle in 1990 urging their demands submitted by the political front of CPN (Maoist) United People's Front with the coalition government headed by Nepali Congress party.³⁶ Maoist rebellion which was started with limited traditional arms and soon accelerated in the hills of western Nepal and became popular among marginalized communities. Most of the Hindu activists in Nepal refer Maoists as the seed for the demise of Hindu Nation since Maoists also demanded for a secular Nepal in one of their demands.

2.4 Role and Relevancy of ‘Christianity’ for Secular Nepal

Despite decades of promotion and conversion, Christianity in Nepal continues to remain fifth largest religion.³⁷ In Nepal Christians are active in the promotion of religion, in Kathmandu they often knock the door of individual and families with the Gospel of God in their hand as well as distribute Bible in the streets suggesting the ‘Enlightenment’ through Jesus. One can argue Christians are desperate to convert people and increase followers. Their efforts have been significant for the growth of Christianity in recent years. In an article published in National Public Radio Danielle Preiss writes, with no Christian in record in 1951 to only 458 in 1961 Christian believers have increased from 10200 in 2001 to 3, 75000 in 2011.³⁸ These numbers are according to the national census of the country that is conducted every ten years. However, Christians have been seen increased rapidly during pick hour of Maoist armed

³⁵ Panchayat was the party-less political system adopted by King Mahendra in 1962 which lasted until the popular people’s uprising led by democratic forces in 1990

³⁶ For an overview of Maoist forty points demands

http://www.humanrights.de/doc_en/archiv/n/nepal/politics/130299_40demands_Maoist.htm

³⁷ According to the 2011 census, 81.3% of the Nepalese population was Hindu 9.0% was Buddhist, 4.4% was Muslim, 3.0% was Kiratis, 1.42% was Christian , http://cbs.gov.np/publications/statisticalyearbook_2013

³⁸ <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/02/03/463965924/why-nepal-has-one-of-the-worlds-fastest-growing-christian-populations>, Retrieved on 15.03.2016

struggle and after the country turned to secular in 2006. On the other hand Christian activists and leaders have shown strong dissatisfaction about the reliability of the census urging the numerical value of the Christians has been highly manipulated as well as underestimated by the census data.³⁹ Both C. B. Gahatraj who is also the general secretary of the Federation of Nationals Christian Nepal (FNCN) and Dr. K. B. Rokaya general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Nepal agreed that the minority numbers have been grossly underestimated.⁴⁰ Gahatraj urged they have a proof of 2.5 million registered followers from 8,500 Churches and the census have limited them with about 300,000 in numbers. Similarly Rokaya puts the result of census as visible manipulations.

A plausible reason minority religions give while favoring a secular state over a Hindu state is that they have been ostracized in the society. Scholars like Hansung argues individual Christians were persecuted by the government and the community in the past. Although the number of churches have increased, Christian leadership and scholarship lacks far behind.⁴¹ Hansung, however notes that due to shortage of opportunities of theological training in Nepal for the pastors the leadership remains weak. He also argued that churches and Christians in Nepal have been attacked in recent years. Citing the work from a Nepalese Scholar Monika Tamsina Hansung has written, Nepal Defense Army had killed a Roman Catholic priest in 2008 and a Bomb attacked in a Catholic Church in Lalitpur had killed three and injured fourteen.⁴² Hansung has further written, a leader from church was also killed by a Hindu in 2013 and several other incidents of such kinds are occurring in the post-Hindu Kingdom.⁴³ Due to Hindu dominant society Christians in Nepal are ostracized even at the funeral, as they often find it problematic to locate for a burial site for their passed away family members.⁴⁴ Orthodox socio-cultural practices and prerequisites of Hindu society have been dominant enough to isolate Christian and has afforded inter-religious harmony remain well hostile when it comes to the ‘Gospel’. Therefore, the minority section often believed that a secular state will certainly give them some ‘fresh air’ to breathe. Christians in Nepal may have struggled for secular Nepal thinking it will adopt some limitation on the ‘psychological atrocities’ from Hindus and gives them more religious freedom.

³⁹ Fernando Perez, (2012) Census in Nepal Marks 2.3 Million Christian as Hindus , http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=66&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1688 Retrived 22.03.2016

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Kim, H. (2013). A Missiological Accessment of the State and Christianity in Nepal.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Kim, H. (2013). A Missiological Accessment of the State and Christianity in Nepal.

Nepalese politics has also shown its disrespect and unfriendliness towards the ‘Gospel of Jesus’ and influenced Christian missions and Church. As Hansung argues, “Nepal is one of the exceptional nations that refused the Christian gospel persistently until recently, presumably next to North Korea, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.”⁴⁵ In Nepal as articulated by Hansung, the fate of Christianity was hinged by ‘Kings’ and political parties who dislike the mission. The commitment and efforts of Christians and mission spreading Christianity in Nepal shows that they were frustrated with the Hindu Kingdom and at the same time hopeful and consistent that fortune will come their way.

Even at the National census, as Dr. Rokaya says some households were found where enumerators did not visit and also they decided the person having Hindu Name⁴⁶ as a Hindu and therefore marked it without asking and same happened to his wife. He further said the preliminary result of the census showed there were 2 million Christians and the final result which was unexpectedly delayed for 14 months marked the number only to 375,699.⁴⁷ Previous censuses were also criticized for being conducted under Hindu Monarch and people still want to identify as Hindu due to existing discrimination against minority faiths. There are number of reasons why Christians have voiced for a secular nation, but on the top of all it is for more religious freedom to ensure more grounds to exercise and spread the religion.

2.5 Factors Triggering Conversion

It is still rational to acknowledge the fact that Christian population in Nepal has reached to more than 2 percent of the total with no or 1 recorded believer in 1950. Although the purpose of this study is to find how Nepal became a secular nation factors that contribute in growth of Christianity are assessed as necessary elements to understand the interest of all involved. The Panchayat era (1962-1990) was fertile period for the beginning of the ambiguity. Nepal remained as a poor nation during the Monarch era and still remain poor with total population of 26.85 million of which some 25 percent population living under the poverty line.⁴⁸ On the other hand its ethnic diversity and harsh geography and extreme climate make living more

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Being dominated by the Hindu culture: there is a common trend in Nepal that parents and the priest agree to name a newborn with a name similar to the name of God. Having some 33million God in Hinduism and a single God further addressed with multiple names most of the Nepalese end up with the name that represent one of the many Gods of Hinduism or related to God

⁴⁷ Fernando Perez, (2012) Census in Nepal Marks 2.3 Million Christian as Hindus ,

⁴⁸ Asian Development Bank Report, 2014

measurable.⁴⁹ Barclay has put forward several factors contributing to the growth of Christian population amidst socio-economic plight of country. United Mission to Nepal (UMN)⁵⁰ expanded in rural Nepal as new fellowships and churches following the development activities of the King in Early 1950s.⁵¹ First of its two characteristics is “it is truly a united mission of people from many organizations, denominations and parts of the world joined together in the name of Christ to serve Nepal, alongside Nepali colleagues.”⁵² However independence of these churches, instead, intensified by mission leaders as they were subjected to various restriction and constraints by the government. Prohibition of conversion, and reality of prosecution continuously strengthened the church, young and vibrant converts enlightened with the evangelistic merits resulted in family and mass conversion among ethnic groups.⁵³ To add, some retired and converted Gurkha Soldiers⁵⁴ who were introduced with the Gospel of Jesus during their service in Britain also influenced their communities back home.

By contrast, Christian community in Nepal has been mostly criticized on the ground that as soon as Nepal became secular thousands of people were converted to Christian through financial attraction. Center for the study of Global Christianity Nepal states in its report 2013 Nepal is the fastest Christianity increasing nation in the world and predicts that the Christian population in the country will reach as much as twice in another six and half years.⁵⁵

The pope of Vatican is serious in reaching their target of bringing one hundred million people in the path of Jesus by 2025 in Asia alone. Ritu Raj Subedi writes, the target of this mission is difficult to achieve not only by handing Gospel of Jesus in the hand of its prospective followers and also not necessarily need to be purchased to the fold. He further states, “who change their faith voluntarily or after gaining enlightenment from other religions, may not be higher. Until certain enticements and inducements are offered to the people, a large scale of conversion is not possible. As the above report disclosed, the rate of conversion is high among the indigenous people. There cannot be any suitable constituency than the ethnic, Dalit

⁴⁹ Nepal is home for 125 ethnic groups, National Population Census 2011

⁵⁰ Following the revolution that opened the country, a group of expatriate missionaries in India were granted permission from the Nepali government to open a hospital in Tansen and to start women's and children's welfare clinics in the Kathmandu Valley. Subsequently, UMN was founded in 1954 as an international interdenominational Christian mission.

⁵¹ Barclay, John. "The church in Nepal, (2009) 191.

⁵² <http://www.umn.org.np/page/our-history>

⁵³ Barclay, John. "The church in Nepal, (2009) 192

⁵⁴ Nepalese serve in British Army under Gurkha Regiment

⁵⁵ Ritu Raj Subedi , <http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/568>, Retrieved on 2016.03.24

and impoverished hinterland for the religious hawks to prey on.”⁵⁶ Mushrooming churches in Kathmandu valley and along the hills and mountainous region are home for conversion. Although conversion of religion is illegal and subject to punishment according to the law, political instability, low state capacity and weak enforcement of law continue to encourage proselytizers.

