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**Contextual and Indigenous Theology: Constructing common
ground for the church in Multi-cultural Nepalese context**

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Abstract

Nepal is not a home for monoculture, ethnicity, and religion but it has varieties of diversity. We can easily imagine that the varieties of languages (123 spoken languages) itself give the clue of the diverse way of revering deities and their worship pattern. However, one thing is common that the majority of people are religious and they are devoted to their gods and goddesses. Also, these people have their cultural practices like traditional dress, (different from other ethnic groups) musical instrument, the way of worshipping gods, celebrating the festival and conducting ceremonies.

In the Nepali Context, as far as people are living in normal life, they do not want to be Christian because becoming Christian is to bear hatred, rejection, isolation and sometimes unexpected persecution too. Why? The only reason is that people consider Christianity is (foreign) religion of others. They imagine that in order to become Christians they must renounce their own culture, lose their own identity, and betray their people. They think becoming Christian is to lose original identity, culture, and tradition.

In this context, the primary question is, how as a church/Christian can we construct an inclusive method (local/contextual theology) for presenting the Gospel giving people a sense of their own cultural identity? Moreover, how the church would create a friendly and homely environment to the people from the diverse ethnic and cultural background?

Constructing local/contextual Theologies is an essential task for the Nepalese Christian community. It is the right time to construct local theology that is suitable in our context. Other hand, the issues of Ethnic identity, national identity, religious identity, and cultural identity has been rising very loudly. Another hand, modern technology, urbanization, globalization, world economic system, migration, and world education system has been pulling the attention of the new generation. In this dichotomy how we formulate Nepalese Christian Theology is challenging at the same time, it is essential to give clear Christian biblical and ethical guidelines by constructing local theology.

Nepal is not only a home for multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural people; also it is a home for many religions. We need to change seeing all other religions as evil and Christianity as only superior religion. Inter-religious dialogue and interreligious hospitality are essential not only for religious harmony but, it is also for fulfilling the mission of God

being involved in the act of love. Nepalese Christian must take the initiative to extend the hearts and hands of hospitality because we are saying, Christianity is the superior and true religion, but Hindus and other religious people are saying, Christianity is foreign religion or religion of west. In this context, Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and dialogue between Jesus and Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) would be suitable passages to construct the theology of interreligious hospitality and interreligious dialogue.

Becoming a multi-ethnic church, showing the spirit of hospitality and exercising religious tolerance is a vital task of the Nepalese church. An individually as well as collectively as a church we must have a spirit of hospitality and religious tolerance because Christianity in Nepal is the religion of minority and we are living among the pluralistic religious community.

Abbreviations

A.D. (Anno Domini)	in the year of the Lord
B.C.	Before Christ
BEC	Believers Eastern Church
B.S. (Bikram Sambat)	Nepali Yearly Calendar
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CE	Common Era
CWM	Council for World Mission
DAWN	Disciplining a Whole Nation
ed., eds.	Editor Editors
e.g. (Exempli gratia)	for example
esp.	Especially
etc. (et cetera)	and others of the same class, and so forth
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference
f., ff.	And the following page(s)
fig., figs	figure, figures
FNCN	Federation of National Christian Nepal
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GFA	Gospel For Asia
INF	International Nepali Fellowship
INGO(s)	International Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NCF	National Churches Fellowship
NCFN	National Churches Fellowship of Nepal
NCS	Nepal Christian Society
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OM	Operation Mobilization
p., pp.	Page, pages
UMN	United Mission to Nepal

V., vv.

Vol.

WCC

WMC

www.

Verse, verses

Volume

World Council of Churches

World Mission Conference

World Wide Web

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1 Chapter One: General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

David J. Bosch states that, "...All theology is, by its very true nature contextual"(Bosch 2011, 431). There are various theologies, and it has come out of human struggles to address the aspiration of the people in a different era. From the 1970s, contextual theology became a blanket term for varieties of theological models"(Bosch 2011, 431). Today contextual theology has become mainstream not only in the field of theological education but also in missiology and practical mission of the church. For example Liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, Dalit theology, Asian theology, Minjung theology and so on.

Every individual has a particular cultural worldview regarding their God and the way of worshiping patterns. People in each continent, country, and region have been facing particular sociopolitical issues. Therefore Contextual theology is increasingly central for Christian existence throughout the world (Haire 2011, 18). Especially, Christianity is growing in the Global South; these contextual theologies of the Global south are lived out in communities' lives but not always recognized for what they are. Since the 1950s there is a rapid development of contextual theology in Asia (Haire 2011, 19) from where major world religion has been launched and also it is a home for multi-ethnicity, religiosity, linguistic and cultural varieties in each mile. However, still, Christianity is always viewed as a religion of others. 1951 was a turning point in the country's development and its openness to the outside world, and partially mission activities began not to convert any native people but just to assist in the field of health and education. In 1951 there was just a single secret Christian residing in Nepal, but surprisingly Nepali Christians grew to about 40,000 baptized believers by 1990 (Barclay 2009, 189). Within 67 years (1951-2018), Christianity in Nepal has been growing rapidly. CB Gahatraj, the president of the Federation of National Christian in Nepal (FNCN), recently announces in the "Talk Show program on AP1 Television": that the number of Christians in Nepal reached 300 thousand and 12 thousand churches have been established (Gahatraj 2017). Late presence of Christianity in Nepal gave enough space to describe it as a foreign religion and Jesus as foreign God. Also, it is a religion of poor and low caste, and always Christians are blamed indulging and enticing poor and marginalized people in the name of charity work. Conversion by force is strictly prohibited by law, and it is a punishable

act. However, still the growth of Christianity in Nepal is rapid and every part of the country the number of Christians are increasing (Gahatraj 2017).

Churches in Nepal are growing from and within the struggle, and it is the condition of the church at present what exactly Stephen B. Bevans describes the church of the twenty-first century as a multicultural church in multireligious population, a young church, a Persecuted Church and a Poor church (Bevans 2011, 6-7). Nepalese churches are in the context of great diversity and facing the situation what Bevans has described. We need a kind of theology that is not just based on high and sophisticated philosophy, but we need working/pragmatic theology that will address the life and situation of the Nepalese community.

Today, construction of Nepalese Christian theology is much more needed so that the flavor of Jesus could be tasted and they might feel Jesus as their god of goodness, provider, protector, healer, dweller, savior, liberator, and peacemaker. Now second generation leaders are on the move, and many of them are theologically trained, but still, we lack deeper study of contextual, intercultural and indigenous theology that will address the real situation of the people. This is an attempt to bring the conceptual framework of contextual theology and its various model to gain a deeper understanding on contextualization so that I could hybridize the new concept of indigenization and give valuable insight for the Nepalese churches and newcomer theologian in our soil.

The Task:

First of all, we need to address the issues within the church where believers are from a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious background. They should not feel like strangers when they come into the church for worship and fellowship. They must feel it as their home and everyone can enjoy their diversity under one umbrella-that is in the body of Christ.

Secondly, we need to preach the gospel in a local/existing cultural context following and exploring the suitable method of contextualization. People should not feel that we are introducing a foreign Jesus by devaluing the local understanding of god, but we need to discover the way so that people may find Jesus within their cultural context in one and

different forms. For example: worshiping unknown god, praying to the spirit, offering sacrifices, respecting the creator and some other symbolic form of worshiping like a rod, stone, light, water, etc. which are metaphorically connected with the Jesus and to the word God. So, how we introduce Jesus is very important.

Thirdly, Constructing Local Theology is an essential task in the Nepalese Christian community. Till now we do not have a written Nepalese Christian theology. We have the oldest Christian literature as a Hymn Book that is called “Nepali Khristiya Bhajan” (Nepalese Christian Hymn Book). In this songbook, the expression of Nepalese Christian Theology is reflected. There are few songs translated from English and Hindi, but most of the Songs are composed by First generation Nepalese Christian and still those songs are very familiar among the Nepalese Christian Churches. Most of the songs are an expression of eternal hope, spiritual salvation, life after physical death and the worldly wisdom, knowledge, wealth, possession and all the material comforts are useless. Moreover, it has nothing to do for the inheritance of the kingdom of God that has been prepared only for the born again and genuine Christian who has been suffered, persecuted, and rejected from society. Those songs were only the mean of their comfort, hope, and encouragement because of gigantic persecution they were unable to expose themselves in front of government officials and other people who were against Christianity. However, now the situations have been changed, and it is the time to construct local theology that is suitable in our context. In one hand the issues of Ethnic identity, national identity, religious identity, and cultural identity has been rising very loudly. Other hand, modern technology, urbanization, globalization, world economic system, migration, and world education system has been pulling the attention of the new generation. In this dichotomy how we formulate Nepalese Christian Theology is challenging at the same time, it is essential to give clear Christian biblical and ethical guidelines by constructing local theology.

Fourthly, need to be open for dialogue and religious harmony. Nepal is not only a home for multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural people; also it is a home for multi-religions. We need to change seeing all other religions as evil and Christianity as only supper religion. As Samuel Ngun Ling said, “Religious pluralism does not necessarily create the loss of one’s faith, tradition, culture, and identity but it rather helps enrich common life, community relationship, and global ministry” (Ling 2012, 141). He further quotes the saying of Hans

Kung, “no survival without a Global Ethic. No world peace without peace between religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions” (Ling 2012, 141). This shows the importance of religious tolerance and dialogue. Nepalese Christian world view is to see other religious practices are merely evil, satanic and idol worship. However, we never observed and valued their passion, respect, commitment and longingness for a living and true God from where they expect a healing miracle, peace, security, good health, and prosperity. Though the way of seeking, praying and worshiping God may be different than what the bible and Christian tradition thought us to do. However, it is the beauty of believing and trusting in god this passion of seeking true and living God will lead them to the eternal source of life (Jesus). Therefore, we need to have religious tolerance and dialogue. As Limatula Longkumer states, “The Church in Asia, under the guidance of the spirit, should never cease to learn the art of dialogue between culture and Gospel” (Ling 2012, 68) and also the art of dialogue between Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslim, and other local religions. This is a necessity for the survival of not only Nepalese Churches but for all the churches wherever they are in a position of the minority.

Finally, spirit of hospitality and religious tolerance is a vital task of the Nepalese church. An individually as well as collectively as a church we must have a spirit of hospitality and religious tolerance because Christianity in Nepal is the religion of minority and we are living among the pluralistic religious community. Theologians like, Jonathan Y. Tan, Peter C. Phan, and Amos Yong all agree that Asian Christians need to acknowledge that the Asian context of religious pluralism is not a dilemma to be eradicated, but a distinctive characteristic of being Asian and Christian. Jonathan Tan suggests that “Without diversity and pluralism, there is no room for the Christian gospel in Asia amid the dominance of the great Asian religion. Asian Christians know very well unless they defend religious diversity and pluralism against exclusivist religious chauvinism, there will be no room for Christianity in a continent dominated by the other great religion of the world.” (Tan 2014, 95). Nepal as being as one of the Sought Asian countries there is no other alternative rather than to admire the spirit of hospitality and accept the religious pluralism with great tolerance for listing and sharing diverse religious views.

1.2 Background and Identification of Research Problem

According to a census held in 2011, there are 125 castes/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as a mother tongue (central bureau of statistics Nepal 2011). Though Nepali is an official and common language for all, still there are huge numbers of people who love their mother tongue. These ethnic groups have their own culture, tradition and belief system. In Nepali Context, as far as people are living in normal life, they do not want to be Christian because becoming Christian is to bear hatred, rejection, isolation and sometimes unexpected persecution too. Why? The only reason is that people consider Christianity is (foreign) religion of others. They imagine that in order to become Christians they must renounce their own culture, lose their own identity, and betray their people. They think becoming Christian is to lose original identity, culture, and tradition.

So, how as church/Christian can we construct the inclusive method (local/contextual theology) for presenting Gospel giving the sense of their belongingness? Identity is a significant issue; mainly it includes Ethnicity, Language, Dress, Music Food, and festival. The primary need is formatting Nepalese Christian Theology.

God as a Creator, Spirit, Supernatural power and bible is the source of culture, ethnicity, diversity, and unity could be common ground. Because all people are theist, believe in God, spirit, supernatural power. We as an Image of God could be one of the best ways to prove our identity. Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for the salvation of one's soul and Human being as an Image of God created with flesh, soul, and spirit because all the ethnic groups in Nepal has a concept of sacrifice, an infinity of human spirit and heaven and heal.

Multi-cultural people are gathering in the church, and they should not feel strange when they are worshipping together. How can the church create a homely environment and enjoy these multicultural, multilinguistic and multi-ethnicity together as a body of Christ?

1.3 Research Question/s

1. What are the appropriate Methods, model and approaches of contextual theology to address the challenges and bring holistic impact for Indigenous Mission work in Nepalese context?

2. How could the Churches in Nepal be a place to feel at home to every ethnic group?

The first research question will help to review and analysis the various methods and model of contextual theology. Also, it will help to formulate local theology based on its context and second research question will help to explore various ideas and biblical thoughts to see and feel church as the body of Christ and place for respecting, valuing, celebrating cultural and ethnic diversity in a religiously pluralistic society.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research work is to broaden the concept of contextualization in the Nepalese context. Moreover, to recommend suitable model and methods of contextualization that will be implemented in Nepalese Context for effective mission work; so that, people may not feel that the Christianity as western religion and Jesus as foreign God. Nepal is also heavily influenced by globalization; especially new generations are curious to explore and adopt new ways of living. Other hand people are more conscious of their culture, ethnicity, identity, and nationality. In this situation what will be the best way to have inclusive mission work among the 97% non-Christian Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic community and also, to encourage local churches of Nepal to be a part of God's mission in effectively and efficiently among the pluralistic religious society. The aim of constructing local theology is to address the real situations of the people. It could be cultural, ethical, social, economical, political, and so on. But mainly, in this research, we are dealing with cultural, ethnic and religious issues.

1.5 Motivation

I was born in a remote village in eastern Nepal. Religiously I was born in a newly converted Christian family in 1981. At that time, Christianity was strictly prohibited religion in my country. However, my parent accepted Jesus as their Lord and savior due to severe sickness because miraculously healing took place after the short prayer in Jesus's name from one of our relatives to whom my parent had persecuted lot for being a follower of Jesus. When my parent accepted Jesus immediately, our neighbors and relatives began to persecute my family, and even my father was put in prison like a criminal for six months because of praying in Jesus name. I was grown up in an isolated, rejected and persecuted Christian family. Not only in a village but even in the school we were treated as lower than the low caste people according to the Hindu caste system.

However, my parent was happy to be persecuted in the name of Jesus because they had

experienced the real peace, Joy and the assurance of salvation in Christ Jesus. As I grew up in that context, many questions raised in my mind. Why people treat us differently? Why did they call Christianity is foreign religion? Why are we rejected by our society? Is it wrong to follow Jesus Christ? What are the differences among the religions? Why people worship so many gods and idols? Who is God in reality? Is there a real place call haven and heal? Being a Christians it sin follow local culture? Why do our brothers (those who have not accepted Jesus), and neighbors think we are “Others”? All these questions pushed me to read the bible and even to pursue my theological studies. I have got the answers to my basic questions, but now I am in frontline ministry and doing church plantation, evangelism, teaching and preaching along with pastoral ministry. However, still, I am pondering with some of the questions: How can we make Jesus and Gospel acceptable in our cultural context? Are we following bible or doctrines of foreign missionaries and denominations? How can we make Jesus as our Jesus?

Moreover, how the Church could be a Place to feel at home to every ethnic group? How can we remove the tag of “Others”? Some of these questions pushed and motivated me to do this research work on Contextual and intercultural theology so that I might be able to find out acceptable, inclusive and biblical concepts and ideas of doing mission among the Multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Nepalese community.