2.6 Post-Earthquake Consequences 2015

A massive earthquake hit Nepal in April 2015 killing some 9000 people, injuring as many as double and leaving hundreds of thousands people homeless. Filling up the gap of politically instable country with a low government capacity to overcome this sudden disaster many aid agency and groups quickly cleared their way to the outskirts of valley where the catastrophe had hit its hard. Various criticism were apparent during the rescue and relief of Nepal’s Earthquake 2015, that many of these aid agencies were found distributing bible and selling the message of salvation.⁵⁷ Although these incidents added ambiguity and controversy, competitions on distributing aid along with faith have lighten how desperate were Christian missionaries on spreading their cause. This statement by no means is against the aid agencies who helped in difficult situation. Nevertheless, a solid attention is needed to investigate whether or not missionaries were misguided by the donor and Christian missionaries in promoting Christianity for a wider understanding of this phenomena. Following three elements can be viewed as the reasons behind the fast growing of Christianity in Nepal. First, prolonged political transition and weak state, second Hindu religion being discriminative in the issues of caste hierarchy and third strategic imperialistic policy of Christians to grow their religion.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ <http://www.opindia.com/2015/04> ; Pictures and news from Nepal after the massive earthquake shocked people across the globe, but amidst all these chaos, tragedies and cry, Christian Missionaries were busy selling Jesus and Christianity.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on methodological approaches that I have adopted during this research. Primarily it focuses on the broad philosophical underpinning of the methods, tools and techniques and data analysis method. This chapter also emphasizes on the strengths and weaknesses of the method chosen while collecting data in Kathmandu, Nepal from June through July 2015. Fieldwork experiences and reflections are also included in this chapter. Due to the sensitivity of the research question various limitations were inevitable, however being the national of the same country was a tremendous advantage to influence the data collection process and its analysis.

Methodology in research is essential for making a study systematic and scientific. It describes the approach of collecting evidence and indicates the types of tools and techniques used during data collection.⁵⁸ Research methodology in a way, summarizes the research process that foretells how the research will proceed and it begins with the choice of research paradigm that signifies the study. Bagele projects research methodology to be, "guided by philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values and the theoretical framework that informs comprehension, interpretation, choice of literature, and research practice on a given topic."⁵⁹ I have a solid understanding of Nepalese politics and history which has enabled me to comprehend the recent change of Nepal from a Hindu Kingdom to a secular republic. Relevant theories and existing literatures on the subject matter are reviewed while answering the research questions.

3.1 Definition

Despite increasing interest on concept of religious nationalism there is no uniform usage of this particular term, therefore it needs clarification. Religious nationalism is the promotion or support for an assimilative, homogenizing national identity based on the ethos and culture of given religion.⁶⁰ In other word, religious nationalism is the relationship of nationalism to a particular religious belief dogma or affiliation. And, secularization refers to the historical

⁵⁸ Cavaye, A. L. (1996). *Case study research: a multi-faceted research approach for IS. Information systems journal*, 6(3), 227-242.

⁵⁹ Bagele, C. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. 161.

⁶⁰ Religious Nationalism in a Global Age: The Case of Hindu Nationalism, pp. 141-142

process in which religion loses social and cultural significance resulting the role of religion restricted in modern societies thus faith organizations are left with little social power.⁶¹

3.2 Study Area

I visited the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, a mountainous landlocked country sandwiched between two giant nations China and India with an area of 147, 181 square kilometers. In spite of its small territory, Nepal shares a diversity of landscapes from snow-capped mountains to the fertile basins in southern region called Terai which has enriched the country with diversity.⁶² Nepal is yet to go for final federal settings as mentioned in the new constitution, which was promulgated on September 2015.⁶³ Kathmandu is the capital city and most of the administrative works rely at the center which was always criticized by the federalists. I have conducted interviews with respondent in Kathmandu. According to the National Census Report 81.3 percent of Nepalese population were Hindu followers, followed by 9 percent Buddhist, 4.5 percent Muslims and 1.4 percent Christian.⁶⁴ Distribution of population by religion is mentioned here for its relevance with the project and expected to guide the purposes of this study.

3.3 Informant Size and Selection

Corbetta suggests that selection of prospective respondents is key to research and should be done with reference to their knowledge and features in the subject matter, “their belonging to certain social categories or having been through some particular experience.”⁶⁵ Therefore, being professionally competent on the subject of the research, informant will add in generating quality data. In this regard, interviewees were identified and selected with reference to their influential potentiality over the questions asked in the research project. Scholarly books, collection of reputed newspaper articles and press notes were rigorously studied while determining the fellow respondents. I was able to contact and ask questions to seven out of ten people who were expected to have good knowledge and experience about the subject matter.

⁶¹Rangdrol, 2007

⁶² <http://cbs.gov.np/atlas/tables.html?chapter=2&table=2.1>

⁶³ Constitution of Nepal 2015 Promulgated

⁶⁴ <http://cbs.gov.np/atlas/tables.html?chapter=2&table=2.1>

⁶⁵ Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social research: Theory, methods and techniques*. Sage. (265)

In total, 14 person were interviewed. Three of them were suggested by the interviewees for having concrete knowledge about the subject and purpose of my study, therefore I considered them for snowball sampling. Out of fourteen informants, six of them are political party's leaders representing four major political parties of Nepal. Five others informants are persons from faith-based organizations - two of them from Church, two from Hindu religion and one from Muslim community. I also interviewed one government secretary at Home Ministry as well as two prominent academician/researcher on the field of social science. This diversity of respondent was important and significantly become reliable source in generating valuable information from diverse ideology, sector and belief.

3.4 Recruitment of Interviewees

Nepal is yet to go for the implementation of new federal system as mandated by the new constitution. Therefore, capital Kathmandu is still the home for most of the major political parties and their various exercises. Every major political parties have their party offices at Kathmandu and they are available in-person around the valley. However, as most of the interviewees were prominent leaders, it was very challenging to find their time for interviews. Since I was conducting such high-level interviews for couple of times earlier, I do have learned some skills on how to connect with them. To say the least, many of these informants were already familiar with me as I've had conversation with them in previous occasions too whilst working for some international research projects as a freelancer. I also had an updated telephone number of most of these politicians and I was well known with their home addresses and party offices. These past experiences helped me a lot in approaching my interviewees. On the other hand, Kathmandu is relatively a small and congested city with poor traffic management, so it was a challenge for me to confirm the meetings within scheduled time. However, I was fortunate enough to do this all.

3.5 Gaining Access for Interviews

While conducting a qualitative research, it is equally important for the researcher to plan about gaining the field access since most of the researchers spend significant time on it.⁶⁶ One of the important aspects of gaining the field access includes the act of getting in touch with the potential informants and convincing them for the required information by building

⁶⁶ Johl, S. K., & Renganathan, S. (2010). *Strategies for gaining access in doing fieldwork: Reflection of two researchers.*

rapport. Nevertheless, gaining access is not so simple and doesn't always go simply as planned. This happened to me during travels to interview sites due to traffic and also as informants rescheduling their meetings in every telephone call. This is very rational that it requires the "combination of strategic planning, hard work and dumb luck."⁶⁷ I frequently contacted my respondents via telephone in case of such unforeseen problems. In a nutshell, I could manage the access as I wasn't required to obtain a national research permits and I had not language barrier.

3.6 Data Collection Techniques: Qualitative Method

Research method is plan of actions for collecting data in an efficient as well as systematic and scientific way.⁶⁸ It was based on the descriptive approach and as said earlier this study employed qualitative data collection. Primary aim of qualitative research is to obtain an accurate profile of the people, events or situations.⁶⁹ Furthermore, regarding the size of my informants, I did not go for the huge size of my informants and thus I conducted intensive interviews with mere 14 people. It has been articulated that the sample size in qualitative research should not be too large that creates difficulty in extracting the essence from dense data.⁷⁰ By contrast, Sandelowski notes that numbers too are important to ensure the adequacy of sampling strategy therefore sample should not be too small for the analysis and data saturation. It is my understanding that interview size I noted for is appropriate since I am conducting a qualitative interviews for master thesis. I also had limited time and funding to go for large scale of respondents. As qualitative research is vital for understanding how human behavior is intentional and meaningful for it actors as this method well interprets the existing texts and collects human actions through fieldwork. The power of qualitative research lies only on the strength of its exploratory and explanatory structure, which requires a rigorous methodological framework during every steps of the research process, which includes but not limited to research design, fieldwork and interpretation of data.⁷¹ In my research, I have collected information through personal interviews with well-organized field notes, which are to be analyzed while writing research findings.

⁶⁷ Van Maanen, J., & Kolb, D. M.(1985). *The Professional Apprentice: Observations on Fieldwork Roles in two Organizational Settings*.11.

⁶⁸ Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices, p. 38

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 23

⁷⁰ Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). *Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron?. Quality & Quantity*. 242.

⁷¹ Attride, . *Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. Qualitative research*, 1(3)

Qualitative research does not remain neutral as in the views of some scholar and it narrates personal impression and therefore equip researcher with bias.⁷² Mays and Pope write that qualitative method is full of personal problems and there is a higher chance of reaching to different conclusions researcher to researcher.⁷³ Despite of these criticisms significant number of quality theories have been derived through qualitative method therefore policy audience have been benefited with the advancement of various social cultural and human related avenues.

Regarding the context of social science research, usually, qualitative, quantitative and mixed research approaches are used, however, the researcher needs to apply the appropriate methodological approach based on the essence of required research question.⁷⁴ I am incorporating with the descriptive qualitative research method in order to gather the required data for my research. Data collection is one of the significant aspects to be taken into consideration and probe along the ethics in the field of a qualitative research. The techniques that I have adopted in order to gather the primary data for my project are illuminated below:

3.6.1 Data Collection Techniques

Interview is one of the key tools for qualitative researchers, and indeed a large proportion of social science investigations rely on interview data.⁷⁵ Bryman writes that semi structured interview as "a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview guide but is able to vary the sequences of the question."⁷⁶ In my case, the interview was not a prepared set of standard questions rather it was a well formulated interview guide with the list of topics and issues I was interested to comprehend. As mentioned earlier, I conducted personal interviews with high-level officials during my fieldwork and interviews are the only primary source of information in this research. Questions asked in the interviews were open ended and I had to listen much of the respondents personal stories about in their political and organizational carrier, which ended up with two hours long interviews. However, average time spent per interviewee is one and half-hour. I formulated the interview guide in way that vary from one person to another according to their profession, belonging or faith. It made the interviews more specific and right kind was

⁷² Masue, O. S., Swai, I. L., & Anasel, M. G. (2013). *The Qualitative-Quantitative 'Disparities' in Social Science Research*.

⁷³ Mays, N., & Pope, C. (1995). *Qualitative research*.

⁷⁴ Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, And Practices, p. 104

⁷⁵ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 699

⁷⁶ Ibid.

question was asked to the relevant person according to interviewee's experience. I took notes while they spoke. I did not use recorder during these interviews because in my previous experience respondent were uncomfortable while I ask their consent if I wanted to record the interview.