1.6 Methodology and Structure

This research is based on mix methods. Topic related texts and literature will be used to discuss a various model of contextual theology and also to give brief information of the historical background of the mission work in Nepal. Participatory observation is one of the main methods in this research work. I am using Observation in multi-method designing as a tool to analyze the practices of the churches in different areas.

This research will contain five chapters. The first chapter carries the general introduction of the thesis which includes overall introductions of the research work, research questions, research method, Objective of the research, Scope, and limitation, ethical consideration and strength and reliability of the thesis.

Chapter two focus on the contextual background of Nepal. In brief, it describes the political, economical, geographical, cultural and ethnic condition of Nepalese society. Also, it includes

the brief history of Nepalese church, mission and present situation of the churches in Nepal and its influences in the society.

Chapter three carries theoretical framework that defines the term, “contextual” and “indigenous” theology. Also, this chapter includes a brief historical background of contextual theology and utilization of these terms in mission work, especially in the third world country. Nature and method of contextual theology and various model of contextual theology will be discussed and how the impact of contextual theology has been seen in the multicultural, multilinguistic, multi-ethnic groups, and multi-religious community in the different part of the world will be analyzed.

Chapter four will be an analytical chapter, where we discuss how the churches in Nepal views leadership and cultural practices that are directly involved in church service and other activities like dance, music, songs, costume, festival, day celebration, etc. Also in this chapter strengthen; opportunity, weakness, and threat of contextualization in the Nepalese context will be measured. Observation as a multi-method is used to prove and analyze the present activities of the churches in Nepal.

Chapter five in concluding chapter where the present scenario of Nepalese churches and mission movement in Nepal and the practices of churches, in brief, will be discussed, and possible application will be suggested for the promotion of constructing local/contextual theology for effective mission work by presenting appropriate methods of contextual theology.

I have used Chicago Fifteenth Edition formate in citation and bibliography to acknowledge the right sources.

1.7 Observation as a Method

Observation has been a central method throughout the history of qualitative enquires. Observation research and ethnography these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Ethnography involves an understanding of communities, groups or settings through the detailed investigation of the cultural norms, beliefs, and characteristic behaviors. (Nicholls, Mills and Kotecha 2014). I have been using this method to observe systematically and record actions and interactions, different activates of the Nepalese Christian community within the

church and with other community that is closely related with their day to day lives; with their previous religion, culture and other activities. I am using this method in a multi-method designing. According to Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha:

“Observation might be carried out concurrently with other data collection approaches or sequentially either before or after other methods are used. So for example, observation might be used at a preliminary stage of the field work to inform the design and coverage of other phases but also to provide substantive evidence for later analysis. Alternatively, it might be used alongside other data collection methods to focus on different aspects of the issues being researched or to support or extend the other evidence collected. As an end stage of data collection, observation can be introduced to explore events or interactions suggested as important by other evidence, or to validate findings identified through earlier data collection” (Nicholls, Mills and Kotecha 2014, 251).

In this research work, my observation is to provide evidence of contextualization in the analysis chapter. Duration of my observation, in general, is since 2006 when I involved in pastoral ministry and started a new church in a Hindu dominated community. However, Focus and selective observation took place on the 1st of November to 28th of December, 2019. Mostly my role is participator as an observer, but sometimes I remain as a complete observer and participator observer. There is a varying degree of involvement as an observer:

1. Observer as participants: Researcher observes unobtrusively as possible, engaging in the setting to some extent but usually only for a short period and does not attempt to form relationships or to engage more deeply.
2. Complete Observe: researcher remains detached from any engagement and whose presence is usually not known to those they are observing (Nicholls, Mills and Kotecha 2014, 246-247).

Another important factor in observation is a selection of observed activities and location or field site. It depends on the research question, what the researcher is seeking and trying to prove or going to analysis (Nicholls, Mills and Kotecha 2014). I have chosen some of the

theme or activities that have been practicing by Nepalese churches. Those themes are closely related to cultural issues and the process of contextualization. Field notes, photographic and short video clips are primary data for the observation in this research. Because, once it has been decided that observation will be a method of data collection, precisely what is to be observed needs to be considered. It is ‘not only impossible but also undesirable’ for ‘anything and everything’ in the set to be observed recorded (May 2011, 177; Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha 2014, 253).

My field note includes a detail description and subjective reflection of what I have observed. This observation is done without informing to the consents. Some would argue that researching without informed consent makes the covert observation, ‘ethically untenable’ (Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha, 2014; Angrosino and Rosenberge, 2011). However, Loftland et al.(2006) suggest that in public spaces part or busy streets it is feasible for observation to take place without explicit permission being obtained, provided the researcher ‘adheres to the normative expectations of public behavior’ such as not staring or following people (Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha 2014, 248). There are seven major themes or the areas of observation that have been observed during my research; leadership in the Nepalese church, way of worship, way of evangelism, music and costumes, dance and songs, festival and day celebration, language and literature are major factors that are directly connected with the pre-existing religion culture and present activities of the church.

1.8 Scope and limitation

Geographically Nepal is a small country; yet there are various ethnic groups, castes, religions and different socio-economic, cultural communities. Within the last 20 years, numbers of mainline churches and different denominations from the western world including some Asian countries like India, Singapore, and South Korea have been doing mission work and establishing churches under their banners. However, the leadership in the church comes under the local Nepalese Christian due to the prohibition of the direct involvement of foreigners in religious activities by the law. Therefore, there are many similarities in worship, evangelism and the other religious practices of the churches in Nepal. This research work is done in general to find out how the Nepalese churches are facing the challenges in doing mission work in their context. Is it possible to have effective mission work through imported theory

and method or do we need to construct and revised our methods of doing mission in the Nepalese context?

This research will not cover all the aspect of contextual theology, but it will raise the curiosity of the readers to think and evaluate the ground of Nepalese churches. There are many independent and indigenus church leaders who have been doing effective ministry in Nepal, and they have learned the methods from the situations they faced, and those ideas came out of their praxis and experiences. Academically, I attempt to think and react differently than the traditional thinking and pattern of doing mission work in the Nepalese context; because still, the common understanding of people in Nepal is that mission is done only by western people. This research work will provide methods of a model of contextual theology in general and gives a guideline to create local/contextual theology for the effective and inclusive mission work in multi-cultural Nepalese context.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

One of the best ethical responsibilities of a researcher is to acknowledge the sources. Without authentic resources, it is impossible to complete a quality research paper. I have taken various ideas, views, and thoughts of the numbers of authors and gone through a critical analysis of the text and observed the activities of Nepalese churches to complete my research work. I am assured that I have carefully acknowledged the source giving proper citation and bibliography.

2 Chapter Two: Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

A study of context will help to find out the real situation of the people in a particular socio-economic, political and cultural context. According to Dr. Vinay Samuel, an Indian contextual theologian understands the context as follows:

Context is the environment of discourse or action. It is a time-space where understanding takes place, the action is engaged, and results emerge. Contextualization implies that we examine the context, and awareness of how the context itself shapes the way we think through our beliefs, priorities, new identities in history, to appropriate something new in the historical context. Thus communication requires context, not just content. In the earlier pattern of the mission, the content was part of communication. In the new patterns, communication of the gospel requires context is more focused on the process. (Sugden 2000, 3).

In this regard, as a background, I want to bring three major issues about Nepal where I have included the number of ten major caste/ethnicity groups, languages and major religions reported in the census 2011.

1. Caste/Ethnicity: There are 125 castes/ethnic groups. **Chhetri** is the largest caste/ethnic groups having 16.6% (4,398,053) of the total population followed by **Brahman-Hill** (12.2% ; 3,226,903), **Magar** (7.1% ; 1,887,733), **Tharu** (6.6% ; 1,737,470), **Tamang** (5.8% ; 1,539,830), **Newar** (5.0% ; 1,321,933), **Kami** (4.8% ; 1,258,554), **Musalman** (4.4% ; 1,164,255), **Yadav** (4.0% ; 1,054,458) and **Rai** (2.3% ; 620,004).

2. Languages/Mother Tongue: There are 123 languages spoken as mother tongue reported in census 2011. **Nepali** is spoken as mother tongue by 44.6 percent (11,826,953) of the total population followed by **Maithili** (11.7% 3,092,530), **Bhojpuri** (6.0%; 1,584,958), **Tharu** (5.8%; 1,529,875), **Tamang** (5.1%; 1,353,311), **Newar** (3.2%; 846,557), **Bajjika** (3.0%; 793,418), **Magar** (3.0%; 788,530), **Doteli** (3.0%; 787,827), **Urdu** (2.6%; 691,546).

3. Religion: There are ten types of religion categories reported in the census. **Hinduism** is followed by 81.3 percent (21,551,492) of the population while **Buddhism** (9.0%; 2,396,099),

Islam (4.4%; 1,162,370), *Kirat* (3.1%; 807,169), *Christianity* (1.4%; 375,699), *Prakriti* (0.5%; 121,982), *Bon* (13,006), *Jainism* (3,214), *Bahai* (1,283) and *Sikhism* (National Population and Housing census 2011(National Report 2012, 4.)

So Nepal is not a home for monoculture, ethnicity, and religion but it has varieties of diversity. We can easily imagine that the varieties of languages (123 spoken languages) itself give the clue of the diverse way of expressing god and their worship pattern. However, one thing is common that the majority of people are religious and they are devoted to their God and goddesses. Also, these people have their cultural practices like traditional dress, (different from other ethnic groups) musical instrument, the way of worshipping gods, celebrating the festival and conducting ceremonies. In Nepali Context, as far as people are living in normal life, they do not want to be Christian because becoming Christian is to bear hatred, rejection, isolation and sometimes unexpected persecution too. Why? The only reason is that people consider Christianity is (foreign) religion of others. They imagine that in order to become Christians they must renounce their own culture, lose their own identity, and betray their people. They think becoming Christian is to lose original identity, culture, and tradition.

In this context how as a church/Christian can we construct the inclusive method (local/Contextual theology) for presenting Gospel giving the sense of their belongingness and how the churches could create friendly and homely environment are significant issues.

As a contextual background, it is essential to know the history of Nepal (land and people), socio-political and economic condition, background and manifestation of the Christianity and church, persecution, the arrival of denominations and influences of the church in the society in brief.

2.2 A brief history, Socio-political and Economic Condition of Nepal

Nepal recorded history begins in the 7th century BCE (Before the Common Era). The Kirats, Mongolian people who came to Nepal from the east, are said to have been Nepal's first inhabitants (History of Nepal n.d.). Little is known about the Kirati era other than Buddhism was the dominant religion and that Rai and Limbu people of Eastern Nepal are the descendants of the Kiratis (Sharma 1991, 12). Around 300 CE (Common Era) the Licchavis, Hindu People from North India overthrew the Kiratis. Hinduism became the main religion,

and caste system was imposed in society (History of Nepal n.d.) The Licchavis were in power until 602 CE, when the Thakuris took over the political power. During mid-1300, Nepal began dividing into many small city-states with feuding royal families. A Muslim invasion of the area left Nepal fairly unharmed, though several Hindu and Buddhist shrines were damaged. It was India that faced major destruction, which caused many Hindus to find sanctuary in Nepal. The new population surge created even more city-states in Nepal; each with their own coined currencies and armies (Sharma 1991, 13),

In 1372, Kathmandu's king Jayasthiti Malla took over the neighboring city-state of Patan, and a decade later, the city-state Bhaktapur. This unified the Kathmandu valley into one large kingdom. The reign of King Yaksha Malla in the Mid 1400s saw Nepal's borders extended south to the Ganges River, and north through Tibet. However, after his death in 1482, Nepal split up into many small states that would continue to battle with each other for 200 years. As the fighting continued, a new dynasty came into power. The Shah kings of Gorkha, a small kingdom located halfway in between Kathmandu and Pokhara, gradually extended power (Sharma 1991). In 1768, Prithvi Narayan Shah, King of Gorkha conquered the Kathmandu valley. On 21st March 1770, he made Kathmandu as his capital. His dream became true. He became the founder of present Nepal and Shah dynasty. In between Ranas had paralyzed Shah Dynasty for 104 years. However, again this power was reassured to Shah dynasty in 1950 (Sharma 1991, 13).

In 1990, The Nepali Congress Party with the support of "Alliance of leftist parties" decided to launch a decisive Jana Andolan (People's agitational movement), which forced the monarchy to accept constitutional reforms and to establish a multiparty parliament. In May 1991, Nepal held its first parliamentary elections in nearly 50 years (History of Nepal n.d.).

In February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started a movement to replace the parliamentary monarchy system with a people's new democratic republic, through a Maoist revolutionary strategy is known as the people's war (History Of Nepal. (n.d.), this war has caused significant economic losses and more than fourteen thousand people have lost their lives. On December 24, 2007, seven parties, including the former Maoist rebels and the ruling party, agreed to abolish the monarchy and declare Nepal the Federal Republic. In the elections held on 10 April 2008, the Maoists secured a simple majority, with the prospect of forming a government to rule the proposed 'Republic of Nepal'. On May 28, 2008, the newly-

elected Constituent Assembly declared Nepal the Federal Democratic Republic, abolishing the 240-year-old monarchy (History Of Nepal n.d.).

Fig. No.1



Source: nepalsbuzzpage.com (present Political Map indicating seven Federal States)

2.2.1 Land and People

Now Nepal is Known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal which is a landlocked country situated in South Asia between India and China having 140,800 square kilometers total area. Administratively Nepal is divided into Provinces, Districts and Municipalities.

According to the new constitution of Nepal 2015, all previous municipalities and villages (which were more than 3900 in number) are restructured in a total of 753 new Municipalities and Villages. Previous 75 district development committees (DDC) are also replaced by the new 77 District Coordination Committee (DCC).

Most Populous Caste/Ethnic groups (Census 2011)	Population	% of the total
Chhetri	4,398,053	16.6%

Most Populous Caste/Ethnic groups (Census 2011)	Population	% of the total
Bahun	3,226,903	12.2%
Newar	3,056,142	10%
Tharu	1,737,470	6.5%
Magar	1,539,830	5.8%
Tamang (taken as a single communal group)	1,321,933	5%
Khas-Kami	1,258,554	4.7%
Muslim (taken as a single religious group)	1,164,255	4.4%
Yadav	1,054,458	4.0%
Rai	620,004	2.3%
Gurung	522,641	1.9%
Damai/Dholi	472,862	1.8%
Thakuri	425,623	1.6%
Limbu	387,300	1.4%
Sarki	374,816	1.41%
Teli	369,688	1.4%
Chamar/Harijan/Ram	335,893	1.3%

Most Populous Caste/Ethnic groups (Census 2011)	Population	% of the total
Koiri/Kushwaha	306,393	1.1%
Musahar	234,490	0.88%
Kurmi	231,129	0.87%
Sanyasi/Dasnami	227,822	0.86%
Dhanuk	219,808	0.82%
Dusadh/Pasawan	208,910	0.79%
Sherpa	112,946	0.42%
Sunuwar	100,000	0.38%
Kumal	121,196	0.46%
Other (more than 100 caste/ethnic groups)	4,229,290	15.96%

(Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011)

At present, there are 6 Metropolitan Cities, 11 Sub-Metropolitan Cities, 276 Municipalities and 460 GaunPalik (also referred to as Rural Municipality). Population of Nepal as of the census day (June 22, 2011) stands at 26,494,504 showing a population growth rate of 1.35 per annum. (National Population and Housing Census, 2011)

2.2.2 Culture and Society

When we analyzed the history of Nepal, we can understand that Hinduism was not an inhabitant of Mongolians or Tibeto-Burman rather it was Aryan who took this religion and entered into Nepal from north India by carrying Hinduism and made it dominant religion by

monopolizing Hindustic religion and culture upon those Mongolians. (Sundas 2004-2005, 56).

This is live evidence even today though most of the Mongolians identify themselves as Hindu, in practice, their worship pattern, customs, belief and understanding of God is totally different from Aryan.

The Aryan conquest of Indus around 1560BC and remained seemingly is a constant conflict with the indigenous people. When the Aryan looked down upon as culturally inferior and excluded as ritually unclean. Before this, it has been said that Aryan arrived in the place with a structured caste system for social functioning and order, which in turn bred into four major castes as Brahmins (the priestly caste), Kshatriyas (the warriors), Vaishyas (the aristocrats) and the Sudras (untouchable).

At the time of the Muslim invasion, India faced major destruction, which caused many Hindus to find sanction in Nepal. Those Aryan entered into Nepal with the Hindu religion, social structure and had the widest influence among the ethnic/native people of Nepal in the ancient history. Before 500BC, Nepal was inhabited only by indigenous ethnic groups and had even no caste system. Migration of Hindu Aryan to Nepal exploited Nepal's indigenous/native peoples seized land and repressed native languages. They also aggressively promoted the Hindu religion, and many indigenous groups adopted their social structure remaining fully under their leadership (Sundas 2004-2005, 57).

Nepal is a home for various societies and cultural diversity. Most of the people who are living in villages are having their own culture and social construction. Most of the ethnic groups are living within their own people and community. However, major changes have taken place within the last ten years due to urbanization and migration from ruler villages to urban area; cultural exchanges and adoption have been taking place. Linguistic and religious diversity have strongly existed in Nepal. Nepal was declared Federal Democratic Republic country in 2008, Hinduism is a dominant religion, and the Nepali language is official and common for all. However, except Brahmins, Chhetries and Thakuris other ethnic groups are purely neither Hindu nor Buddhist, some of them claim themselves Hindu others Buddhist. In fact the majority of them claim themselves as Hindu.

Each ethnic group is having their own culture and tradition for celebrating different feast and festivals, marriage, worshipping God and goddesses and other various activities like dance, playing a musical instrument, songs and lyrics, dancing, etc. Polygamy is common for some ethnic groups, but nowadays, priority is given to monogamy; most of the traditional ethnic group emphasis endogamy marriage rather than exogamy. Child marriage is still in practice in some of the places. Marriages are held by arrangements, captures, by force, elopements (after falling in love) and nowadays court marriage is also being practiced in some of the cases but arrange marriage is highly respected in society. At present major cities of Nepal are having fragmenting cultural framework because of different ethnic groups and cities are becoming a place for extending fraternize relationship between various ethnic groups. For a city dweller, it is very difficult to continue their mother tongues, tradition and cultural practices which their ancestors practiced

Nepal also is known as Gorkhali kingdom was strung out along the Himalayas and included very diverse geographical and cultural regions. To the north of the foothills or middle hills which were its backbone, there were high peaks and valleys with a thin population of Tibetan culture. To the south were the Tarai plains populated both by tribals (principally Tharus) and by caste people, such as the Maithils, whose culture and language was found equally on the other side of the border with India(Gellner 1997, 4).

2.2.3 Economic condition

Landlocked Nepal was closed to the outside world until the 1950s. Nepal entered the modern era in 1951 without schools, hospitals, roads, telecommunications, electric power, industry, or civil service. The country has, however, made progress toward sustainable economic growth since the 1950s and opened the country to economic liberalization leading to economic growth and improvement in living standards than compared to the past. The biggest challenges faced by the country in achieving higher economic development are the frequent changes in political leadership as well as corruption (Economy of Nepal n.d.). A devastating earthquake in April 2015 killed thousands of people, flattened villages and reduced numerous heritage sites to ruin . Also, it was a great economic loss. Nepal is among the poorest and least developed country in the world with 23.8% of its population living below the poverty line. GDP per capita in Nepal averaged 391.43 USD from 1960 until 2016, reaching an all-

time high of 686.10 USD in 2015 and a record low of 267.10 USD in 1960 (Economy of Nepal n.d.).

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, providing a livelihood for over 65% of the population and providing 31.7% of GDP. Only about 20% of the total area is cultivable; another 40.7% is forested (i.e., covered by shrubs, pastureland & forest); most of the rest is mountainous. GDP is heavily dependent on remittances(29.1%) of foreign workers. Subsequently, economic development in social services and infrastructure in Nepal has not made dramatic progress in recent years (Economy of Nepal n.d.).

Nepal is naturally very rich because it has sufficient natural resources; especially it has a considerable scope in hydropower and tourism, areas of recent foreign investment interest. Prospects for foreign trade or investment in other sector remain weak because of the small size of the economy, its remoteness, its landlocked geographic location, its civil strife and susceptibility to the natural disaster.

However, according to the recent central bureau of statistics shows that only 23.8% of Nepalese are living below the poverty line being unable to provide their daily bread/food for their survival. Nepal has 10.4 million labor forces. Most of them are not skilled labors. Labor by occupation: agriculture 76%, services 18%, industry 6% and unemployment rate 42% (Economy of Nepal n.d.).This account shows that 42% of Nepalese are still struggling for their self-dependency without having employment in the country.

2.3 Brief Historical Background of Christianity in Nepal

The Nestorians who were early Christian missionary to Nepal in the pre-14th century but, the birth and existence of the first Nepalese church took place much later in 1952 (Pandey 2003). However, God was in action to prepare the way for the gospel in Nepal. Dr. Simon Panday has given some valuable information about early Christian missionaries' activities in his book "Christianity in Nepal (2003)." Some historical records show the Roman Catholic Church had sent some of the Capuchin fathers as missionary via Nepal to China. However, because of illness, only two fathers arrived in Kathmandu (present capital of Nepal) on 21st Feb. 1707. Malla kings became very close to those fathers and allowed them to stay with them though they had to face some jealousy from Brahmins. There were about 60 Nepali Christians led by father Joseph of Ravato when Prithivi Narayan Shah began Nepal's

consolidation by declaring Nepal only the Hindu Kingdom in the world. When Prithivi Narayan Shah began to rule those fathers were taken as a hostage, but after some time they released from hostage and getting permission from the king they left Kathmandu (Nepal) on 4th Feb. 1769 (Perry 1990, 411). Dr. Pandey states that:

The Policy of King Prithivi Narayan Shah regarding foreigners and Christians were strictly enforced. No foreigners were allowed to enter the country. This policy was applied to traders, scientists, professors, and missionaries. Even Indians were not allowed to stay overnight in the country. By and large, Nepal became closed off from the rest of the world. Law forbade any sales of or use of the bible. It was forbidden for any Christians, whether foreigners or nationals, to live in the country. Nepal thus became a “closed land” for the gospel of Jesus Christ for almost 200 years (Pandey 2003, 21).

Nepalese people remained out of the light of the gospel till Church of Scotland began their mission activities near Nepal border in Darjeeling when British colonialism began in India. According to British demand, many Nepalese have gone from Nepal to Darjeeling and settled over for labor work. Among those Nepalese, Ganga Prasad Pradhan appears as a father of Nepalese Christian literature who reached in Darjeeling in 29th May 1861 (Salon Kathak 2001,16). Other mission activities began in Nepal and surrounding its borders. Some of the early missions who paid great effort for the extension of God’s kingdom in Nepal are: United mission to Nepal 1954, Nepal Evangelistic Band 1940, Gorkha Mission 1892 had sent an evangelist in 1901 and the Evangelical Alliance Mission 1955 (Pandey 2003, 22,27,28). Dr. Rajendra Rongong, one of the early senior Christian leader, has told that during 1951-1960 there were approximately 100 Christians in all over the country (Panday 2003, 28). Another reliable source shows that in 1960 there were only 20 Christians in all over Nepal (Tamang 2003, 213).

2.4 Manifestation and Existence of the Churches

Foreign Missionaries were praying for Nepal taking shelter at Indian borders with the great enthusiasm to share the love of Jesus to the Nepalese people who had never heard about Jesus. The first record of a visit of a Christian missionary in Nepal dates back to 1628 when King Lakshminarasimha Malla received Portuguese Jesuit Father Juan Cabral graciously in

the spring that year. He was awarded a Tamra Patra, a copper plate, allowing him to preach Christianity (Celebrating 45 Years in Nepal, Kathmandu: United Mission to Nepal, December 1999).

In 1769 the Malla kings of Nepal had allowed the Capuchin priests to freely establish schools and clinics and run churches in Nepal. However, when King Prithivi Narayan Shah conquered Kathmandu in 1769, he drove out the priests and around 60 Christians from Nepal. From 1769 – 1950, Christians were not allowed to enter and to do any activities in Nepal. However, few Catholic priests were invited especially by the then Rana Prime Minister and the Royal family to establish a school in Kathmandu (Subedi 2009).

With the combined initiative of the then king, King Tribhuwan and the people of Nepal the 104 years of Rana reign ended in 1950. Nepal was then established as a democratic kingdom. With the advent of democracy in Nepal in 1950, the doors for Christianity was opened. Protestant Christians initially came to Nepal primarily through the Nepalese who were living outside of Nepal during and before the Rana Regime. After the collapse of Rana's rule in Nepal in 1950, Nepali Christians living in India came in, along with some western missionaries. International Nepal Fellowship is one of the earliest western mission agencies that came in and brought Christianity in Nepal (Celebrating 45 Years in Nepal, Kathmandu: United Mission to Nepal, December 1999).

Foreign Missionaries began to enter Nepal in the early 1950s, but engaged in development work, education and social service such as health care. Nepal was an officially Hindu state, and while conversion was never banned, proselytizing to convert was illegal and the Christian organizations who entered Nepal, including the Catholic church, United Mission to Nepal and the ecumenical INF, followed a philosophy of witnessing by example rather than evangelizing.

INF is an interdenominational and international Christian mission that exists to bring life in all its fullness to Nepal. The vision for this work began in India in the 1930s, before Nepal was open to outside people or influences. Lily O'Hanlon and Hilda Steel began medical work among Nepali people living in the Indian town of Nautanwa on the border of Nepal. Here they faithfully waited and prayed that one day they would be able to work in Nepal, which at

the time was completely closed to foreigners (Our Story, International Nepal Fellowship n.d.).

When Nepal opened up in 1952, after 16 years of prayer and waiting, a small group of medical missionaries including Lily and Hilda together with some Nepali friends walked north from the Indian border to the Pokhara valley. Moreover, with the permission of the Nepali Government INF started a clinic and a few years later the ‘Shining Hospital’ – the first hospital in the west of Nepal and the beginning of INF as we know it today (Our Story, International Nepal Fellowship n.d.).

A few Nepalese and some British Missionaries started a church and a hospital in Pokhara. In the meantime, Christian missionaries from South India and Darjeeling entered and established churches in Kathmandu. Nepal’s first church was formed at Ram Ghat, Pokhara, in 1952 with David Mukhia as pastor. Others followed in the Kathmandu valley. Tir Bahadur became the pastor at Bhaktapur in 1954. Rongong and Karthak’s small group that arrived from Darjeeling in 1956 appointed Robert Karthak as pastor the following year. This group developed into the Nepali Isai Mandali, commonly known as Gyaneshwar Church, which today is the largest congregation in Nepal (Perry 1990).

2.5 Persecution and church growth

Throughout the period from 1768 to 1990 proselytism of or conversion to Christianity or Islam was legally prohibited in Nepal. A statement of this prohibition can be found in the legal code of 1935:

To him who preaches beliefs opposed to the traditional religion of the subjects of the kingdom, to him who abandons or cause to abandon one religion to adopt, or cause to adopt, another one, the following rules will be applied: In the whole of the kingdom of Gorkha – Nepal, putting into practice and preaching Christian, Islamic and other irreligious and foreign beliefs which ruin the religion traditionally practiced by the Hindu community and the caste hierarchy, is prohibited; converting to these beliefs any of our subjects belonging to the Brahman caste, or any other clean caste is prohibited (Legal Code of Nepal 1935).

From the early 1960s, the state began actively to prosecute Christians where the baptism of Nepali citizens had occurred; this active governmental persecution continued up to 1990. Following baptisms in Nepalgunj and Tansen between 1958 and 1960, pastors David Mukhia and Prem Pradhan, along with six baptized believers, were prosecuted by the

authorities for proselytism and conversion. The pastors were sentenced to six years imprisonment; the male converts were sentenced to one-year imprisonment and the female converts to six months. Prosecutions such as this continued for the whole of the Panchayat period: when an amnesty was proclaimed in 1990, there were 30 individuals in Nepal imprisoned for crimes of proselytism or conversion, and 200 others who were subject to legal action for the same offenses (Christianity in Nepal n.d.). After the democracy movement of 1990, the jailed Christians were set free. A new constitution was promulgated which decriminalized religious conversion but retained the ban on proselytism. The interim constitution of 2007, adopted after the democracy movement of 2006, was identical to the 1990 code in these respects (The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, 74). It also proclaimed Nepal a secular state (The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, 56); and included guarantees on religious freedom. The 2015 constitution retained the designation of Nepal as a secular state but defined secularism to include the ‘protection of religion and culture being practiced since ancient times (Nepal’s Constitution 2015, 74). It also prohibited ‘disturbing the religion of other people’ and reiterated the ban on proselytism (Nepal’s Constitution of 2015, 22) (or literally, ‘causing someone to change religion’ (Nepali Sanvidan 2072, 13.)

In 2017, Nepal’s parliament passed an ambiguously-worded law criminalizing ‘hurting the religious sentiment of any caste, ethnic community or class by writing, through voice/talk or by a shape or symbol or in any other such manner’, and stipulating that ‘nobody should indulge in any act or conduct so as to undermine the religion, faith or belief that any caste, ethnic group or community has been observing since eternal times’ (Shellnutt: Nepal Criminalizes Christian Conversion and Evangelism: Christianity Today, 25 October 2017). In other South Asian countries similarly worded laws, which have sometimes been interpreted as prohibiting even speaking about one’s faith, have been used to settle personal vendettas or harass Muslim or Christian minorities (India Chapter-2017 Annual Report 2017) (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom 2017 Annual Report – India)

Between 1990 and the mid-2010s Nepal’s law on proselytism remained largely unenforced, and Christians were able to operate without significant governmental interference. However, the rapid growth of Christianity and the rise of nationalist sentiment since the declaration of secularism in 2007 have led to increasing calls for tighter restrictions on Christian activity, causing the authorities in recent years to enforce anti-proselytism laws more aggressively. It has been reported that local government and police officials have begun to

interpret the constitutional ban on proselytism to include non-coercive evangelism, (International Religious Freedom report 2010 South and Central Asia-Nepal 2010) and have brought several legal cases against Christians on this basis. It is probable that the 2017 anti-conversion law will lead to a further increase in prosecutions (Nepal: Bill Criminalizes Religious Conversion: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 21 August 2017).

In May 2009 a bomb was set off in the Catholic Cathedral in Kathmandu, killing two people and injuring a further 13. The group believed to be responsible is the Nepal Defence Army, a Terai-based Hindu nationalist group. Parajuli, Kalpit:2012 ‘Hindu terrorists threaten more attacks against Christians and Muslims.’ Asian News, 14 August 2012). In September 2015 three Protestant churches were bombed in the Jhapa District, with Hindu nationalists again identified as responsible (International Religious freedom report 2010 South and central Asia-Nepal 2010, 2). Christian leaders have expressed concern that the ‘inflammatory language’ of nationalist leaders and some in the media, accusing Christians of luring people to convert with material inducements, may encourage anti-Christian prejudice and violence (U.S. Department of State 2016, 2).