Interviews are conducted with an aim of avoiding inaccuracy within a cross-sectional design which is expected to add to high degree of validity and reliability.⁷⁷ Interviews are generally authentic source of information as researcher goes to the interview sites with an attempt of getting the right information directly from the participant point of view.⁷⁸ Interviews are more likely to provide more accurate data with a high degree of flexibility.⁷⁹ Therefore I have chosen the qualitative methods even there is a doubt lack of structure and empirical data in order to allow the genuine perspectives of the participants to be revealed. Moreover, this method allowed me for deeper description and a contextual understanding that is fundamental for research process. I experienced that I started interviews with limited knowledge but one after another interview I learned more about the issues and subject matter from respondent.

Having some previous professional experience in interviewing people while conducting non-academic researches, I consider interview process as sensitive and complex task and there are number of points to be noted. It was very important being professionally represent the project to the participants adhering to participant consent procedures. I was aware of the fact that maintaining security and confidentiality of information is ethical task in research. Another existing challenge is recruitment of participants despite of their busy schedule as well as participant may choosing not being interviewed or be reluctant in the beginning. Again, conducting interview with participants using project instrument and following project guidelines was also very helpful when I conducted interview for this study.

3.6.2 Content Analysis

Document and content analysis are the source of secondary data in this research. These non-interview information to include reviews of government archives, newspaper/media searches and document collection from NGOs and other relevant organizations are organized in computer for analysis as secondary source of information. I have a set of collection of most of

⁷⁷ David, M., & Sutton, C. D. (2004). *Social research: The basics*. Sage.

⁷⁸ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2016. 695.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

the international and national newspapers and magazines articles and coverage written and published in the issues of the secularization process. These collections are very useful while I compare and contrast articles with the interviews notes while interpreting the data.

3.7 Field Reflection

In retrospect, it might have been useful additionally to probe interviewees on a particular publication deriving from their work, as well as encouraging them to discuss their practices in general terms. I had very useful discussion with my supervisor over the key points on how I should interview people and what kind of question I should ask and not ask. As Bryman puts it sharing of experiences among project directors (supervisor) and interviewers of the researcher interview, particularly if there is likely to be further use of this tool at a time when there is a great deal of interest in social research methods.⁸⁰ I have repeatedly experienced that interviewees mostly the political party leaders were less confident on answering some critical issues. They were feeling inferior and worrying about getting it right because they knew that the interviewer coming for fieldwork from international institution knows subject matter better than themselves sometimes. Example on how I cope with this situation is given in the insider outsider narratives in preceding section. Reflection is essential part of the research during interviews and while analyzing data and it helps to generate a high quality data.

3.7.1 Insider cum Outsider

Reflexivity is to be further acknowledged together with the discussion of insider and outsider status of a researcher. Although insider/outsider status issue was not a major challenge during my interviews I have attempted to carefully understand its effect during my fieldwork. In so doing, I asked myself that in which position I should superficially represent or stay neutral during the follow up questions. It is my understanding that researcher's position needs to be clear because it may doubt number the conditions those impact on building rapport and trust between the informants and the researcher. How being insider or outsider makes an impact on the relationship between informants and the researcher?

Insider, in social science research refers to when researcher speaks same language as the fellow respondents, share characteristic role and experience and has to be part of culture, have

⁸⁰ Bryman, *Social research Methods*,

the same membership identity from gender, age, class to ethnicity.⁸¹ For me I come from the same country, speak native Nepali and probably a Hindu follower for those respondent who believe in Hinduism which makes me an insider researcher. Arguably, an outsider is the person who does not pose recently mentioned insider features. As Hallawell puts it outsider researcher “is where the researcher is not a priori familiar with the setting and people he/she is researching.”⁸² Since my case study of Nepal also included one of the most sensitive issues in current politics and constitution drafting process researcher role in insider/outsider was problematic due to lack of pragmatic understanding among the informants. Student coming from Norway for such crucial issue and at the pick time of discussion of the same subject in the constitutional assembly might had fueled certain suspicion. I was visibly outsider since my ethnic background suggests that I am a follower of Hindu religion and coming from a Norwegian academic institution. I do not categorize myself as a Hindu or non-Hindu, my aim was to collect information without any biasness. When I was interviewing with communist party leader or Muslim leader or head of the Church there was probability that they considered me as an outsider just being based on I might be a Hindu. In fact I was in the field to collect the information for this research and I had nothing to do with all these political issues going on. It was kind of challenge to make them feel that I am an independent student researcher and therefore neutral to issues we are about to discuss or discussing.

When it comes to being insider there were opportunities. Being an insider gives common ground in context of selflessness and membership, Armstrong writes acceptance, membership provides a level of trust and openness of participants in insider research.⁸³ The second benefit is a possibility to speak from within a culture being part of the culture or religion enhances the understanding of the study subject.

While studying religious consequences there are two popular avenues recently addressed. The first one is due to objective, outsider position “the aim of the scholar of religion should not be to get inside the experience and meaning of religious phenomena, but to build upon the benefits of critical distance to explain religion from the outside.”⁸⁴ And the second approach

⁸¹ Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. *The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. International journal of qualitative methods*, 55.

⁸² Hellawell, D. (2006). *Inside-out: analysis of the insider-outside concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. Teaching in higher education*, 11.

⁸³ Armstrong, J. S. (Ed.). (2001). *Principles of forecasting: a handbook for researchers and practitioners*

⁸⁴ Knott, K. (2005). *Insider/outsider perspectives*. 245.

foretells that reflexivity, which attempts greater awareness “research and write consciously from within their context and standpoint whether as insiders or outsiders.”⁸⁵

3.8 Ethical Issues

Research ethics are the set of moral and professional behaviors of a researcher that checks and balances the unlimited power of researcher and respects the research subjects which consequently minimizes the possibilities of the research being chaotic.⁸⁶ Thus, ethics signifies respondent’s partnership to balance the researcher’s power influence on subjects. Regarding the ethical issues in my research project I provided information sheets to the respondents which includes all set of purpose and objective of the study. Notes and information are stored responsibly to maintain confidentiality and privacy of respondents. Anonymity request of some of the respondent has been seriously adhered in the writing process.

3.9 Conclusion

Research methodology is the link between the problem statement and theory as well as the reality on the empirical domain. Social science researchers often prefer qualitative research strategies over quantitative strategies when researcher takes an interpretive epistemological standpoint, whereby the researcher is concerned with the meaning given to social action by the participants. The theoretical stance of the researcher will influence adherence to their preferred research methods. This chapter presents field reflections and methodological approach that was adopted during the vital process of study design, data collection, and data analysis and later in report writing. It also discussed various incidents about the opportunities and challenges while conducting interviews in search of the above questions.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 245.

⁸⁶ Baker, T. L., & Risley, A. J. (1994). *Doing social research*.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have studied various important literatures in connection to Nepal's case with an aim of observing how the religious nationalism gets weaker and the secularization occurs in a given civilization. This study is about whether or not bribery was offered to ruling political actors, groups or people during the process of Secularization in Nepal, independent variables discussed in this chapter may not correspond directly with the case. It is not proper to call it as theory testing, however, ideal discussions here are expected to offer significant information on existing socio-cultural structures and political scenario of the time. Following are the factors that facilitate the understanding of determining ingredients for secularization in Nepal.

4.2 Ideological differences between the West and the Rest

Significant number of literatures on religion-secular discussion focus on various political scenario that has promoted religious nationalism to replace secular order. Mark Juergensmeyer has conducted several interviews basically in Asia and Arabian Peninsula with political and religious figures to write the book *The new cold war? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. He found very typical and strong criticism against the secular ideologies and those activists whom he interviewed were found interested in establishing an order guided by religious principles.⁸⁷ The author in his book has not only unfolded several incidents how various religious movements emerge but also clearly puts religious and secular order shares identical motives being rival to each other at the same time. However, it is found otherwise in the case of Nepal where Hindu Nationalism was suddenly and strangely declined for a typical collapse of Nepal from a Hindu nation to secular.

Eighteenth Century had been symbolized as the era of 'modernity' in most of the Europe. The term modernity can be further discussed as the transformation of society where an individual was given access to his/her own way of action, knowledge and life. According to Juergensmeyer this enlightenment in Europe was possible through liberal thought about religion which means enhancement of the society through secular order. This concept then travelled the rest of the world possibly in the countries where those nations in Europe have

⁸⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, (1993), 4

had their colonies.⁸⁸ Juergensmeyer further explains, those secular ideologies eventually became irrelevant in the East mostly because people's expectations were trapped by hollow promises which were given during the period when secularization was imported.

4.3 Conspiracy Theory

Since this case of Nepal is highly influenced with variety of assumptions and suspicions that secularization was not a key demand among citizens, one section of people believe it is a subterfuge. Therefore a useful approach to demand or look for more information might be 'conspiracy theory.' However contemporary scholarship on conspiracy theory is so complex that it can be quite confusing and may mislead to an irrational understanding. Sometime theorizing conspiracy may disregard necessary and complex social changes which are inevitable given the socio-political complexities. Nevertheless, the age of globalization and advancement of technology and information have on the one hand brought the world closer where on the other hand many things we think are true may not be true. As Jodi Dean puts it, "what we see is not what we get."⁸⁹ He further quoted Kathleen's Conspiracy theory's World as "the more we know, the less we know."⁹⁰ In her article Theorizing Conspiracy Theory Dean has produced three dimensions of conspiracy approach. First she marked theorist as they try to create the context exaggerated by self-importance and follow militia groups and their activities. Second they observe and unfold exercises of cult groups and three is their pathological motivations.⁹¹

Conspiracy theories therefore are more concerned and lack the actual truth which results the theory too difficult or too easy. Although conspiracy theory often gives attention to plot, pathology therefore it remains often incomplete⁹², we will see some interesting factors conducive to conspiracy. Despite sometime being vague and ambiguous conspiracy is still relevant theoretical elements for the analysis of this study.

4.4 Violence and Extremism amid Religious-Secular Ideologies

It has been a customary discourse that Religion and culture are often discussed as an identity and social fabric of a given society. One of the most cited literatures in political science *Clash of Civilization* offers various forecasts about the cause and nature of conflict in the post-Cold

⁸⁸ Ibid., 6

⁸⁹ Dean, J. (2000). Theorizing conspiracy theory. *Theory & Event*, 4(3).