These are some of the leading incidents that were published in the media. There are numbers of cases of persecution, harassments, misbehave, trail and threatening have been facing by Nepalese Christians from won family members, relatives, neighbors and also from government officials. Christians in Nepal are always seeing as a religion of “Others,” “Outsiders.” Despite all kinds of persecution churches are growing rapidly. Christianity is, according to the 2011 census, the fifth most practiced religion in Nepal, with 375,699 adherents, or 1.4% of the population. (Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics 2011) However, it is widely claimed that non-Hindus are systematically under-reported in Nepal’s censuses, and informed observers have estimated that there are at least 1 million Nepali Christians. In 1951 there was just a single secret Christian residing in Nepal but surprisingly Nepali Christians grew to about 40,000 baptized believers by 1990 (John Barclay 2009, 189). Within 67 years (1951-2018), Christianity in Nepal has been growing rapidly. CB Gahatraj, the president of the Federation of National Christian in Nepal (FNCN), recently announces that the number of Christians in Nepal reached 300 thousand and 12 thousand churches were established. (Gahatraj 2017). According to a report by Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Nepal’s church is the fastest growing in the world (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary 2013, 38).

2.6 Arrival of Denominations

It could be the result of millions of peoples' prayer from all over the world. Massive civil agitation in 1990 brought about extensive liberalizations and, multi-party democratic system in Nepal. Not only the Christians but also who struggled and fought for independence for years, they were overwhelmed with abundant joy. According to world mobilization record in 1960 there were 25 baptize believers in Nepal, in 1985 there were 25,000, and by 1991, there were about 50,000 all over the country (Patrick 1993, 405).

Before 1990 there were very few denominations were working in Nepal. Operation book record shows that there were only six denominations all over Nepal: Nepal Churches Fellowship, Assemblies of God, Agape Fellowship, Evangelical, Protestant, and Roman Catholic. Also, few other mission agencies did not involve directly in evangelism, but their mission focused on improving health, agriculture, and education in a land hampered by disease, low life expectancy, and illiteracy. Few people converted through those missionaries. United Mission to Nepal and international Nepal fellowship were the largest mission agencies apart from several other foreign and Indian agencies that work in Nepal (Patrick Johnstone 1993). According to DAWN survey paper, till 2003 46 denominations have been involving in ministry in Nepal. Still, the arrival of new denominations is continued. Most of them are Pentecostal, protestant and evangelicals who have been strongly involving in evangelism and church plantation (DAWN survey report presented in Dharan Anugraha Church on 30-31 May 2005).

In last ten years, some of the traditional churches like Lutheran, Calvinist, Mennonites, Ana-Baptist and seven days Adventist also have started their mission work in Nepal but the indigenous form of missions with local leadership has greater influence. We have very few frontline foreign missionaries who have been directly involving in church ministry in Nepal. Most of the denominations and churches are run by Nepalese leadership that could be one the reason there are not so many differences in worship patter among the churches

2.7 Influence of the Churches in Society

The religious freedom has brought radical changes among the churches and society. Different denominations arrive from different countries have thrown both negative and positive impacts on society. When we study the history and life of Nepalese Christians, we can see both positive and negative influence in society. However, that can be more and less.

2.7.1 Positive Influence

Hindu or other religious people who persecuted their Christian neighbors severely but the passion and loving attitude of Christian have thrown huge positive impact on the society. Other people could realize Christians are gentle, loving, peacemaker and nonviolence people. Pastor Dilip Thapa (one of the senior pastors in Eastern Nepal) expressed that, a society who did not allow new convert Christian to use same water source telling that you are fully boycotting from our society, and you are no more counted as a part of the society. However, later on when numbers of Christians increased, and they have seen positive attitudes of Christians they reconciled by saying, “it is your turn, or it is your kingdom, we are willing to eat and drink with you because we got nothing by excluding you from our society” (Thapa 2005). The situation and influence of Christians towards society may not be the same in every society. However, true followers of Christ have influenced society in some positive way.

2.7.2 Negative Influence

There are some negative influences brought by Christians and pointed out by other religious people. Norma Kehberg, in his book, “The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri” collected various information from 530 first generation Nepalese Christians and noticed the fact that, Nepalese who converted in Christianity have left to celebrate national festival like Dashain (the most celebrated festival of the Nepalese Hindus in honor of goddess Durga; celebrated for ten days. Usually falls on October), Tihar (festival of lights observed for five days, by worshiping crow, dog, cow, ox and brothers respectively) and other various festivals 100% (Kehrborg 2002, 61). They left their tradition, culture, and arts, which shows their identity and beauties. Here I am not promoting all the practices, which today Hindus or other religious people are practicing in eastern Nepal today, but First generation Christians were failed to separate the cultural practices whether it is evil or something useful for their identification and social function. That is why all the Christians in eastern Nepal have left their culture and gave a huge room to criticize Christianity as a foreign religion.

Another important thing is that Christians have shown very less involvement in social activities or social function. They isolated themselves from the world, their own relatives and limited themselves within Christian circle only. Though it has very less influence and effect in those days, where Christians were very few, now, the relation between only Christians circle and not interested with other religious people who are their relatives is one of the big

issues to be condemned by other religious people. Now, what the non-Christians think about Christians are the destroyer of traditions and culture, selfish, righteous, isolated from society and exclusive who do not respect or accommodate others views. These are some of the negative influence of Christians towards the society in eastern Nepal.

2.8 The idleness of the Churches for Social Activities

When churches grew up in numbers and Christianity all over the country, they (Christians) acted something differently. They isolated themselves from social responsibilities and gave less priority for social work.

Norma Khrberg quotes the statement of Dr. K. B. Rokaya:

The Christian community has completely left the customs and traditions considering it as non-Christian practice. Women left to put Tika; usually, they use to put it on their forehead as a sign of marriage; they stop to involve and celebrate national religious festivals like Dashain and Tihar; they rejected their old religious practice, idol worship, and all Hinduistic rituals. In Nepal, it became a tradition to left everything related to their past life. They left their cultural music, arts, dance, drama, poems, and literature that show their identity. Festival and celebration are forgotten; national days are not observed. He/she seems too busy to be considered themselves as a member of the border and spiritual family; even he/she forgets that they are the citizenship of this country and member of this society (Rokaya 1986,5; Kehrberg 2002, 63).

Lack of biblical teaching and qualified leadership, the inferiority complex of the believers and lack of education and Poverty could be the main reasons for their inactiveness in social activities. Because most of the first generation Christians in Nepal were not well educated many of them have learned to read and write after becoming a Christian, bible became the main source in remote villages for Nepalese Christians to improve their reading and writing skills. Most of the converts were from a poor background whose status was uncounted in a society. Nobody counted them as a responsible person. That could be another reason why Christians are not able to come up actively for social warfare.

2.9 Conclusion

During the last 40 years politically, people of Nepal had various experience model of the governing system. Till 1990 there was a Monarchy (kings' rule), from 1990- 2008 we have experienced multi-party democratic system (king as a ceremonial), and since 2008 Nepal is declared the Democratic Republic of Nepal. It was a cry and struggle of depressed, exploited and oppressed publics who were seeking freedom from politically, socially and religiously

highly structured class system. These political changes are not enough to satisfy the demand of general public who are still struggling for their basic needs, but it has brought much awareness concerning religious freedom, human rights, freedom of speech and issues of national as well as an ethnic identity. In all these political phases growth of the Nepali church remain stronger. The message of hope, love, healing, salvation, freedom from bondage and equality became a central point to attract hopeless and desperate labor class people in Nepal. As I have mentioned above, Nepal is not a home for monoculture, ethnicity, and religion but it has varieties of diversity. We can easily imagine that the varieties of languages (123 spoken languages) and 125 ethnic groups itself gives the clue of the diverse figure of Nepalese society where the understanding of God, way of expressing god and their worship pattern are varied.

In this context how as a church/Christian can we construct the inclusive method (local/Contextual theology) for presenting Gospel giving the sense of their belongingness and how the churches could create a friendly and homely environment is our significant issues.

As a contextual background by examining the history of Nepal (land and people), socio-political and economic condition, background and manifestation of the Christianity and church, persecution, the arrival of denominations and influences of the church in the society. We are moving next chapter to explore in brief about the contextual theology and its nature, definition, model, and appearances in the field of missiology.

3 Chapter three: Theoretical Approaches

3.1 Introduction

There are numbers of book that have been publishing concerning Contextual theology. It is one of the growing concerns in the Theological and missional field. The concept of contextual theology is not only drawing the concern of the global south, but it has been a challenging issue even for western or the rest of the world. Contextualization has been part of the history of the faith communities yet has not always been part of the methodology of theological thought. For the most part, cultural patterns have been assumed in the process of making the gospel understandable. The tools to investigate appropriately for theology have been absent. It is possible to observe contextualization throughout Christian history, but the turn to the contextual method is new (Matheny 2011, 25).

In this chapter, I have included the understanding of the mission, Biblical perspective on indigenization of Gospel and Culture, a brief history of contextual theology, definition, nature, and models. Also, I have included the resources for contextual theology. I am not attempting to reproduce another volume of the book bringing all those thoughts and materials to weight my thesis. However, these are some of the facts that we need to know when we attempt to do mission work effectively. Because contextual theology is an outcome of human experience; one hand western dominated cultural way of doing mission could not satisfy the feelings and holistic needs of the suffering community; another hand traditional way of worship and church's activities could not draw the attention of modern generation (materialistic, secularized and sophisticated). The situation around the world is eagerly demanding the contextualization in every area for example in Mission, Evangelism, worship, preaching, teaching, and leadership and so on.

This chapter aims to bring those existing model by examining thoroughly with the present Nepali context or to propose new ways of doing theology to promote and strengthen indigenous mission work in Nepal.

3.2 Understanding of Mission

The word "Mission" is used widely in different filed and also it is one of the most usual terms in Christendom. Today, wherever the churches have been established, from lay believers to

the leaders of the church, are familiar with the word “Mission.” However, to define the mission in a single sentence is extraordinarily difficult. According to Bosch, “the definition of mission is a continual process of shifting, testing, reformulating, and Discarding (Bosch 2011, 523). In his book *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in Theology of Mission* (2011), he describes that “transforming mission means both that mission is to be understood as an activity that transforms reality and that there is a constant need for the mission itself to be transformed(Bosch 2011, 523). Understanding of mission has been changed around the time of the Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council IMC (1928) from traditional to “Comprehensive Approach,” which marked a significant advance over all earlier definition of mission(Bosch 2011, 523). Meeting of the IMC (1947) summarize the understanding of mission using the terms Kerygma and Koinonia. The paper published in 1950 added a third element: Diakonia. The Willingen conference (1952) made the expanded formula it's own, adding the notion of “witness,” through proclamation, fellowship, and service. (D. J. Bosch 2011). After 1952 sometimes “martyria” and “kerygma” Proclamation and witness are treated interchangeably and as synonyms (Snyder 1983, 267; Bosch 2011, 524). According to Bosch:

Mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship church planting, contextualization, and much more. And yet, even the attempt to list some dimensions of mission is fraught with danger because it again suggests that we can define what is infinite. Whoever we are, we are tempted to incarcerate the *Missio Dei* in the narrow confines of our own predilections (Bosch 2011, 524).

A most acceptable definition of mission that applies in the Nepalese church is similar as Yung defines, “a specific intention of bearing witness to the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ at the borderline between faith and unbelief.” (Yung: 2014, 14). Therefore, Mission occurs when the churches out beyond its inner life and bear witness to the gospel in the world. Also, the more traditional sense of the mission is, the church sending forth authorized personnel across cultural and national boundaries to proclaim the gospel, to win converts from other faiths, to

implant the church where it did not previously exist, and to nurture it to maturity (Yung:2014, 14).

A paradigm shift in Theology of mission has been taken widely, and it is very important for the Nepalese theologians and church leaders to know about this shift and present understanding of the theology of mission. In the Introduction to *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, David J. Bosch Observed:

Until the sixteenth century, the term mission was “used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, of the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.” The Jesuits were the first to use it in terms of the spread of the Christian faith among people (including protestants) who were not a member of the Catholic Church (Bosch1991,1; Tan:2014, 136-137).

Bosch went on to explain that the term mission is the above sense

Was intimately associated with the colonial expansion of the western world into what has more recently become known as the Third World (or, sometimes the two-third world). The term “mission” presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment. The entire terminology thus presumes that the one who sends has the authority to do so. Often it was argued that the real sender was God who had indisputable authority to decree that people be sent to execute his will. In practice, however, the authority was understood to be vested in the church or in a mission society (Bosch 1991,1; Tan 2014, 137).

Tan cited Bosch’s view of understanding of mission or *Missio Dei* marked a profound move away from earlier understandings of mission as “saving individuals from eternal damnation,” “introducing people from the East and the South to the blessings and privileges of the Christin West,” or “the expansion of the church”(Bosch 1991, 389-390; Tan 2014, 137). Bosch identified that the international mission conference in Willingen in 1952 marked the emergence of a new understanding of mission as “being derived from the very nature of God” and rooted “in the context of Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology” (Bosch 1991, 390; Tan 2014, 138). Bosch puts the missiological significant of the 1952 Willingen meeting as follows:

The classical doctrine on the *Missio Dei* as God the Father sending the son, and God the Father and the son sending the spirit was expanded to include yet another “movement:” Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. As far as missionary thinking was concerned, this linking with the doctrine of the Trinity constituted an important innovation. Willingen’s image of mission was mission participating in the sending of God. Our mission has no life its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission, not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone (Bosch 1991, 390; Tan 2014, 138).

Bosch went on to explain that *Missio Dei* should be understood “not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God (Bosch 1991,391; Tan 2014, 138). He further clarified:

Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission...There is the church because there is mission, not vice versa...To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love towards people since God is a foundation of sending love (Bosch1991,391; Tan 2014, 138).

Tan further cited the idea of Bevans that the need for contemporary mission should be multidirectional, mutual, and relational the fact is that mission is first and foremost, a *mission Dei*, that is, God’s work of creation, celebration, healing, reconciling, and outreach in the world (Bevans 213, 160; Tan 2014, 139). Beavens explains the relationship between mission and church as follows:

Mission, then preceded the church. Mission is not about the church, but about the Reign of God...Mission is for creation, not for the church. it is self-giving of God to the world. In solidarity with the world, it is the church for the world, but above all the church with others. Mission should, therefore, be understood not as “mission of the church, but ‘the church from and in mission’” (Bevans2013, 160-61; Tan 2014, 139).

Tan acknowledges the concept of Bevans that mission is all about discovering “what God is doing in the world, rather than thinking of ourselves as bringing and managing something;”

Tan puts emphasis on this, “therefore, since mission is participation in God’s missionary life and work, mission is done in imitation of God” (Bevans 2013, 181; Tan 2014, 139).

In the light of the above definition of the mission, the understanding of Nepalese Christians still matches with the traditional and colonial understanding of mission sending someone with authority to proclaim the gospel and to plant the new church. So the emerging need of Nepalese Christians is to have a proper understanding of the term mission as God’s mission not as a mission of the church and particular denomination to establish their own denominational and doctrinal kingdom. It is to discover what God is doing in mission in the past and present Nepalese context. As Jonathan Y. Tan has suggested that “we would need to discern the *missio Dei* in pluralistic Asia, that is, discovering what God is doing in mission with the diverse religious tradition in Asia and their wealth of soteriological insights about living in this world and beyond” (Tan 2014, 145).

3.3 Gospel and culture

As we have discussed above that all the models of contextual theology are somehow related to the gospel and culture. “There is no culture entirely corrupt and evil” also “there can never be a culture-free gospel (Bevans 2017, 119-120). I am agreed with the ideas of Bevans that, we need to have truly encountered and engage the context through respectful yet critical analysis and authentic gospel proclamation in word and deeds. Telling to truth and proclaiming the gospel has power over against a “culture of death” (Bevans, 2017, 118). The word culture is associated with activities such as drama, music, art, poetry, literature, language and customs of a human being. Bruce J Nicholls, (former executive secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission, missionary, pastor, editor of the Evangelical Theological Review of Theology and Editor of the Asian Bible Commentary Series) in his book “Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture” gives some meaningful insights about Gospel and culture. Nicholls cited the words of Louis Luzbetak, “Culture is a design for Living. It is a plan according to which society adapts itself to its social and ideational environment” (Nicholls 2003, 10). Further, he cited the ideas of Professor John S. Mbiti; as he gave a working definition of culture as, “human pattern of life in response to man’s environment”-expressed in physical forms such as agriculture, art, technology; in inter-human relations. Such as institutions, laws, customs; and informs of

reflection on the total reality of life such as language, philosophy, religion, spiritual values and world view (Nicholls 2003, 11).