⁹⁰ Ibid. 1

⁹¹ Ibid. 1

⁹² Ibid. 2

War era. This study argues that the end of bi-polar world will be customary to protracted conflicts among various civilizations where religion and culture will fuel its brutality. Larger academic interest explains the significant of religion in politics which has fetched many findings that support the evidence that conflicts with religious-secular guise are often interacted in rising number of religious violence in the last century or so. Although the relationships between religion and violence remains persistently contested and frustratingly unclear there is a significant concern among the scholars of social science in recent decades.

On the other hand, commenter of comparative religion Karen Armstrong strongly opposes the idea of religion is inherent to violence. In her very recent book, she has argued against the idea that faith fuels the war. She finds a huge hostility in the United States and United Kingdom among secular as well as religious people toward Islam, seeing it as a faith of violence. Especially the United States is much entwined in the history of the Middle East, and British are deeply entwined with these issues in what they used to call the developing world. By contrast, there are literatures which mention exclusion of religion from public domain may be intolerant, dialogue therefore is needed among the disciplines who believe and don't believe in God.⁹³ However there is no universal standard on what is a 'religious-secular conflict'.

4.5 Religious Rejection of Secularization

In recent years, many people in the East have realized that secular nationalism is itself a 'kind of religion'.⁹⁴ A leader in Iranian Revolution writes secularism is not only a religion but also peculiar to west. Juergensmeyer further explains this statement "secular nationalism responds to the same needs for collective identity, ultimate loyalty, moral authority that religion has traditionally responded to and that this similar response makes secular nationalism de facto a religion."⁹⁵ Further comments to this argument was given as, western nature of secularism is Christianity itself. It is because west is less secular as it claims and they still run "Christian Governments". In support of this argument an evidence is offered that the fact of some socialist parties in Europe use Christian in their title.⁹⁶ For a causal observer secular means a state of discontinuation from religious and spiritual matters. But the recent trend in western

⁹³ *Religion, Intolerance and Conflict: A Scientific and Contextual Investigation*, Clarke, Powell and Savulescu (2013)

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 19

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 19

style of secularism has brought along several criticisms where it first deprogram people from their eternal belief and then reprogram again with a new belief system. To conclude, secularism has become a tool to maintain asymmetrical power relations among west and the rest simply tossing the same coin diabolically towards the position of the western world.

As mentioned in the earlier paragraph that the western way of enlightenment has been exported to the post-colonial societies, however Nepal remains exceptional given its glorious history of never being colonized by any of those colonial powers. That is why, there is a theoretical gap in the argument of Juergensmeyer that the post-colonial states had to react with the secular-religious corollary imposed by the west among various failed nation-building strategies. Nepal although being an independent and sovereign state from centuries there is a conception that it has always been positioned by neighboring India. It has been a debate and then a mater-of-fact that for every political solution in Nepal India has to be a partner. The huge Indian Territory was colonized by British under the East India Company for several decades and only became independent in 1947. India also known as Hindustan was declared as a Secular country only by the 42nd Amendment Act on 1976.⁹⁷ However, the complexity of the scholarly discussion about the meaning of Secular continues to become a 'contested' concept among social scientists as well as in the practice of this term. In the West secularism is understood as three dimensional approach, freedom of faith; equal citizenship to every citizen regardless of religion and separation of the religion from the state.⁹⁸ By contrast, India despite of its secular constitution continues regulating and administrating temples, universities and monasteries with significant amount of funding to operate them.⁹⁹ This comparison may help to study on how the youngest secular Nepal a multi-religious country will now define and practice its secularism where some 80 percent majority of population practice Hinduism.

4.6 Religion and Power

David Rangdrol in his thesis *Religious Nationalism in Nepal: Understanding the Demise of Hindu Kingdom* has cited the work of Almond et al. *The Fundamentalism Project* where he argued that a clear trend of reaction against secularism is evident as the resistance power of “Strong Religion”. However he further explains, although this extensive project is a replica of Juergensmeyer’s idea the Fundamentalism Project is tremendously rich in drawing various

⁹⁷ The constitution of India, Preamble

⁹⁸ Donald E Smith (2011), *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press,

⁹⁹ DD Acevedo (2013), *Secularism in the Indian Context*,

social structures and political atmosphere of the very context.¹⁰⁰ There is no customary boundary among the secular around the globe thus it continues varying with controversial practice. In *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World* author writes “Secularist may have internalized the privatization of belief but religion continues to perform complex, multiple roles and functions in societies.”¹⁰¹ These kind of roles of religion are clearly visible in the countries who pretends to practice secularism in United States, Europe including South Asia.

4.7 Contextual and Structures Factors

In this section I will discuss some selected national structural factors in Nepal which may also have association with and have influenced religious-secular debates.¹⁰² These factors are viewed as independent variables for the purpose of this study.

4.7.1 Hindu Fundamentalist Groups

Very less has been discussed about the presence of Hindu fundamentalist as the source and threat to secularism in Nepal. Despite being a Hindu state there is no evidence and record that state have sponsored any kind of fundamentalist operation or organization, however there are some incident where state had cracked down such activities. For example, Nepal Defense Army was accused of bombing a Church in Kathmandu valley in 2009.¹⁰³ Out of many small armed group in Terai plains of Nepal couple of them occasionally come up with anti-secularism ideology but there task mainly focuses in killings and extortion and they do not officially interact with the fundamentalist across the border. Nepal is relatively free from external influence in anti-secular fundamentalism except some negligible support from Hindu activists in India in the name of some festivals and celebrations.

4.7.2 Lack of Intelligence and tracking of Criminals Activities

Nepalese intelligence often remains weak in terms of tracking of criminal activities across border. Due to open border with India it is easier for criminal gangs to hit and run in several killings. Given the reality of time, Nepal’s security is inadequate to track what happens from

¹⁰⁰ For details see, Rangdrol (2007) Religious Nationalism in Nepal

¹⁰¹ Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan. *Strong religion: The rise of fundamentalisms around the world* (2003), 9.

¹⁰² Almond et al. (2003)

¹⁰³ P. Rimal Secularism and Challenges faced by Nepal, 2006

outside the country. Various secular activist could have enjoyed this opportunity to play in Nepal.

4.7.3 Ethnic Awareness

Nepal is home for ethnic an estimated 103 ethnic groups each having different languages, demands and priorities. David Rangdrol articulates that “subordination and exploitation of one ethnic or regional group by another as well as historic ethnic tensions may create grievances in the long term.”¹⁰⁴ Although historically ethnicity was not in the surface as a tension, Maoist armed conflict has advanced ethnic awareness and enthusiasm for ethnic identity. Thus ethnicity can be considered as a central factor and may have favored secular change.

4.7.4 Political Instability

Many people in Nepal were very unhappy with the autocratic rule of the king. On the other side political parties were also not in a legitimate position and suffering from intra-party conflict and polarization. However, political parties, eventually became able to convince the citizen to come in the street and protest for democracy. The popular revolution headed by parliamentary forces and civil war waged by Maoists might have served as features that supported the secularization.

4.7.5 Role of Media

Growing ‘ethnic politics’ and proposal of federalism according to ethnic identity have supplemented the trigger for secular change. Politicians have promised to people that majority ethnicities rights will be secured in the new constitution. Sometime, media could play an otherwise role while covering the stories between ethnicities and religions since religion and ethnicity is interconnected given the case of Nepal.

¹⁰⁴ Rangdrol, 2007

Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis

This section will attempt to answer the research question, how Hinduism in Nepal was weakened to the extent that it could not safeguard the religious nationalism and prevent the country from turning to secular one. Information here will be linked with the theory discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. I will also refer to the interviews I have conducted in July and August of 2015. Since I have interviewed people holding various position and background from politicians, religious leaders, researchers, civil-society and local experts the information collected is diverse. I have found contradictory criticism between secularist and Pro-Hindu. Therefore I have divided this section into three sub-headings. In the first part, I will present the information that I received from people who are the supporter of Hinduism as a state religion. In the second section, I will discuss the idea of pro-secular people and their motivation behind making the country secular. The third section will then offer the analytical remarks over these two arguments.

5.1 Informants Profile

Since the purpose of the study is to find out the progress of the process of secularization I have interviewed people from different backgrounds.¹⁰⁵ Out of 14 respondent 5 people were found as a serious supporter of Hinduism who also carry strong dissatisfaction on Nepal becoming a Secular country. For the purpose of the study I met some of the interviewee who are active in the country with religious profile and active to reverting Nepal into a Hindu country. I have also interviewed two high level people from Christianity and one from Islam. Similarly, I had an opportunity to ask questions with six politicians, and two prominent researchers in the field of social science including one secretary in the home ministry of Nepal. Most of these political people think that the change is positive and it ensures more freedom for the religious minority in the country in true sense.

5.1.1 Nepal was a Hindu Nation and will become a Hindu Nation

At the time of my data collection in Nepal in July and August several campaigns and demonstrations against secularization were ongoing. These kinds of protests have been regular reaction of the slogan “Nepal as a Hindu Nation” supporters who are unhappy with

¹⁰⁵ Methodology Chapter provides detail information about the interviewee and methods

the word secular which showed up in the text of interim constitution of Nepal on 2007.¹⁰⁶ When I asked about the rationale of their argument, their response was that secularism is an ethnic politics as it comes together with the issue of ethnicity. Ethnicity is not a religion, it's an opinion, making Nepal a secular nation means giving some medicine without a disease.¹⁰⁷ Secularism is an adjective by itself and any opinion can be adjective but not a religion. The main agreement remains convincing, most of the informants in this section remained saying any path can be secular but not religion since religion is eternal onto itself. In the opinion of these activists, Nepal which is already a multi-religious nation with tremendous freedom for all religions to practice their faith Secularism is just an ugly word without its significance in the context of Nepal. When asked why Hinduism is so much important, the common answer was, "to overcome all recent grown insecurity in the country."

Similarly, respondents who oppose the secularization also mentioned that force conversion is rampant in the country which is an absolute invade upon the faith of one. Hinduism is the eternal and the culture associated which has relationship like the nail and the flesh. Hinduism is associated with all aspects of the society and once it is shaken conflict will escalate all around the country. Hinduism is not only a mere faith but also a lifestyle of people living here, thus Nepal is meant to be a Hindu nation and anything against this is completely foreign. Secularism in Nepal was made possible only with the agenda of the western world. This is not national, rather it is foreign once at all.¹⁰⁸ All of five respondents interviewed urged that secularization was completely a diabolic design of the Christian world and thus will never be accepted in Nepal. Most of these respondents believe that the top political parties leaders who decided secularism on their own have received a handsome amount of money from external means and they do not want to speak further and beyond and remain silent.¹⁰⁹

One of the renowned medical surgeons who was also a member of council of minister under the chair of the King blamed Maoist in a public speech jointly organized by many Hindu Organizations in the premises of Pashupati Nath temple in Kathmandu. In his speech he urged that Nepal is the only country in the world where Communist movement became successful

¹⁰⁶ Nepal was declared secular by the Interim Constitution on 2007

¹⁰⁷ Informant no. 1

¹⁰⁸ Respondent no 2

¹⁰⁹ Interview notes, Interview with Hindu activists in Nepal

with the support of money granted by church.¹¹⁰ He also added, religion now has reached to this controversy because of the funding accepted by the Maoist which was given by churches during Maoist civil war. He mentioned Hinduism as a religion of tolerance and never been offensive to non-Hindus therefore underestimated as weak religion but it is however an inherent feature of Hinduism. Though he repeatedly argued Maoist have been paid by the church, but he did not mention any church in particular. There are several stories of its kinds, a leader of CPN (UML) stated in a program that western encroachers with the Bible in hand has exploited the social fabric of Nepal. He was clearly blaming the European countries and India on the ground that they want to use the land of Nepal in order to destroy the growing influence of China in world order.¹¹¹

5.1.2 Reaction of Gurus and Yogis

One of the most new age gurus in Nepal Kamal N. Acharya is one of many who is in the street against secular Nepal and with an agenda taking Nepal to the earlier state, a Hindu nation. When asked this task belongs to politician or Swami like him he replied that the work was of politician but they were misguided thus it came to his shoulder.¹¹² His argument said Nepal was declared secular neglecting the sentiment of 94% of people in Nepal who follows *Sanatan Veidik Dharma*¹¹³ thus it is not a public consent. In the interview he further mentioned several politicians visited him to offer homage and get his blessing while he reminded all of them not to agree on secularism in the constitution and they were ‘yes’ to him on these occasions. He was reminded by a Sadhu who used to say him that “you do not know a person by outer look but from his behavior” thus same happened with these, in his own word ‘corrupt politicians.’ Further, he articulated that all politicians have sold the religion of the nation, although the value of religion is as same as mother, but, now politicians do not

¹¹⁰ <http://annapurnapost.com/News.aspx/story/14713>

¹¹¹ <http://yeskathmandu.com/archives/20064>

¹¹² Kamal Nayan Acharya who is also known as Muktinath Baba is well known religious figure in Nepal. He has been leading various street protest and demonstration organized by the Hindu Nationalist in Nepal. His speech often portrays that he is determined to make Nepal as a Hindu nation again. Some of his gathering went violent. He also speeches there may be need of holy war in order to make Nepal a Hindu state.

¹¹³ Hindu activists often mark 94% of people in Nepal follows *Sanatan Veidik Dharma*, the *Omkar* category that includes Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and other similar religion and concludes a typical Hindu family. However Buddhists and other minority religion often rejects this calculation and oppose being the branch and kin of Hinduism

want to speak about secularism. He questioned, ‘who has send them to the power?’¹¹⁴ He marked that politicians have forgotten the sentiments of people and country.

With two constitutional assembly election in a row and 8 years of struggle, as soon as preliminary draft of the constitution showed up with the text secular agitation between secularist and pro-Hindu people was accelerated. According to Acharya some ten law-makers of the constitution assembly went to him to appeal that their effort of speaking on the issue of secularization was silenced by their respective party authority. Acharya questioned, “What kind of democracy we have created where there is no freedom of thoughts?”¹¹⁵ Speaking in many public speech and protests organized by the supporter of Hindu Nation Hindu activist and leader repeatedly urged secularization was declared without the consent of people dishonoring the ethos and pride of the Nepalese by offering monetary benefit to handful politicians.

5.1.3 Political Mobilization against Secularization

Despite major political parties remained together favoring secularization as their agenda for change Rastriya Parjatantra Party Nepal (RPP-N) headed by Mr. Kamal Thapa stood as major exceptional party to oppose secularism in Nepal. In one sense, RPP-N was able to justify its popularity by securing 24 seats through constitution assembly election in November 2013 from its only 4 winning seats in 2008 election under the proportional voting system. Although 24 seats are very nominal among the 601 law-makers in the constitutional assembly president of the party continued to raise voice for constitutional monarchy and Hindu Nation from inside and outside of the assembly in parallel way. Various occasion and rituals were organized throughout the country opposing the sudden declaration of Secularism. Kamal Thapa’s major dissatisfaction was, Nepal had always remained a Hindu country and its glorious track of inter-religious tolerance and harmony is the essence itself for its continuation. During an interview he explained that secularization in Nepal is a conspiracy of the westerners and force and threatening conversion of Hindu people to Christianity is rampant throughout the country.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Interview with Kamal Nayana Acharaya, a Hindu Swami by Rajendra Baniya in Bakti , Bisaya ra Bishesh Avenues Television

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Sajha Sawal : Episode 402. BBC Media Action

Kamal Thapa who is also the chairman of the fourth largest political party was clear on saying that major political parties at times receive large amount of money from foreign authorities in several occasions. Similarly he mentioned, this kind of money had been overtime spent on political movement, to go in and win elections, to reach in power. He gave an example of a recorded tape clip which was once publicly noticed that when Madhav Kumar Nepal was prime minister a Maoist leader had requested some 5 million Dollars from a foreign authority, but this incident was never investigated with political understanding. He further added, such illegal money does not come as grant but there hides a huge agenda of the international community.¹¹⁷ In the contemporary world governed by political realism, it is difficult to comprehend what brings the donors to the specific countries. It can range from altruism to humanitarian efforts and national interest to international power plays. Because of this, the renowned economist like Easterly and Collier have discussed vigorously on the counter productiveness of the development aid.¹¹⁸

5.2 Rationale for a Secular Kingdom: Political parties and Non-Hindus in Nepal

Here I present the data collected from both primary and secondary sources which are in support of secular Nepal. In this section, the motivation of declaring Nepal as a secular country is reflected from the perspective of political parties. I will also employ the information gathered from other minority's faiths in Nepal mostly Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. This section is yet not an analysis but presentation of information which has come directly from the participant point of view as well as supporting literatures.

5.2.1 Political Parties: Secularism is a Positive Change

It was mentioned in the earlier section RPP-N stands as fourth largest party according to the constituency secured in the constitutional election that was held in 2013 and this was the largest party to stand in support of Hindu Nation. Similarly, Nepali Congress Party (NC), Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) and Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Maoist (CPN-UM) respectively are largest parties in terms of the seats in the

¹¹⁷ Tough Talk: Kamal Thapa with Dil Bhushan Pathak, Kantipur TV

¹¹⁸ Collier, P. (2007) *The Bottom Billion*: Oxford University Press and Easterly, W. (2006) *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Effort to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. New York: The Penguin Press.

parliament in the last election 2013.¹¹⁹ Despite some contradictory intra-party debate among their central committee members all of these parties have agreed on the ground of secularism in Nepal. When it comes to Communist parties they are reported to have said, it has been their inherent interest to make every society free from religion. According to them, to eradicate belief system and teach Marxism is the quest of communist which had always been suppressed in Nepal by autocratic Hindu monarch in the past.¹²⁰ Religion is a mere source of fear in the mind of people and secularism is not only rational to make people free from fear it is equally important for every country. It is because secularism is moving towards science, with this understanding secularism was accepted in first hand as soon as it was declared. People were dominated by religion and they started to raise their voice for rights, freedom and equality, therefore secularism has become the will of the people in Nepal.¹²¹

5.2.2 Christians in Nepal

Christians in Nepal are aware of the fact that they are minority groups but they have made significant contribution to the society helping to ease the caste hierarchy, supported for livelihood opportunities and health facilities. Although there is no provision of Christian Churches to be registered in Nepal, but they work as NGOs and other foundations. Nepal is the home for 2799 Churches with 309 Churches in Kathmandu alone.¹²² When I asked leaders of these organizations about the religious freedom in Nepal they showed a high degree of dissatisfaction against the suppression and unfriendliness of state towards their organization. One of the high officials said “Hindu Kingdom in Nepal has been the agenda of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which is the current ruling political party which is itself criticized for favoring Hindu fundamentalism in India.”¹²³ He further added, “Every political parties favoring Hinduism in Nepal are tremendously being paid from India.” Secularism is not only demand of Christians in Nepal but also for the 36% of total population who belong to ethnic group feel that Hinduism is forced practice induced upon them and Hindu activists alone blame Christianity in Nepal. However India has only assisted for secularism in Nepal in order to defeat the King and later with the change in the government in India Nepalese political parties are being targeted in the same way to reverse the decision.¹²⁴ The growing demands of

¹¹⁹ For complete information see: <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/1675/>

¹²⁰ Interview notes, Informant no. 5

¹²¹ Interview notes, Informant no. 9

¹²² Monica Timsina, The Nepal state and Secularism

¹²³ Interview Notes. Respondent no 9

¹²⁴ Interview Notes, Respondent no 10

organizations supporting Hinduism in Nepal to revert back to Hindu nation have tensed the Christian in Nepal.