According to Nicolls:

Cultural behavior is not biologically transmitted from one generation to another. It must be learned by each succeeding generation. It is sum total of the learned behavioral patterns and attitudes of a given community.... This process takes place through direct and conscious instruction by parent, teachers or elders. It is learned by deliberate observation and limitation as for when a child copies adults in everyday living. It is also learned through unconscious imitation and absorption. Because culture is acquired, it is constantly changing. It is relative. When the change is Quicker than the community capacity to adapt to it, we may rightly speak of “Cultural Shock”(Nicholls 2003,11).

Another remarkable thought given by Nicholls is the concept of “supra-culture” It is the phenomena of cultural belief and behavior that have their source outside of human culture. He described the two sources if supra-culture. First one is God-who is the sovereign creator and Lord who controls the created world and acts within it according to his purpose. He strongly believes that “the culture of the Hebrews was not just the product of their environment but was the interaction of the supra-cultural and the Hebrews in their environment and history” (Nicholls: 2003, 13). God of the bible is the source of supra-culture.

The other supra-cultural source of phenomena in culture is demonic. Satan is a spiritual, metaphysical reality whom John calls, “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. Moreover, 1 John 5:9 states, “the whole world is in the power of the evil one.” Paul takes this supra-cultural reality seriously. He speaks of Satan seducing the heathen to worship him (1 Corinthians 10:20; 2 Corinthians 6:16) and unbelievers being blinded by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Again, those who walk according to the course of this world follow “the prince of the power of the air”(Ephesians 2:2) But his most frequent metaphor is of “principalities and power” (Roman 8:38-39; 1 Corinthians 15:24,26; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10,15). The reference in these passages to demonic cosmic power is unmistakable says the Nicholls (Nicholls 2003, 14).

Nicholls is not agreed with Mbiti's views as he said culture is neutral, "so then each culture must count it a privilege to have the Gospel as its guest. African cultural must extend its hospitality to the gospel as an honored guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millennia as the case may be." Whereas for Nicholls, culture is never neutral; there is the conflict between the supra-culture and every culture reflects this conflict. Religion is never purely a human affair, but an encounter within the supra-cultural realm of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. So the gospel is never the guest of any culture; it is always its judge and redeemer (Nicholls 2003, 15).

The gospel is good news of redemption both for each person and in their individuality, and their social behavior because every segment of culture –world views, values, institutions, artifacts and outward behavior-are perverted and abused as a result of human fall. As Nicholls states that, "The word of God changes the direction of culture and transforms it. The God of the Hebrews is also the God of the Christian and therefore the church, as the newly converted people, is the sphere where a change in culture to be most expected" (Nicholls 2003, 13). Similarly, an Asian theologian Limatula Longkumer describes culture and gospel as follows:

"Culture" is the world view of the people. While the gospel frees people from their bondages, it is a culture that sustains and nourished people's identity. In spite of its ambiguous nature, the work of God is imminent in all culture. God's presence is manifested in land and every culture, albeit differently and imperfectly. There are no people and culture without God, and every culture possesses some forms of divine manifestations. Therefore, culture is one of the most important resources for doing theology. There is no authentic theology without culture...Culture has both liberating and oppressive elements. The task of theology is to challenge and transform the oppressive elements, recover and affirm, and integrate the life-affirming values into our life (Longkumer 2012, 67).

It for sure there is both liberating and oppressive elements in the different cultures in Nepal. So it is the responsibility of Nepalese theologians and Church leaders to find out those elements and challenge and transform those elements into opportunity through the power of Gospel.

3.4 Indigenization of Gospel

Indigenous theology is one of the first terms for the new theological perspective after the Second World War. According to Schreiter, It emphasizes the fact that theology is done by and for a given geographical area by local people for their area, rather than by outsiders. It aims at focusing upon the integrity and identity of the enterprise. The difficulty with this term “Indigenous” connotes the old policy of replacing British personnel in colonial government with local leadership. The term, therefore, has a distinctively colonialist ring in East Africa and India is unsuited to the new perspective in theology. However, the term indigenous is widely used in other parts of the world (Schreiter 2015, 5-6). As a development of new theological perspective in mission work indigenization is replaced by inculturation and later on the term Contextualization is widely used.

Early in 1972 Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsejian Directors of Theological Education fund suggest that the term, “contextualization” implies all that is involved in the familiar term indigenization, but seeks to press beyond it to take into account, “the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle of human justice which characterized the historical movement of nations in the third world. (Nicholls 2003, 21). TEF third mandate was a response to the widespread crisis of faith and searched for meaning in life; the urgent issues of human development and social justice; the dialectic between a universal technological civilization and local culture and religious situations. So the Contextualization is not simply a fad or a catchword used in the place of indigenization, but it is theological necessity demanded by the incarnational nature of the world. It can respond meaningfully to the gospel within the framework of one’s situation. Another hand, James O. Buswell suggests that the word indigenization, which means “to bear or to produce within,” is not a static concept. It is as future-oriented as the people who use it. He thinks that it is particularly appropriate for the church as the point where Christianity is indigenous within a culture (Nicholls 2003, 21).

According to Bevans contextualization is the best way to describing the process, which has also been called inculturation, indigenization or incarnation of the gospel. He cited the Asian Bishops view that indigenization focused on the purely cultural dimension of human experience, while contextualization broadens the understanding of culture to include social, political, and economic questions. In this way, culture is understood in more dynamic, flexible ways and is seen to be not closed and self-contained, but more open and able to be

enriched with an encounter with other cultures and movements. Indigenization tended to see both the home culture and the culture out there as good; contextualization tends to be more critical of both cultures (Bevans 2017, 26-27).

3.5 Brief History of contextual theology

I agree with Schreiter when he says, “The basic purpose of theological reflection has remained the same-namely, the reflection of Christian upon the Gospel in light of their own circumstances-much more attention is now being paid to how those circumstances shape the response to the gospel” (Schreiter 2015, 1). In this process, an important shift has been taken in theological perspective. Inculturation, adaptation, indigenization, localization, and contextualization are some of the use of the term as a reflection to make gospel relevant and live to deal with the circumstances.

The theological shift has been taken as a response to the circumstances faced in a new situation. The first evidence of contextualization appeared where Christianity was relatively new. It drew the attention of the world in the 1950s in part of Asia and Africa. There was a growing sense that the theology being inherited from the older churches of the North Atlantic community did not fit into those different cultural circumstances. In Roman Catholic circle Pope Paul VI developed this thought in 1969; simultaneously another movement took place in Latin America among the gathering of Roman Catholic Bishop in 1968. Soon Book title, “Theology of Liberation” published in English in 1973 by Gustavo Gutierrez added a new dimension in theological thoughts. (Schreiter 2015, 1-3).

Among the Protestant circles in the 1970s the term “contextualizing theology” was used in missiology by Shoki Coe when he argued that the Venn-Anderson three-self principles (Self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating) were inadequate in addressing the sociopolitical context of his native Taiwan. According to Mathney, “The original impulse came from strongly confessional and ecumenical scholars, such as Paul Lehmann, Karl Barth, James Burttness and Shoki Coe”. (Matheny 2011, 63).

Mathney noted that:

Must scholars pinpoint the original impulse to “contextualize” theological and ecclesial work as a response to the expectation of the theological education fund. At

that time, the fund was responsible for providing guidelines and resources for the educational program of ecumenical institutions in “emerging” churches. They advised them to take cognizance of the context of their students and the churches they served. Theological formation and education should be connected to the everyday lives and struggles of the churches as communities. Good theology is constructed so as to mediate the gospel by becoming a part of the life, society, and culture of the faithful. They called this contextualizing theology, in order to emphasize its impact on the social and cultural life of congregations. It was theology in a Reformed sense of being both reformed and reforming. Shoki Coe and the theological education fund are usually noted as the theological leaders who provoked the discussion leading to contextual theology (Matheny 2011, 63-64).

Coe popularized this notion through the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. While it was initially understood as part of a liberal approach to theology, it has grown in currency among evangelicals and Roman Catholics (Matheny 2011, 25). Another Scholar Darrell L. Whiteman states:

Concern over issues of contextualization has been a part of the Christian church from its inception, even though the vocabulary of contextualization dates back only to the early 1970s. It is a perennial challenge—one that Christians have faced every time they have communicated the Gospel across language and cultural boundaries. The church has struggled with this problem through the ages as it has evolved from one era to another. Essentially, contextualization is concerned with how the Gospel and culture relate to one another across geographic space and down through time. Contextualization captures in method and perspective the challenge of relating the Gospel to culture. In this sense, the concern of contextualization is ancient—going back to the early church as it struggled to break loose from its Jewish cultural trappings and enter the Greco-Roman world of the Gentiles. At the same time, it is something new. Ever since the word emerged in the 1970s, there has been almost an explosion of writing, thinking, and talking about contextualization (Whiteman 1997, P.2)

In terms of biblical evidence when we examine the earthly ministry of Jesus; He worked in the context dealing with poverty, injustice, sin, sickness by declaring liberation from all the bondages. Apostle Paul was very clear doing his mission contextually. He became “all thing to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:23). It does not mean he syncretized Christianity with other religions, but he became a transforming agent witnessing the love of Jesus in all situations.

So the history of contextual theology connected with the New Testament church but the term was popular since the 1970s (Schreiter 2015, 3).

3.6 Theories of Contextualization

Though the contextualization has been a part of the history of the faith communities and yet has not always been part of the methodology or theory of theological thought. Our era is demanding contextualization as a new theory or methodology not only as history to observe. Stephen B. Bevans is one of the contextual theologians who has published the book called “model of contextualization” where he introduces and proposed six models of contextual (Bevans 2017).

Another Asian theologian Paul Duane Matheny describes the contextual method as a new and it is needed because the global reality of Christianity’s reach is now compelling us to study and discern more fully and the authentic process by which knowledge of God can be communicated (Matheny 2011, 25). According to Mathney,

“the call for contextual theology was not a call for new theologies with ethnic frameworks, but a response to the historical and contextual situation of a new era the era of the post-colonial third world. The call was not to be Philipino or African but to be a Christian Philipino or Christian African in one’s own context surrounded by the witnesses and suffering of one’s own people and countries”(Matheny 2011, 60).

Further, Matheny agreed with the Lehmann’s view the use of contextual theory promises to offer both the church and theologian a way to be faithful to their tasks for the health of the Christian community. In this regard, contextual theology holds great promise as a catalyst for the authentic proclamation and the healthy Christian community in contexts challenged by modernity. Theology’s true dialogical character will be upheld, preserving the conversation between the past and the present, the pastoral theologians and scholars, the religious and those with a negative conscience, the critics of religion (Matheny 2011, 66). Contextual theology must not, therefore, be seen as marginal or decorative, but as central to the international theological struggles of the church and faith community throughout the world (Haire 2011, 20).

The main focus of Contextual theory is used when the communicator of the gospel discerns what can be known about God and communicates this knowledge to a particular community in their socio-economic, historical, cultural and geographical context. In this process, the use of language must bear meaning in a particular context. In the process of communicating the message, knowledge of context is vital. Biblical wisdom can be a resource for the beliefs and practices of Christian communities and believers. However, we should not forget to construct an interpretation of cultural life that helps communicator or theologian to do theology responsibly (Matheny 2011, 25).

Schreier has pointed out that, the need for constructing local theology is to make sense of Christian message in local circumstances. Both “New question no Answer” and “New Question Old Answer” ultimately forces to seek New Question-New Solution that is “new identity” (Schreier 2015, 3-4) values each individual and brings a solution to the local circumstances reflecting the scripture in their existed situations.

3.7 Definition of contextualization

The word, Contextualization carries border sense and it can be understood in a wide range. Therefore I have brought the views of different authors who have been defined contextualization or contextual theology in these ways:

According to Catholic Contextual theologian Stephen B. Bevans, Contextual theology is a way of doing theology that takes in to account (or we could say puts in a mutually critical dialogue) two realities. The first of these is the experience of the past, recorded in scripture and preserved and defended in the church’s tradition. The second in the experience of the present or a particular context which consists of one or more of at list four elements: personal or communal experience, ‘secular’ or ‘religious’ culture, social location and social change (Bevans 2011, 9). The Latin word for context means ‘to wave’ or ‘join together’ (David J. Hesselgrave 1986, 7). According to S. D. Ponraj, “it is an effort to express the never changing word of God in an ever-changing mode of relevance.”(S.D.Ponraj 1993). For him, contextualization is relating the gospel to culture. Without context, it is very difficult to understand a text. Therefore we need contextualization. In the border, sense contextualization is needed to make a text or gospel more applicable to a particular society and culture. Mirjam Bergh states that:

Since human culture is continuously changing; contextualization of the gospel message has to be an ongoing task. A relevant theology has to be formulated within its context and reformulated when the context changes. It is not the message that changes. God is always the same, and his message to the human race remains the same throughout history. But when that message is allowed to speak into various specific contexts the way it is understood and implemented will vary. However, scripture can never be interpreted in such a way that it comes to mean something that is not congruent with the original message in the original context. (Bergh 1999, 35).

God accepts the human with the culture. God is not imprisoned by any culture in his sovereignty. God chose a Hebraic cultural form and transformed it over centuries, which cover the biblical records. The incarnation of Jesus took place among human form and human culture. He grew up in Jewish customs and culture at a particular time and place. Jesus' incarnation is to share the message of God in human understanding and context and to redeem physically and spiritually. Four gospels provide clear evidence that Jesus transformed the culture, judged the culture at the same time promoted the culture. Paul, as a missionary to the Gentile world, found it necessary to adapt Greek words and concepts in order to communicate the gospel.

Norma Kehrberg, a missionary expert who has been associated with or working in Nepal for thirty years, is an eye witness of the first-generation church in Nepal. He involved, observed and experienced the spirit of Christianity, the socio-cultural, political and economic condition in Nepal and wrote a book called, "The cross in the land of khukuri" (Khukuri is a weapon used by Gurkha army and also Nepalese people commonly as a knife). According to Kehrberg, "Contextualization is the theory that emphasizes the circumstances or fact-the content that surround an event or situation in the establishment of the specific thought or way of life" (Kehrberg 2000, 183).

Also, Kehrberg cited a statement of one of the educated Christian leaders. He defines contextualization is; "to integrate and live the Christian message in the historical, social, and religious context of Nepal" (Kehrberg 2000, 183).

This is true that contextual theology is honoring or testing or critiquing of experience that makes theology contextual. For contextual theologian anything can be a source of theology

for example: values in one's own culture; one's experience as a male or female; one's experience as a marginal person in one's culture; one's encounter with another religion; the experience of multicultural tension in one's society; or the challenge of technology today (Bevans 2011, 10). Therefore, we cannot say that contextualization is not based on scripture. In order to make gospel or Christiana faith more relevant we need contextualization but on the process of contextualization one must be able to distinguish which are cultural practices and which are evil practices. As Simon Pandey says, "Culture and religion are interlinked. One has to decide which is culture and which is religion"(Pandey 2003, 75).