5.3 Analysis

Link to the case and theory and explanation of socio-political situation and war-peace transition will attempt to answer the research question in this section. Why Nepal turned to a secular country is unexplained and unsayable to many who perceive it as not the consent of majority of Nepalese. The only known about why Nepal became a secular country is unknown. However it has been customary to many that a secular Nepal became possible with the interplay of the religious minorities in the country and powerful influence from non-Hindus whoever were interested in this change. Nepal had have visibly free from any inter-faith violence as it is commonly perceived as blood-free country. On the issues of ethnic and religious hatred and there has been not any sign of *Clash of Civilization* that is why secularism seems to have a peaceful transformation. In the introduction chapter *The New Cold War. Religious Nationalism Confronts the Religious State*, Juergensmeyer has provided the conflict between secular and religious nationalist and highlighted a specific grievance that the groups carry against each other in order to make one owns position stronger.¹²⁵ Religious nationalist tensed with western-inspired secularism and secularist may welcome powerful lobbyist to support their cause. The other important argument from Juergensmyeyer that helps to understand Nepal's case is the very feature of Nepal of not being colonized being closed for any secular project in the past. Since Nepal never experienced the colonial past, most of colonized countries experienced post-colonial state-building approach. However, the stands of Nepal remain untouched by the comparative cases that are categorized in the total literatures of religious nationalism. That said, until the declaration of 2006, Nepal has decided its own trajectory and beside some missionary influence in the societal level there was no visible external political exertion in secularizing Nepal.

5.3.1 Low State Capacity: Fragility of the Country

In *Strong Religion* theory, author has produced independent variables like socio-economic development and given political conditions advantage the religion, where the bond between religion and nation becomes stronger. Both Juergensmyer's and *Strong Religion* theory argue it is the religious national to grasp the opportunity to boost the ethos of religious

¹²⁵ Op cited, Rangdrol, 2007

significance when the western secular project continues failing in developing and state-building strategies. However there is a theoretical gap as in the case of Nepal pro-secularist were leveraged to find out the gap between the religion and nationalism against the Hindu-Nation.

A subtle democracy granted by the King in 1990 and followed by a decade long arm conflict, political and economic situation of Nepal was already dire. Nepal experienced several revolutions and democratic experiences featuring high political unconsciousness that led every government rich in corruptions. Nepal was one of the least developed country in the world and remains same with four out of ten people with less than a Dollar per day. Nepal ranks 187 in the Human Development Index.¹²⁶ Continuation of frustrations of Nepalese towards their government keeps tremendous gap between citizen and government. Despite having high potential with rich natural resources especially fresh water immaturity of political parties there has been no progress in the potentiality of hydropower to boost the economy. While neighboring India and China have significantly improving economic growth Nepal remains far below. Although, Nepal receives huge amount of foreign aid, effectiveness is invisible given its lack of visionary leadership and corruption. The Hindu nation has failed to improve the quality of life to its citizen, this very sentiment played as a triggering element to think people a substitute. Pro-secularist in Nepal had an aversion with the rationale of Hindu state given the witness of its moral failing to safeguard development of the country. On the other hand, Hindus were not much skeptical to the secularism in first hand as they were with the other religions inside and outside the country. In economically weak, politically instable and constitutionally transitioned post-conflict country many of its citizen were unaware with the meaning of secular. These all circumstances created a significant gap between the people and parties, some powerful lobbyist of pro-secular sentiment may have carefully found the track in inserting secularism in Nepal.

5.4 Maoist Revolution

It was early 1996 February the then chairman of United People's front Baburam Bhattarai put forward 40 points demands to the coalition government headed by Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali congress party urging if the demands were not addressed by the deadline they will

¹²⁶ United Nations Development Program Data
<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/NPL.pdf>

launch a movement against the government.¹²⁷ Maoist in Nepal were clearly against the Hindu Kingdom in the beginning of their revolution as the point number 18 of the 40 points reads “Nepal should be declared a secular state.”¹²⁸ Maoist revolution became popular in short period of time since it carried sentiment of the disadvantaged groups given the commitment of eradicating hierarchy of caste, class and socio-political chaos in the country. Maoist armed conflict in Nepal could be considered as a prime dawn for the long journey to secularism in Nepal. If the secular west were not to blame regardless of their unofficial presence in the country Maoist could be viewed as prospective pioneers of anti-Hindu sentiment when we forget some internal secular elites and other religious minorities.

They were the Maoists, the communists inherent with atheism, who may have demanded the separation of religion from the state at the barrel of guns. Many Hindu activists consider Maoist as antagonist¹²⁹ in the downfall of Hindu Kingdom, by contrast Rangdrol found Maoists sentiment not fitting in all dimension as anti-Hindu force.¹³⁰ Maoist do not fit the anti-religious or atheist type as Rangdrol writes “ Maoists seem to have managed a skilled balancing act: on the one hand harvesting the grievances left by decades of pro-Hindu discrimination, and, on the other being careful enough not to harm Hindu or traditional sentiments.”¹³¹ Although, there have been several incidents which portray the dualist nature of Maoists as a communist like the chairman ‘Prachanda’ himself used to present his Janma Kundali (Vedic Birth Chart) to some renowned Godman and Gurus seeking his upcoming fortune.¹³² Prachanda worshiped a female water buffalo,¹³³ following this event there was a trending gossip that, the communist leader Prachanda has forgotten his past adventure of being atheist. A Nepalese online news writes about his dubious role and lifestyle, “This was the same leader who had ordered his cadre to slaughter cows and forced people to eat beef

¹²⁷ For complete list of those demands see:

http://www.humanrights.de/doc_en/archiv/n/nepal/politics/130299_40demands_Maoist.htm

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Interview notes

¹³⁰ David Rangdrol, *Religious Nationalism in Nepal*, 2007

¹³¹ Ibid. 43

¹³² <http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2010-02-13/>

The news reads : Swami Krishna Das Maharaj the Godman provided valuable suggestions to Maoist chairman Prachanda how should he move forward in the politics. In an another incident, another fortune teller had told Parchanda that his Zodiac is highly influenced by negative effects of the ‘Shani’, the Saturn planet. The Swami then suggested the Communist leader Prachanda to worship the planet to ease his political path and enter in good days ahead. While worshipping Saturn Prachand also worshipped black water buffalo in order to please the Planet. Prachanda also chanted the Vedic Mantras at this event, it is believed in this kind of worship event that if you donate black and worship buffalo the Planet Saturn will be pleased and the negative effects of its will go away.

during the conflict and he does not seem to see the irony in worshiping a buffalo now.”¹³⁴ Cow slaughter to buffalo worship of Maoists supremo have shown Maoists were neither a committed atheist nor fundamentally religious and even not a serious secular.¹³⁵ The atheist-religious ideology of Maoist and other communist political figures in Nepal continue to harvest contradictory position due to their differences in speech and practice. Thus, it is difficult to say the very atheist ideology that led Nepal to a secular path.

5.5 The Royal Massacre, 2001: Legitimacy Crisis and Downfall of Hindu Monarch

The Royal Massacre of 1 June 2001 killed king Birendra and Queen Aishwarya including other members of the royal family at their residence Narayanhity Royal Palace during a monthly reunion dinner among royal family. The report said, crown prince Dipendra who was heavily drunk and smoked large quantities of hashish and shoot around the family and kill himself at last.¹³⁶ There are many contradictory stories whether crown prince himself fired his father and mother including others, many Nepalese doubt him as the sole culprit for the incident.¹³⁷ However, after the massacre king Gyanendra the younger brother of previous King sat on the royal throne despite his unpopularity as well as widely held belief that he is also a conspirator behind the massacre. Besides that, both the father and son of the last King had been criticized for various moral abuses during their adulthood. According to Hindu tradition in Nepal Kings are believed as a symbol of God Vishnu the care taker God. Gyanendra was holding a profile as businessman before he became king, owning some top alcohol and tobacco enterprises.¹³⁸ Due to these incidents and recent blame against him as a responsible person behind the palace massacre people doubted him as a reincarnation of God Vishnu.¹³⁹ Due to these incidents as soon as the symbolic God man and the highest official protector of Hinduism continued losing their moral in the public, credibility and authenticity of the Kingship in Nepal became weaker. Since both new king and his heir suffered huge legitimacy crisis people starting losing trust in the Royal institution. As soon as the head of

¹³⁴ <http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=16841#.Vwrvk6QrKhc>

¹³⁵ Major Maoist leaders have been approaching time and again with different Godman, mostly seeking suggestion on their political carrier, position and transition. Recently various media has tracked that major political parties leaders meets holy men and Gurus in several occasion. Gorakahnath Baba, Manakamana Mata, Yogi Kamalnayanacharya, Chandar Swami , Pilot Baba are some Godmen and women whom all so-called atheist had paid homage to.

¹³⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/15/world/nepal-gives-synopsis-of-massacre-by-drug-addled-prince.html>

¹³⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/1/newsid_3987000/3987183.stm

¹³⁸ Op Cited, Rangdrol, 2007

¹³⁹ Interview notes

the state ‘the King’ was overthrown by a popular revolution it became easier for those minorities to raise their voice against the domination of Hinduism for a century and half. The weak and illegitimate leadership of the King created a social vacuum, the local pro-secularist and their foreign counterpart decided it as the right time to insert secularism in the interim constitution.