3.8 Nature of Contextualization

The new consciousness of the nature of theology described here is the result of both external and internal factors. External factors are rapid changes in the world's history in the last several decades. In the light of the emerging nationalism at the end of the colonial era, there has been a growing consciousness of the irrelevance and even the oppressive nature of theologies that claim universal validity. All cultures are equal, and all cultures are good, even holy, and so can be valid sources for theology. Internal factors are aspects of the Christian tradition itself that have come to light as these external factors have been recognized (Bevans 2017, 9-10). Christianity is a radically incarnational reality, which calls for God's continued incarnation throughout history, in all cultures, and all circumstances as Stephen B. Bevans describes Contextual theology as both new and traditional. Contextual theology understands the nature of theology in a new way. Classical theology conceived theology as a kind of objective science of faith. It was understood as a reflection in faith on the two theological sources of scripture and tradition, the content of which has not and never will be changed, and is above culture and historically conditioned expression (Bevans 2017, 3-4). However, what makes contextual theology precisely contextual is the recognition of present human experience. Along with scripture and tradition, contextual theology realizes that culture, history and contemporary thought forms as a vital source. The nature of contextual theology is having three sources: scripture, tradition, and present human experience-or Context (Bevans 2017, 4).

So, the nature of contextual theology is progressive, active living and practical; not only written scripture is a text, but contextual theology viewed human behavior, attitudes and physical appearances as a text that can easily read by ordinary people. Sugden has given the

vivid example of the relation between text and context. He states: we go into the context with a text. The text of mission is the scriptures, the Bible, its inherited mission ideologies, its traditions of mission and history of the mission. Texts include written resources and methodologies. Clothes and attitudes are also text. Cigar-smoking Dutch missionaries, teetotal Methodists or European women missionaries with long-sleeved blouses and long skirts were texts that people read. The text is placed in a context which is the contemporary reality that the text must address. (Sugden 2000, 3).

3.9 Models of Contextual Theology

Various models have been used and are in use. No such a concrete model can be used worldwide as a genuine model of contextual theology. Contextual theology itself came out of the human experience-the problem they have faced while conveying the gospel and implementing the word of God in their current social, cultural and religious context. Rober J. Schreiter in His book “Constructing Local Theologies” has described three types of models: Translation models, Adaptation Models and Contextual Models (Schreiter 2015, 7-18). Whereas Stephan B Bevans in his book “Models of Contextual Theologies” have suggested Six Models and those models have brought new revolutions in the field of contextual theologies (Bevans 2017). There are some similarities between both the authors’ views, but the Bevans has given expansion version of those models. Those models are The Translation Model, The Anthropological, The Praxis Model, The synthetic Model, The Transcendental Model and Countercultural Model (Bevans 2017, 37-126). Here I am going to point out in brief about those models and some of the similarities and differences between the two authors’ views. This Model suggests not only a procedure for engaging in the theological reflection but also some specific interests or principal that help to guide the use of the procedure.

The main reason to put all these model, in brief, is to give a general understanding of all models. So that the local theologians, as well as believers, would be informed of the strong and weak points of each model. After describing each model in brief, I will end up recommending some models that are suitable in the multicultural and multireligious Nepalese context.

1. Translation Models: Both Bevans and Schreiter have used this model. According to Schreiter, Translation Model sees the task of local theology as one that calls for a two-step procedure. In the first step, one frees the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions. In so doing, the data of revelation are allowed to stand freely and be prepared for the second step of the procedure, namely, translation into a new situation. For example “De-Hellenization” of western Christianity, Renewal in Liturgy among Roman Catholics in Zambia decided to use drums rather than bells for summoning the people to services. However, the major weakness of the translation model is a positive understanding of culture rather than analyzing its meaning in a particular culture. (Schreiter 2015, 7-10). Another one is the underlying “Kernel-and Husk Theory”- to know the exact difference between the two. It is certainly important not to throw out the baby (doctrine) with the bathwater (context), and this is something that the translation model strongly affirms (Bevans 2017, 40-43).

The positive side of the translation model is it takes Christian Message seriously; recognizes contextual ambiguity and it can be used by participants and non-participants in culture making the good news relevant (Bevans 2017, 44).

2. Adaptation Model: the strength of the adaptation model is the quick achievement of twin goals of some authenticity in the local culture and respectability in the western church circle. This model does not take the culture more seriously than make translational approaches but often will try to force cultural data into foreign categories. It tries to respect both the integrity of the apostolic tradition and the tradition of the local culture (Schreiter 2015, 11-12).

The underlying problem of the adaptation model is merely adapting the Christian message in a current culture without analyzing its effect. Bevans included both adaptation and accommodation as an alternative title in the translation model (Bevans 2017, 44).

3. Contextual models: Schreiter acknowledged that the contextual model is especially closely related to the adaptation model. The contextual model concentrates directly on the cultural context in which Christianity takes roots and expression. Whereas adaptation models continue to emphasize somewhat more the received faith, contextual models begin their reflection with cultural context (Schreiter 2015, 14). According to Schreiter, there are mainly two kinds of contextual models: First one is “Ethnographic approaches” which concern with

cultural identity issues. The next is “Liberation approaches” which focus on the issues of oppression and social illness that need for social change (Schreiter 2015, 15).

4. Anthropological Model: this is the second model of Bevans. He states the differences between translation model and anthropological model in this way:

“The person who uses the translation model basically sees himself or herself as bringing a saving message into the context and making sure that it is presented in relevant and attractive way, practitioner of the anthropological model looks for God’s revelation and self-manifestation as it is hidden within the values, relational pattern, and concern of a context” (Bevans 2017, 56) .

There is a huge change of mission theology after the Vatican II it is the changes of imagery of the missionary Bevans agreed with the concept of Robert T. Rush as he characterized before the Vatican II missionary might be pictured as a “pearl merchant.” Whereas since Vatican II, the theology of mission have begun to discover that a better image might be that of a “Treasure Hunter.”(Bevans 2017, 56) Also, Bevans cited the ideas of M.A.C. Warren as the presuppositions of the anthropological model in this way:

A deep humility, by which we remember that God has not left himself without a witness in any nation at any time. When we approach the man of another faith than our own, it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understanding of the grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter. Our first task is approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on man’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival (Warren 1959-1956; Bevans 2017, 56).

The anthropological mode would emphasize that it is within a human culture that we find God’s revelation-not as a separate supracultural message, but in the very complexity of culture itself, in the warp and woof of human relationships, which are constructive of cultural existence. A significant danger with this model is that it quickly falls prey to a cultural romanticism (Bevans 2017, 61).

5. Praxis Model: this model focuses on the identity of Christians within a context particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change. Praxis theologian would see cultural existence as essentially good. However, any context can be perverted and in need of liberation and healing. So it can be called situational theology. The praxis model understands revelation as the presence of God in history in the events of everyday life, in social and economic structure, in a situation of oppression, in the experience of poor and marginalized. God revealed in history, however, is not just there. God's presence is one of beckoning and invitation, calling men and women of faith to locate God and cooperate with God in God's work of healing, reconciling, and liberating. We best know God by acting in partnership with God (Bevans 2017, 50-57).

For this practitioner theology is not just mere "Right thinking" (Orthodoxy) but it is "Right Acting" (Orthopraxy). Praxis model would say, it is not just "faith seeking understanding" as traditional theology might be described; rather it is a "faith seeking intelligent action" (Bevans 2017,72-73). The negative part of the praxis model is closely connected with Marxism. Liberation theology and feminist theology are the outcomes of the praxis model of theology, and some people fear or feel uncomfortable that their inability to intermediations of grace (Bevans 2017, 78).

6. Synthetic model: Bevans Describes this model as a middle-of-the-road model. Midway between an emphasis on the experience of the present (i.e., context: experience, culture, social location, social change) and experience of the past (scripture, tradition) (Bevans 2017, 88). The beauty of this model is, it might relay for scriptural justification for the whole process of the formation of the various biblical books. Also, it can be called dialogical, conversational and analytical model because synthetic model reaches out to the resources of other contexts and another theological expression for both the method and the content of its articulation of faith. In this way, synthesis develops between one's cultural point of view and the points of view of others as well and put things together in a kind of compromise, but of developing, creative dialectic, something acceptable to all standpoints (Bevans 2017, 90).

Every culture has something to give and place to take. Every culture can borrow and learn from every other culture and remain unique. There is a beauty to admire and evil to omit. Therefore dialogue is essential for the practitioners of this model. Giving enough room for

conversation, dialogue and openness between cultures are essential, but the theologian must be aware of the power and subtle manipulations of a dominant culture as well, for example, the colonial concept of mission in the third world countries. The danger of synthetic model is “selling out” to the other culture, tradition or social location (Bevans 2017, 94).

7. Transcendental Model: key insight for understanding the transcendental model of contextual theology is based on Mark 2:21-22 (a new patch cannot be put on an old garment, and new wine cannot be put into old wineskins): there are some things that we cannot understand without the complete change of mind. Some things demand a radical shift in perspective, a change in horizon—a conversion before they begin to make sense (Bevans 2017, 103). This model concerns with one’s own religious experience, one’s own experience of oneself and one’s own community’s experience itself. From this transcendental starting point, therefore, theology is conceived as the process of “bring to speech” I am I or whom we are as a person of faith who are in every possible respect a product of historical, geographical, social and cultural environment (Bevans 2017, 104).

Transcendent model views that revelation is not in the word of scripture or the doctrine of tradition or even hidden within the labyrinthine network of human culture, social location, and social change. The only place where God can reveal God-self truly and effectively is within human experience, as a human person is open to the words of scripture as read or proclaimed, open to the events in daily life, and open to the values embodied in the cultural condition (Bevans 2017, 105). The main focus of this model is the subject or an individual’s accuracy when he/she articulate his/her faith as an authentic human subject. The negative side of the transcendental model is that it is too abstract; false claim to universality and too ideal to be practical (Bevans 2017, 109).

8. Countercultural Model: The countercultural model is the sixth and last model for contextual theology described by Bevans in his book “Models of contextual theology.” According to Beavens, this is a model that takes context (Experience, culture, social location, and social change) with utmost seriousness (Bevans 2017, 117). It recognizes that human beings are all theological expressions that only exist in a historically and culturally conditioned situation. On the other hand, however, it warns that context always needs to be treated with a good deal of suspicion. If the gospel is to take root within a people’s context

truly, it needs to challenge and purify the context. Further, Bevans cited the views of Lesslie Newbigin's, "if it is truly the communication of the gospel," "it will call radically into question that way of understanding embodied in the language it uses. If it is truly a revelation, it will involve a contradiction, and call for conversion, for a radical metanoia, a U-turn of the mind" (Bevans 2017, 117). The horticultural analogy used by Beavans describes that this model would say that the native soil of a particular context need to be weeded and fertilized in order that the seeds can be planted. The soil itself otherwise could not support the healthy growth of the plant, and after that, it needs continued care and vigilance.

This model realizes more than any other model is how some contexts are simply antithetical to the gospel and need to be challenged by the gospel's liberating and healing power (Bevans 2017, 118).

Roman 12:2, 1Corinthians 1:23, 1 Peter 1:1 are some of the scripture passages that strongly support the countercultural model. Another important thing to acknowledge is the term countercultural is not anti-cultural, but its analysis the context with respect and ultimately allow the gospel to take the lead in the process so that the context is shaped and formed by the reality of the gospel not vice-versa. This model also can be called encounter, engagement and prophetic model. Some dangers are noticed in these models: danger of being anti-cultural, the danger of sectarianism, tends to be monocultural and danger of exclusivism. Lesslie Newbigin, Stanely Hauerwas Jons S Milbank are some of the noticeable theologians who have brought the concept of Countercultural model and Beaven who has combined all the resources and included it as one of the most effective models in the field contextual theology (Bevans 2017, 120-126).

Summary: Stephan Bevans the author of the book, "Model of Contextual Theology" clearly states that "each one of these models is a valid one, and so none can claim hegemony" ((Bevans 2017, 139). Depending in context one can choose any models because certain models can function more adequately within certain sets of circumstances. One can prefer "praxis model or "countercultural model" others can choose "translational model or "anthropological model," but it does not mean other models are not valid. Taking all these model as the source of contextual theology one can develop or choose a particular model that can function more adequately within particular circumstances. I have found specifically two

models (Praxis and countercultural) that can be function well in Nepalese context. As Bevans clarified that, “the best model of contextual theology is a appropriate one...it depends on the context” (Bevans 2017, 140).

3.10 Selection of appropriate Models

I have briefly described eight models of contextualization discover by Bevan and Schreiter. From those eight models, I have selected two most appropriate models in Nepalese context.

1. Countercultural Model: Lesslie Newbigin, Stanely Hauerwas Jons S Milbank are some of the noticeable theologians who have brought the concept of Countercultural model and Beaven who has combined all the resources and included it as one of the most effective models in the field contextual theology (Bevans 2017, 120-126).

The countercultural model is the sixth and last model for contextual theology described by Bevans in his book “Models of contextual theology.” According to Beavens, this is a model that takes context (Experience, culture, social location, and social change) with utmost seriousness. It warns that context always needs to be treated with a good deal of suspicion. If the gospel is to take root within a people’s context truly, it needs to challenge and purify the context. Further, Bevans cited the views of Lesslie Newbigin's, “if it is truly the communication of the gospel,” “it will call radically into question that way of understanding embodied in the language it uses. If it is truly a revelation, it will involve a contradiction, and call for conversion, for a radical metanoia, a U-turn of the mind” (Bevans 2017, 117). The Nepalese Christians change the changing of mind and thinking pattern. Because, still they have a concept that I am from the poor and lowly background; culturally, I am from the backward community or whatever my forefathers did I have to do the same things. Definitely this approach will help to counter evil practices and poor thinking pattern of the people. Also, the horticultural analogy used by Beavans describes that this model would say that the native soil of a particular context need to be weeded and fertilized in order that the seeds can be planted. The soil itself otherwise could not support the healthy growth of the plant, and after that, it needs continued care and vigilance. This model realizes more than any other model is how some contexts are simply antithetical to the gospel and need to be challenged by the gospel’s liberating and healing power (Bevans 2017, 118). I have deeply observed and experience some of the cultural practices are need to be challenged, transformed and heal; for

example, the compulsion of sacrificing animals and celebrating the festival by taking a massive amount of loan which is a substantial financial burden for needy families.

Roman 12:2, 1Corinthians 1:23, 1 Peter 1:1 are some of the scripture passages that strongly support the countercultural model. Another essential thing to acknowledge is the term countercultural is not anti-cultural, but its analysis the context with respect and ultimately allow the gospel to take the lead in the process so that the context is shaped and formed by the reality of the gospel not vice-versa. This model also can be called encounter, engagement and prophetic model. There are evil and dehumanizing factors that are embodied with the cultural taboos that need to be an encounter for example child marriage, untouchability, casteism, gender discrimination and so on.

2. Praxis Model: It is also called ‘action-reflection’ model (Green 2009, 11). According to Green Laurie, “praxis is the inert-twining of action and reflection, of commitment and spirituality, reminding us that any action without reflection may well be irresponsible, but reflection without action is sterile. As St. James put it in his epistle, ‘faith without good deeds is useless...faith and deeds work together’ (James 2:20,22) – that’s praxis” (Green 2009, 6) this model focuses on the identity of Christians within a context particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change. Praxis theologian would see cultural existence as essentially good. However, any context can be perverted and in need of liberation and healing. So it can be called situational theology. The praxis model understands revelation as the presence of God in history in the events of everyday life, in social and economic structure, in a situation of oppression, in the experience of poor and marginalized. God revealed in history, however, is not just there. God’s presence is one of beckoning and invitation, calling men and women of faith to locate God and cooperate with God in God’s work of healing, reconciling, and liberating. We best know God by acting in partnership with God (Bevans 2017, 50-57).

For this practitioner theology is not just mere “Right thinking” (Ortho-doxy) but it is “Right Acting” (Orthopraxy). Praxis model would say, it is not just “faith seeking understanding” as traditional theology might be described; rather it is a “faith seeking intelligent action” (Bevans 2017, 72-73).