5.5.1 Were political parties benefited?

Notwithstanding religious minorities and ethnic groups are happy with the declaration of secularism in Nepal, Hindu activists on the other side have protested against this decision with mass rallies and demonstration with Hindu supporters. These rallies with religious flags tremendously criticized and shouted against major political parties for betraying the sentiment of 80 percent of Hindu population. During my data collection I observed many kinds of protests against secularism where police were lurching shells of tear gas and water cannons to disperse the mass. I observed and discussed with some of these protesters why they were protesting against secularism. And the gist of their argument is, Nepal is declared secular without due and democratic procedure without consulting the majority population of the country. Most of their shouting slogans were, they need a referendum to settle this dispute in a democratic way. When I asked Hindu activists in the mass protest in an informal discussion all of them have one voice, “Nepal was declared secular at the behest of foreign elements with an aim to weaken the glory of Hinduism in the country.”¹⁴⁰

In Nepal there is a widely held belief with activists that some top level politicians are also among the conspirators for secularism and have received monetary benefits from the European lobbyist of secularism. Most of these activists agree that secularism in Nepal was imposed not only to separate the state from religion as practiced in western countries but also to make Hinduism weaker and spread Christianity.¹⁴¹ The very idea of Christianity and Islam is to convert people to their faith and rise in the numbers to glory and political influence and they thus politicizing it.¹⁴² Every country has minority and majority religions and still they are not secular even having higher minority and majority. The notion of democracy is by the people and for the people with the support of majority population. How do they last without

¹⁴⁰ Interview notes, Discussion with street protester against secularism in Kathmandu city

¹⁴¹ Interview notes, July 2015

¹⁴² Interview notes, July 2015

people? Nepal constitution is not complete without Hindu nation, all other religion is guest to us since Hinduism has a history with thousands of years.¹⁴³

A plausible logic most of the Hindus give is, Hindu religion is only the greatest identity of Nepal. Growing division between the Tarai and Hill communities in Nepal will be integrated with the common point that is Hinduism. This is the main element to organize people as common factor to ease national integration, but secularism has put Nepal into a grave identity crisis. Furthermore being secular is not a freedom itself, a Hindu monk gives example of a pen in front of him during an interview. He pointed his pen in the table and asked, “you can use this pen but you cannot take this pen as yours own, Christian in Nepal are like guests, you can feed them, you can give facility to them but you will not give your home and cannot transfer your property in their name.”¹⁴⁴ He further gives example of different Indian cities like Goa, Asham, Kochin where there were 100% Hindus in the past and now their identity has been lost due to influence of other religions. He further articulated that Secularism in Nepal is a European design and if left unchecked the number of Christians will rise up to 20% in coming decade and Europe and America will be sending their military justifying that minorities are in danger.¹⁴⁵ By secularizing, we are feeding a snake with milk only before it bites with poison.¹⁴⁶

Nepalese politicians have failed to provide credible answers to the kind of questions which are raised in the above paragraph. Following these blames and probabilities I asked several politicians who were supposed to be responsible and at the center of this change whether they received any monetary benefit from European countries to make Nepal a secular state. All of them agreed to disagree. It was Thursday May 18, 2006 when the then speaker of the parliament Mr Subash Chanda Nembang announced that Nepal became a secular state.¹⁴⁷ He remembered that day, “there was appropriate homework in the context of announcing Nepal as a secular state. At that time we had an all-party working committee excluding Maoists since they were yet to join the government, That particular working committee had prepared the manifesto. The then Prime Minister Girija Prashad Koirala produced the secular manifesto in front of Council of Ministers by carrying in himself. He himself presented the proposal to

¹⁴³ Interview Notes, July 2015

¹⁴⁴ Interview notes, July 2015

¹⁴⁵ Interview notes, July 2015

¹⁴⁶ Interview notes, July 2015

¹⁴⁷ <http://setopati.com/raajneeti/36899/>

the assembly meeting. Then the paper was distributed to every members of the house which was also published in '*Raj Patra*' the state paper by Ministry of Law on same day May 18, 2006. At the time of reading the proposal, Prime Minister Girija Prashad Koirala felt some unhealthiness and requested me to read out loud. And I was fortunate to read it from the chair of speaker by coincidence."¹⁴⁸

Almost a decade has passed since Nepal was declared a secular state but still the debate with and against secularism is growing. Reviewing rigorously what politician said before promulgation of new constitution I came to an understanding that even politicians were unaware of the consequences that secularism may bring. Current Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli was reported to have said in public speech that due to wrong translation secular word had been written in interim constitution and it should be therefore secular word should be replaced by another in new constitution. Similarly, Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi whose political will is to support and grow Hindu religion in India and Nepal. Various media in Nepal and India has written about Modi is greatly disappointed with secularization in Nepal and desperately wants to see Nepal as a Hindu nation.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, recently prime minister of Nepal visited India and Indian Prime minister Modi reminded to Nepalese prime minister K. P. Sharma Oli to re-declare Nepal as a Hindu-state.¹⁵⁰ After visiting Narendra Modi in India the chairman of Unified Maoist Party Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachand) gave a statement that Secular word has given a false meaning and it will be good if we change this. Prachanda

¹⁴⁸ Based on Interview of the than Speaker of the House of Representative Subash Chandra Nembang published Setopati on November 25, 2015, retrieved on 10, April 2016

¹⁴⁹ See: <http://m.setopati.net/news/1214/> : Nepal will be Hindu state after Modi becomes India's PM: Singhal: Vishwa Hindu Parisad leader Ashok Singhal said, "Once Modi becomes the prime minister, Nepal will become a Hindu state again," "We will not let others damage our Hindu identity." He also blamed the Western and other some Muslim countries playing a game to turn the Hindu kingdom into a secular republic.

"Nepal became a secular state under the pressure of China, US, Europe and some Muslim countries. Though many powerful leaders here also want to make Nepal a Hindu country, they fear to speak out their mind."

He also praised Modi's strength as a leader. "We also need a leader who doesn't yield to unnecessary pressures. Modi is that type of leader."

"We are ready to make any kind of sacrifice to turn the country in a Hindu state. You have to stay ready for that."

¹⁵⁰ See: <http://www.southasia.com.au/2016/02/25/re-delcare-nepal-hindu-state-modi-told-oli-reports/>

who is the chairman of third largest party in Nepal mentioned that India is facing trouble with the growing numbers of Christians in the country. Majority of higher level leader in Nepali Congress (NC) the largest party of Nepal are also in favor of Hindu nation but they hardly dare to be open in these issues in the public.¹⁵¹

5.6 Secular Nepal: Product of Conspiracy?

Religion continue to become the part of identity for many nations. It has become a strong political influence in South-Asia. So much has been said that some western nations are publicly recommending that Nepal should shack its identity as a Hindu country.¹⁵² Prakash Chandra Lohoni, the former foreign minister of Nepal and senior leader of Rastriya Prajatantra Party in his article writes, those nations who openly advocate Nepal to become a secular nation do not want same to happen in their country. He further articulates, “Interestingly, smaller European countries that have been advocating secularism in Nepal as the new ‘mantra’ of democracy and modernization are also anything but secular.” He further observes, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Britain as the nations who are connected to Church either by their constitution, relationships with state or monarch of respective countries and so on. Lohoni also commented on Britain and David Cameron on his statement that ‘Britain is a Christian country’ given only 60 percent of its population have identified themselves as Christians.¹⁵³

Similarly, in a statement a senior Nepalese Journalist Youbraj Ghimire writes that the word secular has chilled the society and its fabric. He further quoted the reasons with two out of many examples, “EU and Western donors are taking too much interest and openly lobbying in favor of the right to change religion; and two, Hindus and Buddhists are reportedly feeling the impact of “proselytization” numerically.”¹⁵⁴ In this article Adhikari has argued that the decision to convert Hindu Nation to Secular as the piece of conspiracy. The point here is not to prove that ‘conspiracy’ as the adaptive strategies utilized by the ‘west’ to convert Nepal to a secular but to demand more information if socio-cultural grievances of oppressed (minority) people have been used as a tool of opportunities by external actors for otherwise purposes.

¹⁵¹ <http://nepaliheadlines.com>

¹⁵² Prakash Chandra Lohani, Former Foreign Minister of Nepal
<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2015-08-03/let-us-be-279156.html>

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ <http://nepalpolity.com/?p=5344#sthash.QKeACna1.dpbs>

There is a widely held belief that Nepal's adaptation of secular constitution has happened against the 'Indian advice.'¹⁵⁵ Out of many issues in the new constitution where Indian interests are not met, there are ample examples that India is not happy with the secular constitution is one. An unofficial blockade from Indian Government resulted in keen shortage of fuel and cooking gas in Nepal as soon as new constitution was promulgated in 2015. It is clear that Indian advice has been crucial in Nepal's internal matters. Some of Indians writers are found to have written that India has provided monetary and political support to promote Hinduism in Nepal. This criticism is well accepted by Leader of fourth largest political party who is demanding Nepal to revert to a Hindu state. Kamal Thapa the chairman of RPP-N himself in many television interviews has said that no one should surprise when Hindus form all around the world support Hinduism in Nepal. Interestingly on the other side of the coin, Dr. Charudatta Pingale in his article writes Christian missionaries have offered millions of amount as bribery to Nepal's constitution to be secular.¹⁵⁶

In his article Pingale further acknowledges that Christians are 'showering money'¹⁵⁷ to convince Hindus to act against Hindu state. He gave several examples that Christian countries had attempted to purchase academic persons, Hindu activists and journalists where some accepted the bribe and most of them did not.¹⁵⁸

5.7 How Nepal Became a Secular Nation?

In this section I will sum up the analysis by providing the answer to the research question, how Nepal became a secular nation? Due to its top-bottom structure of Hindu Monarch religious nationalism in Nepal got weaker as soon as the King was overthrown in 2006. Considering Maoists as the major threat for the Hindu Nationalism and lack of religio-political activism in support of Hindu religion by the King himself the toss was won by pro-secularist. In other words, the King himself did not initiated any kind of religious tools to safeguard the monarchy. He trusted and relied merely to his Military and close intellectuals. Nepal's Hindu-state is seen to have gone together with the fall of King's regime. If only the King was aware this was going to happen, he would have established and mobilized some religious force neither he nor Hinduism would have gone. I found the bond between the king

¹⁵⁵ www.dawn .com, published September 22, 2015

¹⁵⁶ Dr Pngale, Christian Conspiracy to separate Nepal from Hindu identity and solution to stop their ploy (2015)
Retrieved from : <https://www.hindujagruti.org/news/55939.html> , (10.04.2016)

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

and Hinduism like the ‘nail and the flesh.’ However secularism was declared before the King left the palace his active political career ended when he reinstated the old Nepalese House of Representative on April 24, 2006. Although secularism was not an agenda of the people’s uprising of 2006, the failure of King’s leadership and legitimacy with the combination of following independent variables secularism became inevitable. Politically and economically weak state and its historic transition, top-bottom hierarchy of Hindu traditions, illegitimate leadership of the King and cooperation between powerful European lobbyist and local secular elites as well as opportunistic political parties became the pillars for this change.

5.8 Constitutional Crisis and External Influence

Popular Gettysburg Speech of 1863 from Abraham Lincoln says “Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” For a casual observer, democracy is a tool to rule people by their own representatives. Nepal subtle democracy seems to have lost its track of ruling people by their verdict instead by some guided political ego of each political parties fulfilling their own intra-party and inter-party interest. Furthermore, this small and weak Himalayan nation face tremendous influence by its neighbor India due to its economic dependence and importantly because of the numerous influential local friends New Delhi has cultivated over the last few decades.¹⁵⁹¹⁶⁰ Until the recent new constitution officials believes Nepal has not taken any decision without an approval of India.¹⁶¹ Recently three incidents occurred in this inter-play. In May 2015, prime minister Narendra Modi has himself suggested Nepalese Politicians¹⁶² to extend promulgation of new constitution as part of their influence but this time Nepalese political parties did not agree on India’s will. Since then India is furious and eventually imposed an unofficial blockade of goods. However, this punishing of Nepal for not addressing India’s concerns in its new constitution appears to be the first act in a diplomatic suicide.¹⁶³

Second, Nepal took strong objection to the reference to the country in the Joint Statement issued after the 13th EU-India summit in Brussels on March 30. In their joint statement after the 13th EU-India summit in Brussels on March 30. European Union and India mentioned

¹⁵⁹ <http://nepalpolity.com/?p=5344#sthash.QKeACna1.dpbs>

¹⁶⁰ <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/r-i-p-indias-influence-in-nepal/>

¹⁶¹ India has inserted its micro-management team in India to track most of the political activities. Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) closely observes every important decisions made in the governmental level and influences overtime in Nepal.

¹⁶² <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/5-10-people-cannot-impose-a-constitution-pm-modi-tells-nepal/story-yC4QsS0q5hJuAJuOkhwfyM.html>

¹⁶³ <http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/r-i-p-indias-influence-in-nepal/>

about Nepal's Constitutional issues, urging the country to address the constitution-related issues in a time bound matter. However, on Thursday took strong objection to the reference to the country in the Joint Statement issued after the 13th EU-India summit in Brussels on March 30. In the strongly-worded statement, Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has firmly objected the statement, saying that resolving the Constitution-related issues are purely internal affairs of Nepal and no foreign countries should interfere in it. Similarly just 8 days after this incident, International Crisis Group (ICJ) is an international non-governmental organization based in Brussels working to prevent armed conflict worldwide published a report about Nepal “*Nepal Divisive New Constitution: An Existential Crisis*”. The report is mostly based on highlighting the eastern-Terai the so-called Madhesi communities who ethnically and socially share the traditions with Indians just across the border. The report criticized Nepalese major political forces not being fair enough towards those Madhesi. ¹⁶⁴ Felling lack of acceptance from the state as well as existing citizenships measures that them since they normally have many cross-border marriages are some of the elements that grows dissatisfaction among this community, as told by their leaders. International Crisis group in its long report mentioned much about Madesh protest and gave many recommendation to the government on how to solve the problem.¹⁶⁵ However this report did not mention anything about the Hindu groups who want the restoration of the country to officially Hindu status and not happy with the secular constitution. Third, the 13th EU India Joint summit and the statement urged Nepal to urgently solve the crisis addressing the demands of Madhesi Community was very much silent about the growing demands of Hindus. The Indian government seems “to kill the snake as well as keep the stick unbroken” by working to put diplomatic pressure on Nepal to address Terai protesters in Brussels as well as harvest support from Hindus in Nepal and India silently suggesting to revert Nepal as a Hindu state in regional context.

Preliminary draft of new constitution was distributed widely for public feedback before its promulgation in September 2015 and its report was drafted and tabled from the feedback received by the Suggestion Collection Committee.¹⁶⁶ Not to forget, preliminary draft of the

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/nepal/276-nepal-s-divisive-new-constitution-an-existential-crisis.aspx>

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2015/07/28/public-feedback-in-ca/>

constitution in article 4 has mentioned, “*State of Nepal: (1) Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive multi-caste, republican state, oriented towards democratic socialism, which shall be called Nepal in short.*”¹⁶⁷ Among 186,946 suggestions significant numbers of “people have suggested “secularism to be replaced with Hinduism as a state religion or mention religious freedom instead.”¹⁶⁸ RPP-Nepal that was elected to the second CA on the basis of this every agenda organized protest rallies against the preliminary draft that proposes secularism.¹⁶⁹ On this issue parties agreed in principle that secularism should be replaced by other words or phrases though they were yet to decide one acceptable to all. Despite wider suggestions and violent protest against secularism the new constitution in September 2015 did not replace the word secular however it is different from the earlier draft. As the article four of its final version reads, “*State of Nepal: (1) Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state.*”¹⁷⁰ However a controversial explanation was given which political parties dictate, ‘minimizes the dissatisfaction and address both the majority Hindu and minorities religions.’ The explanation of article four reads, “*For the purpose of this article, 'secular' means protection of religion and culture being practiced since ancient times and religious and cultural freedom.*”¹⁷¹ Pro-Hindu activist disagree with this explanation and their demand to revert Nepal back to Hindu nation is increasing widely. One recent example: the leader of the largest party Nepali Congress (NC) Shekhar Koirala who said in an public event, in order to make republic and federalism stronger we should consider the sentiment of 85 percent people and revert Nepal to Hindu Nation.¹⁷²

The 94-page report contains 186,946 suggestions collected directly from people and through website, email, post office and fax. The CA members had reached their constituencies to seek public feedback on the draft. As many as 184,674 people had participated in programs organized to collect public feedback

¹⁶⁷ Preliminary Draft, Constitution of Nepal June 2015

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.rssnepal.com/?p=1992>

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 4

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² <http://www.himalkhabar.com/126094>

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has examined the trajectory that Nepal from a Hindu nation has converted to a secular nation. It has specifically highlighted how socio-political progress in Nepal as well as non-secular activism from inside and outside the country eventually resulted in secularization of Nepal. This study is primarily based on fourteen high level personal interviews with political and religious leaders conducted in Nepal. Power-relations and differences between the ‘west’ and the ‘east’, religious resistance against secularization, extremist groups and socio-political transition of Nepal are applied as theoretical approach to further discuss respondent’s opinion on how Nepal turned to a secular nation.

In the beginning this study has discussed about the history of Nepal which has unfolded its social, cultural and religious roots since the creation of Nepal in 18th century. The second chapter has offered specific background about the origin and development of Christianity in Nepal in connection to its fast growing followers. Chapter three has described methodological frameworks along with tools and techniques and opportunities and challenges of the research. Similarly, chapter four has outlined the theoretical framework within the religious-secular discourse and interest and motivation of ‘secular’ project in inserting secularism in Nepal. With reference to all four chapters discussed, chapter five has presented data collected, its analysis and major findings.

6.1 Summary of Research Findings

This study aims to look at the process and progress of Nepal from a Hindu religious country to a secular country as well as to look if there was any monetary inducement proposed to convince the actors who were there to decide the cause. Findings suggest that Nepal became secular with the cooperation between the religious minorities in the country and powerful influence from non-Hindus whoever were interested in turning Nepal into a secular nation. Juergensmeyer has opined that conflict between secular and religious nationalist as well as specific grievance that the groups carry against each other in order to make one owns position stronger. This also happened in the case of Nepal.¹⁷³ In Nepal minority religions like Christianity and Buddhism were found to have cultivated certain grievances which was then supported by the non-Hindus groups mainly ‘Christian actors’ from different parts of the

¹⁷³ Op cited, Rangdrol, 2007

world. Christians have strongly favored a secular state over a Hindu state because of their rising grievances of being a minority religion or in other word a second class religion in an officially Hindu country. The weak economy, political instability, post conflict transition and constitutional vacuum fabricated a huge gap among the citizen and political parties, some stronger 'secular' powerbroker have carefully traced the track in adopting secularism in Nepal.

Nepal's frequent change in government with eight governments in last ten years has featured its political instability. Although King was overthrown in 2006 by popular people's movement, secularism was not among the demands of people in that movement. However failure of King's leadership and legitimacy also determined the fate of Hindu state to some extent. Among many variables, in the one hand top-bottom hierarchy of Hindu traditions, illegitimate leadership of the King; support and cooperation between stronger European lobbyist and local secular elites as well as opportunistic political parties on the other hand together are found as major reasons for the demise of Hindu Nation.

On the other side of the case, Hindu Nationalism in Nepal was found relatively peaceful and moderate. Despite the fact that secularism was declared without 'due and democratic process' (as quoted by the Hindu activist and section of people who oppose secular Nepal) their reactions were not fanatic. However, many peaceful protests were organized in many parts of the country. In 'strong religion' theory Juergensmeyer has explained that fundamentalist groups may exist and rise to confront the secular projects in such transition.¹⁷⁴ In Nepal, despite growing dissatisfaction among Hindus to accept Nepal as a secular country their opposing to it seems relatively peaceful with no visible fundamentalist and fanatic mobilization. David Rangdrol in his thesis puts this, lack of religiopolitical mobilization and shortage of communalism among the religious nationalists may short resistance power to stop Nepal becoming secular.¹⁷⁵ This study has found that Hindu organizations and political parties those favor promotion of Hindu Nation receive ample amount of support from the Hindus around the world. Nevertheless, these supports were either not sufficient and/or not mobilized properly to safeguard Nepal to remain as a Hindu country.

¹⁷⁴ Op Cited: Juergensmeyer, 1985

¹⁷⁵ Op Cited: Rangdrol, 2007

6.2 Analytical Contribution of the Findings

This study has attempted to find whether or not there was an intention of outside world in turning Nepal to a secular country. Although there was a growing grievances from various minority groups who are dissatisfied with the 'Hindu Monopoly' in various socio-cultural dimensions, those grievances were not sufficient to secularize Nepal. It is because there are many other dire socio-economic grievances raised in such ethnically diverse country which the state is unable to address. Further this study finds out that the demand of secularism is less dire in comparison to other economic hazards faced by the citizen in such underdeveloped country. However, secularism has been prioritized in Nepal, which has also arisen some thoughts, *no smoke without fire*.

Since Hinduism is not only a religious practice in the Nepalese society but also entangled with socio-cultural aspect of day to day life. This study reveals that no actors who decided and declared secular Nepal are in a position to answer what kind of framework is going to address the societal fragmentation. Hindu activists are blaming politicians as traitors and recent intra-party debate whether Nepal should revert to Hindu nation shows Nepal has a lot to think about. The ideological confrontation and ongoing roaring and protest from Hindu section may enter to a fortified battle, such aggression is visible. Those actors who were in the center of the decision making and declaring secular may sit together and then discuss on what can be done to minimize the chaos.

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