This is what precisely the Nepalese context is demanding; where Christians have treated as lowest caste people and follower of foreign and culture and foreign God in this context there will be no other way except answering by action that who we are and to whom we serve. I am hundred percent agree with the statement made by Laurie Green in his book “Let’s do Theology” (2009); as he says, “if we are to create an excellent theological process, it must therefore clearly have a place for both theory and practice—we will be ‘doing theology,’ not just ‘theological reflection’” (Green 2009, 11). Also, Bosch reminds us that, “we may have been fairly good at orthodoxy, at ‘faith,’ but we have been poor in respect of ‘orthopraxis’ of love” (Bosch 2011, 531). This is what Nepalese churches need to be focused we are solid in our faith and conviction to follow Jesus at the same time we need to be strong enough to show our love in action to the people who are around us.

3.11 Literature Resources for Contextualization

Till now we do not have literature resources for contextualization in the Nepali language written by Nepali theologians. Also, I have not seen the translation of books that speak about contextual theology in Nepali languages. We have very short Christian History our first generation leaders are still in leadership positions, and most of them are theologically untrained, and they did not attain any theological seminaries except short term seminars, training, and conferences. However divine guidance and the divine intervention in their lives and ministry is the key to their success. Only the Bible is the source for everything for them. Nowadays few Christian book shops have been opened in Nepal, but the English theological book readers are very few. Nepalese Christians are still in search of literature resources for contextualization. Dr. Simon Pandey in his book *Christianity in Nepal: Unity in Diversity* (2003) has talked a bit about the need for indigenization and contextualization, but there is no sufficient ground given by the author. Also, Dr. K. B. Rokaya and Dr. Ramesh Khatri are some of the noticeable Nepalese Christian theologians who have raised the issues of indigenization and contextualization, but their writings are presented in mission conference and limited within a few Journals. Rokaya, K. (1996). *Gospel and Culture: Contextualization towards a Truly Nepali Church*. World Mission and Evangelism. Sylyadar Bhhiya: World Council of Churches. Khatri, R. (1997). *Church and Mission Relationship in Nepal-Forty Years Ahead*. International Review of Mission.

Issues of indigenization and contextualization have never discussed seriously among the Nepali theologians and church leaders. However, above observation shows that still Nepalese church is in the right track and moving forward as a result of prayer and hard work of humble, faithful, sincere, dedicated and Godly first generations Christian leaders. Now, this is the time to construct Nepalese Christian Theology and to have a constructive discussion in the issues of contextualization and indigenization. In this context Books like, *Christian Mission among the people of Asia* (written by Tan, J.Y.), *Gospel Culture and Transformation* (written by Chris Sugden), *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (written by David J Bosch), *In our own tongue* (written by Peter C. Phan). *Ministry across cultures* (Written by Warren R. Beattie), *Mission-shaped church: church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context* (forwarded by Dr. Rowan Williams), *The New Catholicity: Theology between the global and local* (written by, Schreiter, R.J.), *The Distinctive Identity of the Church* (written by Jeppe Nokolajsen), *Nepal and the Gospel of God* (written by Jonathan Lindell). *Doing contextual theology* (written by Angie Pears) and *Contextual theology for the twenty-first century* (written by Steven Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams) and *Models of Contextual Theology* (written by Stephen Bevans) would be good literature resources for constructing local/contextual theology in Nepal where Christianity is growing from childhood to young –adult.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the understanding of mission, Gospel, culture, and indigenization. Also a brief history of contextualization, nature, definition, theories, and models. This is just an overview of what is happening in the field of contextual theology and mission. The understanding of mission and doing theology in more relevant ways is an ongoing process. As Whiteman states that, Contextualization is part of an evolving stream of thought that relates the Gospel and church to a local context. In the past we have used words such as ‘adaptation,’ ‘accommodation,’ and ‘indigenization’ to describe this relationship between Gospel, church, and culture, but ‘contextualization,’ introduced in 1971, and a companion term ‘inculturation’ that emerged in the literature in 1974, are deeper, more dynamic, and more adequate terms to describe what we are about in mission today. So I believe we are making some progress in our understanding of the relationship between

Gospel, church, and culture, but we have a long way to go in everyday practice (Whiteman 1997, 4-5).

This chapter aimed to gather the understanding of mission, gospel and culture, Indigenization, contextualization and its models. Moreover, we have discussed some important factors related to those issues and select two models of contextualization that appropriate in Nepalese context. Also, I have included some of the useful resources to provide an understanding of contextual theology that has been taking place around the world. Now, the next step is to enter into the reality of the Nepalese church context how churches are handling the issues of indigenization and proceeding towards contextualization. Gradually I am aiming to answer the research questions in chapter four and five.

4 Chapter Four: Analysis of Contextualization in Nepalese Context

4.1 Introduction

Christianity in Nepal is a unique one. The growth of the church has been rapidly taking place since 1990. Within three decades the significant numbers of church and believers have been increased. In chapter two I have mentioned the brief history of Christianity in Nepal and the arrival of different denominations, church growth and various situations faced by the early church and first-generation Christians. In chapter four, we are going to discuss the function and practices of Nepali churches in different areas. For example; Leadership, a way of worship, evangelism, use of music and costumes, dance, song, festival, etc. These entire topics are closely related to cultural issues and day to day practices of the believers in their daily lives. Somehow the Nepali churches are contextualizing not only the way of presenting the gospel, but all their church's activities are interrelated with those practices. Therefore this chapter is the findings of what the researches have read, observed and experience the different activities of Nepalese churches in general. Also, there is an analysis of the strengths, weakness, opportunity, and threat for the contextualization of those practices in Nepalese churches. Christianity in Nepal is like a baby grow with much curiosity, and we are in learning by doing the process. So, we do not have enough written documents. In this aspect, I am using Observation in multi-method designing as a tool to analyze the practices of the churches in different areas.

4.2 *Observation of the Nepalese Churches' Practice in Different areas:*

Here I have chosen some of the thematic practices of Nepalese churches. My observation is to see the overall activities of the Nepalese churches and to measure how far we have been making the gospel relevant in our socio-political, economic and cultural context in the advancement of the 21st century. I have very few written documents that speak early church's activities in Nepal, but they are rich. My observation is to see the changes and similarity of the Nepalese churches' practices during 66 years of church history (1952-2018). 1952 is a historic year where the first Nepalese church was established which is known as the "Ramghat Church" ((Pandey 2003).

The church growth statistic in Nepal is drastic. Nepal is one of the fast Christianity growing countries in South Asia. According to Kehrberg, in 1951, there were no known believers; church history project reported that in 1966 only 100 baptized believers were there. However, by the end of 1990, the church is estimated to have 400,000 members or 2% of the 20 million populations (Kehrberg 2000, 124). Pastor Robert Karthak - another legend of Nepalese Church history who is the founder-pastor of Nepal's largest church (still active in pastoral ministry) in his interview with Dr. Simon Pandey once said, "during 1951-1960, I think, there were about 100 Christian in Nepal (Pandey 2003). Now, CB Gahatraj the president of the Federation of National Christian in Nepal (FNCN) recently announces that the number of Christians in Nepal reached 300 thousand and 12 thousand churches were established (Gahatraj 2017).

In my observation, Gahatraj is true because everywhere the number of believers and the church is growing. For example in 2010 in my city (Itahari Sunsari, which is one of the fast growing city in Nepal) only 10-12 churches were there. However, now this number reached to 40 and still the number is growing. Not only in cities but even in the remote villages of from east to west and north to south the number of churches and believers are growing. I believe this observation; detail description, reflection, and analysis will help to build contextual or local theology to make the divine truth; the gospel of our Lord Jesus more relevant, effective, efficient and meaningful for the people in Nepal who are in search of real God, peace, harmony and fullness of life.

4.2.1 Leadership

We have very few written documents available about the leadership of Nepalese Churches. However, whatsoever we have all these documents shows that the leadership of Nepalese churches always remains in the hand of Nepalese Christians. Though there was a huge contribution to the foreign mission, it is quite different doing mission activities in the case of Nepal. Nepal has never experienced colonialism; it was a land lock country for the foreign missionary as I have mentioned in chapter two. After 1951 foreign missions were allowed to work but they need to have certain criteria and agree with the government. Also, missions have to agree not to preach the gospel and not to involve in proselytizing. Oversees missionaries need to have certain professional qualifications for a particular job (Pandey 2003).

They were known as mission expatriates or professional expatriates. One of the Professional mission expatriates Norma Kehrberg (she has been worked for 30 years in Nepal) said, “The expatriate professionals who were a part of the United Mission to Nepal were not allowed to work full time in a church or as a Christian worker; this was spelled out in the agreement with His Majesty’s Government. Our professional work was as a teacher, doctors, and agriculturists; but we were allowed to practice our faith” (Kehrberg 2000, 32). Kehrberg further states that:

One of the profound decisions taken by the leaders of the church was their intent to organize the church separate and apart from foreign mission groups. When the country opened, two foreign Christian mission groups were invited to enter Nepal for medical work. Their expatriate workers were Christians and interested in being a part of the church in Nepal. The traditional mission pattern was to start the church with expatriate missionaries taking a leadership position and making most of the decision. Remaining apart from the foreign mission groups was a difficult decision for the original committee; wanting to avoid some of the mistakes and weaknesses that they recognized in other parts of the sub-continent, they organized independent of the mission but opened their worship services to all. This significant decision to separate the church and mission has allowed the church in Nepal to develop its own theology and to identify its own leaders (Kehrberg 2000, 99-100).

Professor Dr. Rajendra k. Rongong who was one of the noticeable leaders entered into Kathmandu valley in his young age from Kalimpong (West Bengal, India) and gave his whole life for the people of Nepal. He went to the Lord in 2018 while he was serving as a pastor of Nepali Ishai Mandali (NIM) Lalitpur. In 2012 Ekta Book published his book, “Early Churches in Nepal: An indigenous Christian Movement till 1990” is the collection of early church history of Nepali Churches. Rongong states that the mission expatriates became part of the local churches and help the leaders in various ways but never took an active part in leadership or interfered with the church governance. The expatriates did not take prominent leadership or in the affairs of the churches. It was left entirely to the Nepalese (Rongong 2012).

Also from the writing of Earnest Oliver (who was Executive Secretary of United Mission to Nepal during 1960), we can clearly understand that it was the excellent plan of mission expatriates not to involve in Church Leadership rather depending and trusting on the Holy Spirit for the guidance and clear understanding of Church structure in Nepal. In his letter to Dr. Simon Pandey (former general secretary of National Churches Fellowship of Nepal) states that “Right from the beginning the missionaries from a wider variety of bases and backgrounds, denominations and traditions in about 17 countries, were determined not to introduce denominational churches in Nepal. We felt strongly that we must trust the Holy Spirit to guide the emerging assemblies of Christian in their understanding of God’s word regarding church structure (Pandey 2003, 43). During 1952-1960 the first and foremost decision the Nepali Christian church made was in its founding apart from the prevalent pattern of mission in that day. It was collective decision missionaries and indigenous leaders among them missionary from Mar Thoma Church in Kerala with the help of some Nepalese people established a church at Putalisadak, Kathmandu but they were free from the liturgical and ecclesiastical tradition of Mar Thoma church. Somehow churches established in Pokhara and Nepalganj were closely aligned with expatriate missions across the border in India. However, the vision from the group of Darjeeling was different for the church in Nepal. Their main vision was to establish an indigenous church in Nepal ((Kehrberg 2000, 116). All these above mentioned historical records show that the Nepali church leadership has never gone in the hand of foreigners or overseas missionaries. Also, my observation shows this fact:

1. General Observation of leadership (from 2006 to 20018).

Selection of Site: Approximately 200 churches in a different part of Nepal. Also Nepali speaking region of Sikkim and West Bengal India.

Who are Observed?: Pastors/ Leaders of the church

What are Observed?: The leadership of the church in general

Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my observation, I have found that accept few (it could be 2-3%) church denominations have overseas missionary as a key leader or the pastor of the church in Nepal or those who are doing ministry among the Nepali speaking community. Some of the Leaders in remote villages are illiterate they hardly read Nepali Bible, but they are leading 7-20 families in a congregation as a local church. But, in most of the leadership seminars, conference and healing crusades main speakers were foreigners. However, local administration was in the hand of local church leaders/pastors.

Findings: Nepali churches and denominations have been prioritizing native/local pastor/leader.

2. Focus/selective Observation of leadership (from 1st Nov. 2018 to 28th Dec. 2018).

Selection of Site: 20 Churches of Province No. 1 and Kathmandu Valley.

Who are Observed?: Pastors/ Leaders of the church focusing on 20 churches

What are Observed?: The leadership of the church and their nationality

Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my focus/selective observation I have visited 20 churches and in their church's worship and prayer services. Denominations like: Baptist, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, Methodist and some of the independent charismatic churches and the churches affiliated with National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (NCFN). Except for the Roman Catholic Church (I have not observed the Roman Catholic Church of Nepal), all the local church leaders were Nepali. In most of the remote village, a local villager (residence of native locality) were the pastors. Even in cities leaders/pastors of the churches were permanent residents of that locality though some of them were migrated from different reason (E.g., for education, business, employment, Maoist agitation, and by the influence of urbanization seeking to get access of facilities like transportation, electricity, internet, health services, etc.).

Findings: Native/indigenous people are serving as pastors/leaders of the church with great enthusiasm.

From the beginning of its establishment to till now the Leadership of Nepali churches, always remain in the hands of indigenous people. Most of the churches have their own governing body or committee. However, nowadays some of the denominations follow episcopal governance, for example, Believers Eastern Church previously known as Believers church.

4.2.2 Way of Worship

Worship service (Aaradhana Sewa/Sangate) in Nepal is conducted each Saturday instead of Sunday because Saturday is a public holiday in Nepal. All most all worship service pattern in Nepal is the same despite various denominations. Differences are some of the churches emphasis more on praise sessions, others in speaking tongues and long pray and also churches are focusing on balance growth of the believers in prayer, bible study, recognition and use of the spiritual gifts and social involvement of the believers for peace and

development. Norma Kehrbrg who has spent 30 years in Nepal as an overseas missionary expatriate describes in her book “The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri about the churches and worship pattern of Nepal in this way:

The churches in Nepal primarily share the same doctrine but with different practices. All churches in Nepal can be described as charismatic, but some groups put more focus on having the gift of speaking in tongues than do others. Long praise sessions, where everyone prays out loud at the same time, are a standard part of the worship service in all churches. Common in charismatic churches in other part of the world, this practice enables those who have the gifts of tongues to use that gift without alienating others in the membership who do not have this gift; thus having this gift is not divisive. At the end of the 1990s however, it was not uncommon thought to hear some church leaders state that they were not charismatic; they did not focus on the gift of tongues (Kehrberg 200, 120).

Singing indigenous songs, gender-segregated seating on the floor and other culturally-appropriate practices are some of the main factors that led to the growth of churches in Nepal (Rongong 2012). Also, Kehrberg describes sitting, and worship pattern of early churches in Nepal was a conscious decision of the church to worship in an eastern style, removing one’s shoes and sitting on the floor men and women on opposite sides and music was Christian words set to Nepali folk tunes (Kehrberg 2000, 100). That was the foundation laid by first generation Christian in Nepal, and till now most of the churches are practicing the same style of sitting in the worship services. Countable churches have started to keep the chair in the church but sitting male and female on the opposite side is still the same. Here is my observation report of the way of worship among the Nepali Churches:

1. General Observation of the way of worship (from 2006 to 20018).

Selection of Site: Approximately 200 churches in a different part of Nepal. Also Nepali speaking region of Sikkim and West Bengal India.

Who are Observed?: The entire congregation those who were gathered for worship service.

What are Observed?: Generally, Ways/patterns of worship services.

Subjective reflection and Analysis: Till 2010 I did not see chairs for the congregation accept few chairs for guests. All the believers sit on the floor. To protect from cold, they use

a handmade mat. However, now days must of the churches replace those mats with carpet. Moreover, also few churches have begun to use the chair for whole congregations. Churches are improving their infrastructure according to their financial growth. Collection of offering and tithes every week is a part of the worship service. Holy communion is done once in a month but in remote villages where there is no ordained pastor have to wait up to six months. Worship service during 2006 was not less than three hours, but now most of the churches have set 2-3 hour time for worship service.

Findings: There is no traditional way of worship. It has been changing in the matter of time, music, song and sitting arrangement. Churches are interested in an interactive way of worship. Singing, dancing and playing an instrument in worship is the main attraction for the young generation.

2. Focus/selective Observation of the way of worship (from 1st Nov. 2018 to 28th Dec. 2018).

Selection of Site: 20 Churches of Province No. 1 and Kathmandu Valley.

Who are Observed?: The entire congregation and leaders those who were gathered for worship service

What are Observed?: Ways/patterns of worship: time, place, sitting style, Gesture, dress and formal activates of worship service

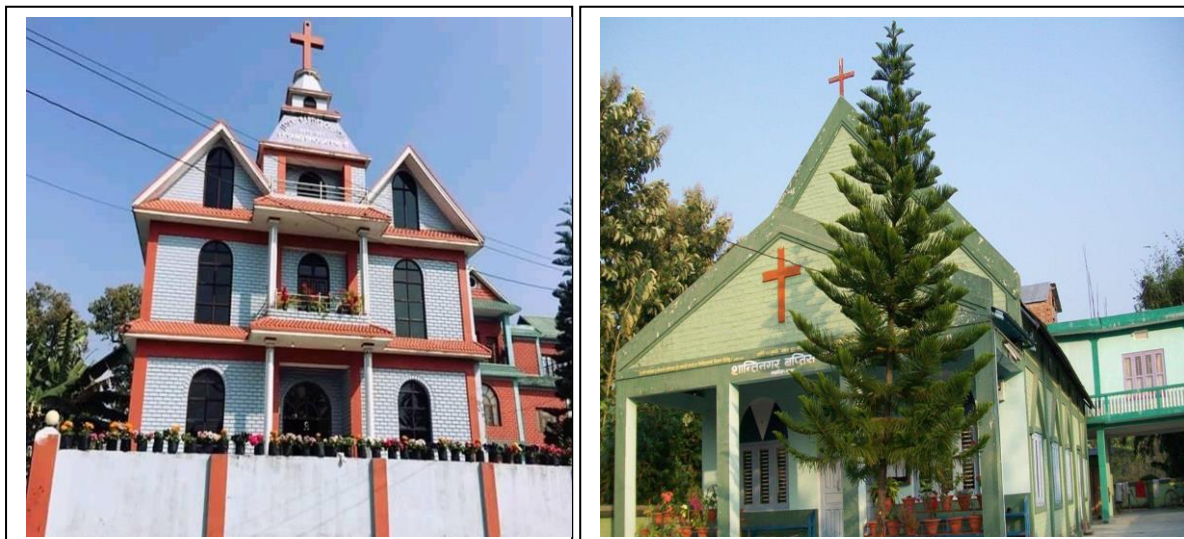
Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my focus/selective observation I have visited 20 churches and in their church's worship and prayer services.

I have found that all the churches have different infrastructure out of 20 only one church has chairs for congregation in 19 churches believers sit on a floor all the churches have carpet in the floor. 60% of churches have set their worship time 3 hour, 30% two and a half hour and 10% two hours. All the churches have 20-30 minutes of praise and worship time before the sermon. All the congregation stands and sing praises clapping and lifting their hands and pray loudly by the whole congregations, and this session is led by the choir (also call worship team) with a musical instrument (guitar, dram, timbrel or whatever instrument is available) based on Psalm 150. Sermon, Singing hymns in Nepali flock tune, intersession prayer, collecting of tithes and offerings and sharing testimony are major activities of the worship service. There is no formal dress code for pastors except eastern believer church. Covering of head was compulsory for women in early churches in Nepal, but now most of the church did not focus on this matter. However, still covering of the head is in practice.

Findings: There is no particular form of worship. Whatever the situation permits churches are ready to adapt. According to the need and interest of congregation, churches are flexible to change the form of worship. However, biblical morality is strictly followed. Smoking cigarette, drinking alcohol and adultery is strictly prohibited. If they found so no responsibility will be given in the worship service. Sitting on the floor, praying out loud, singing Nepali folk songs, clapping and raising hands dancing at the time of praise and worship time, collecting of tithes and offering, sermon and sharing testimony are common practices in every church.



The structure of the churches in remote villages of eastern Nepal, pictures was taken during my observation in November 2018 by myself.



The Structure of the churches in cities of eastern Nepal rich in both membership and finance. Both pictures were taken by myself right one is in 2016 and left one is during my observation Nov. 2018



A sitting arrangement in the worship services both in cities and village church. The right picture was taken by Ps. Prem Sing Tamang in January 2019 at Taplejung and left picture was taken by myself during observation on Nov. 2018 in Itahari.

4.2.3 Ways of evangelism

The central teaching of Nepali church concerning evangelism is, all the born again believers must be able to share about Jesus to their non-believers friends, relatives and with everyone when he/she gets an opportunity. Nepali Churches teach that the great commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 is for every believer. All the first generation Christians were evangelists; in their lifetime they have brought many friends and family into Christian faith. Sharing of their own testimony with friends and relatives is one of the easiest ways of evangelism that have been following by Nepali Christians.: “It was one-to-one, and mouth to mouth evangelism and very effective” Rongong has expressed the ways of evangelism by the early Nepalese Christians (Rongong 2012, 149). The churches began to grow. Signs like healing and miracles occurred during this period, in churches all over, which emboldened and strengthened the Christian in their faith. Even the jail and places of persecution turn into the mission field, and many were converted in prison (Rongong 2012, 149-150). Also, a pastor Robert Karthak (founding pastor of the largest church in Nepal) in his interview with Dr. Pandey once said the main factors of the church growth in Nepal is, “ordinary common lay people have shared their faith with others. They have their own converts everywhere” (Pandey 2003, 44). Also, this is what Kehrberg describes:

Like Christians in other parts of the world, the Nepali Christian can barely restrain themselves from sharing the gospel. One of the first acts of a new believer in Nepal is to share the new found faith with family and friends, even though in days past this has often led to hatred, separation, imprisonment, and loss of family inheritance. At other times such sharing has led to the joy of experiencing whole families sharing this new faith. Pastors, or those designated as pastors were willing to pay a special price. It was often said that the birthright of a Christian in Nepal is one year in jail, but for a pastor who baptized the Christian, it was six years...they were always prepared to accept the six-year jail sentence. They knew the risks and accepted without reservation, remaining steadfast in their sharing of the gospel (kehrberg 2000, 101-102).

The spirit of evangelism are still the same in the Nepali Churches. Still, personal evangelism is found the most effective way of evangelism. Kehrberg has made another remarkable statement that, "Church growth in Nepal resulted from one-on-one sharing of the Gospel by the new believers" (Keherberg 2000, 168). During her research she interviewed 530 Nepali Christians; 293(55%) of the participants reported that they first heard about the gospel from friends or member of their family; 149(28%) heard from a pastor, mission-related school and hospital or health center. Her research shows that 83% of participants heard the gospel through personal contact (Kehrberg 2000, 168). After the independence (1990) mass preaching, healing crusade, Christmas rally, Ester rally and distribution of gospel literature are other forms of evangelism that has been practicing by the Nepali churches in later days. The door to door evangelism, evangelism through Television and Radio broadcasting also in practice; Nepali flock tune gospel songs, gospel cultural dance, and translation and distribution of gospel literature in ethnic languages are some of the powerful tools for evangelism.

Moreover, these evangelists (except few foreign speakers in healing crusade) are lay believers of the local church and indigenous leaders who are leading the local congregation. Another way of evangelism was living an exemplary life showing love, giving taste and shining as the light. Dr. Pandey urges that "Christians should identify themselves as people of God. Their conduct and lifestyle must be different from others. They must be the light of the world and salt of the earth. Their purpose must be to glorify God" (Pandey 2003, 61).



Traditional musical instrument (Chyabrung) and costumes of Limbu (indigenous ethnic group ready for Gospel program. Ps. Bikram Yakten took both pictures in 2017

4.2.4 Music & Costume

During the 1990s in my village of a person is carrying guitar people would easily guess he/she is Christian. It was not only in my case but in most places people had this concept. Because guitars and timbrels are the first instruments used by Nepali Christian in the church. Even today playing a western musical instrument in the church is common. New generations are eager to learn western music and much impressed by Hill-song and other western worship bands. One of the criticisms faced by Nepali Christian is a denunciation of previous tradition and culture after becoming Christians (Kehrberg 2000). First generation Christians were not able to accommodate local musical instrument and costumes with their limited knowledge of the biblical understanding and interpretation of the text. Some of the Nepali churches used Nepali traditional instruments like; Harmonium and Madal (a kind of drum) (Kehrberg 2000, 181). They have adapted some of these practices; wearing a gown/white sari and tie suits by bride and bridegroom in marriage ceremony instead of their cultural dress or Nepali dress. Whereas wearing a white sari is a symbol of widows in Hindu religious traditions. They imitate the practices of the churches in India (Particularly in Darjeeling areas) where foreign missionaries were doing mission activities and eagerly waiting to enter into Nepal.

1. General Observation of Music and Costumes (from 2006 to 20018).

Selection of Site: Approximately 200 churches in a different part of Nepal. Also Nepali speaking region of Sikkim and West Bengal India.

Who are Observed?: Believers and leaders of the Nepali churches.

What are Observed?: Music and costumes being used by Nepalese churches

Subjective reflection and Analysis: First generation Christians did not focus on the cultural dress and traditional musical instrument, but during 2006 the understandings of emerging Church leaders have begun to promote cultural dress and to play a traditional musical instrument. It could be the response to the criticism made by non-Christian. From the beginning, Nepali Christians are blamed as a destroyer of cultural and local tradition.

Findings: Nepali churches did not introduce a formal dress code for pastors and believers in the worship service. However, leaders and believers were encouraged to dress properly. Especially in the case of women, it was more sensitive to wear proper dress covering their whole body as the eastern style. The guitar is the basic musical instrument in every Nepali church. However, nowadays few church leaders have been using a particular dress in the worship service.

2. Focus/selective Observation of Music and Costumes (from 1st Nov. 2018 to 28th Dec. 2018).

Selection of Site: 20 Churches of Province No. 1 and Kathmandu Valley.

Who are Observed?: The entire congregation and leaders those who gathered for worship service

What are Observed?: Music and costumes in the worship service of 20 churches.

Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my focus/selective observation I have visited 20 churches and in their church's worship and prayer services. I have found that all the churches have Guitar as the first instrument in the church. Churches in cities used a western musical instrument like guitar, drum, keyboard or whatsoever they can afford. Only in 2 churches Madal (traditional drum) have used in worship service.

There was no formal dress all of them wearing the dress according to their choice. Some of them have worn their cultural dress. Few people have worn Nepali dress. Out of 20 in 3 churches choir had a formal dress.

Findings: Churches are in the process of learning. However, one positive thing I have found in my observation is, Nepali churches survive in any situation. They are using available and affordable resources for the glory of God. Young generations are interested in and adapting western music in the church, but they also a lover of typical folk music are not less. Churches are sensitive to counter the criticism of non-Christian by adapting ethnic, cultural dresses and

playing a musical instrument in the church as well as in the outreach programs. In my depth observation, I have found that Nepali churches are in the process of contextualization though this term is unknown to many of them.



Right: youth are with cultural costumes in worship service picture taken by myself at Itatari in Nov. 2018. Left: Choir is singing in the worship service with a musical instrument; picture taken by Sundar Tamang at Itahari Nepal in Nov.2018.

4.2.5 Dance & Song

First generation Christians composed and sing songs in Nepalese folk song style by putting Christian words ((Kehrberg 2000). The composition of the Nepali Hymn book was a significant milestone in Nepali church History. Some of the songs were translated from Hindi and English, but first-generation Nepali Christians composed most of the songs. However, nowadays churches have adapted contemporary music and songs. First generation Nepali Christians did not focus on cultural dance and songs. Kehrberg cited the statement made by Dr. K.B. Rokya concerning the practices of early Nepali Churches:

It has been the tradition and practices in Nepal that when someone becomes a Christian, he/she gives up almost everything and anything that has to do with his/her previous way of life. The music, the art, the dances, the songs, the poems, the literature and the identity as a special community of people is (are) all left behind. The festivals are forgotten, the important national days are not remembered. One becomes so taken up by his/her new heavenly citizenship and the spiritual membership of a wider family of God that he/she forgets that he/she is also a citizen of this country and a member of the community (Rokaya:1996, Keherberg:2000, p. 181).

However, now the concept of second-generation Nepali Christian have been changing; they are accommodating or adapting not only Nepali dress but also they are adapting ethnic dance and dress. Each Indigenous group of people has their own traditional cultural dresses, songs, and forms of dance. For example; Magar, Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Gurung, Tharu, Sherpa, Newar, Lepcha, Dhimal all these indigenous people have their own culture. In my observation, I have found that now Nepali churches are promoting cultural dance and typical folk songs in gospel program, in celebration like Esther and Christmas also even in Saturday worship service.

1. General Observation of Dance and songs (from 2006 to 20018).

Selection of Site: Approximately 200 churches in a different part of Nepal. Also Nepali speaking region of Sikkim and West Bengal India.

Who are Observed?: Choirs/worship team and who were performing dance and songs

What are Observed?: Dance and songs

Subjective reflection and Analysis: Nepali Church leaders are conscious of dress and songs. These are the main attraction to draw the attention of the audience. Also, it could be the identical issues for Nepali Christian to prove that Christens are not against the cultural dress and folk songs.

Findings: In my observation, I have found that in all ten big events Nepali Cultural dances were performed. Especially on the occasion of Christmas celebration, Cultural dances were performed.

2. Focus/selective Observation of Dance and songs (from 1st Nov. 2018 to 28th Dec. 2018).

Selection of Site: Two Combine Christmas program in Province no. 1

Who are Observed?: Choirs/worship team and who were performing dance and songs

What are Observed?: Dance and songs

Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my focus/selective observation, I have visited and participated in two combine Christmas program organized by Christian society. In both programs, choir team has worn a particular dress. Participants were in their ethnic dress, and some of them were wearing normal dress also the majority of people even the pastors on the stage were wearing Christmas cap/Santa Claus hat. Even non-Christina guests were welcomed by putting Christmas cap in their head. Choirs have sung both contemporary and

typical folk Nepali songs. Cultural dance with indigenous cultural dress drew the attraction of many people.

Findings: Nepali Churches and society are open to accommodate new changes. Churches are more conscious of identity issues. As respect to one another's culture sometimes believers love to wear his/her friends' ethnic dress. Especially in the Christina festival and day celebration now believers appear with their ethnic, cultural dress. Moreover, churches are accommodating this change.



Left: Cultural dance Presented in Church Opening Program at Taplejung in November 2018 during my observation. The picture was taken by Prapti Magar. Right: Choir is singing in worship service. The picture was taken by Deepti Subba.

4.2.6 Festival & day celebration

Celebrating festival and other historical days are part of human life. However, in the context of Nepali Christians, they had made profound changes in their cultural and social lives when they became a Christian. Research done by Kehrberg among 530 believers and church leaders shows that 529(99.8%) have made a social and cultural change. 530 (100%) stopped celebrating the national festivals of Dasain and Tihar. Participates stated that when they stopped celebrating festivals, they stopped being with their family at the festival times (Kehrberg 2000, 179). Also, Kehrberg cited the statement made by Dr. K.B. Rokya concerning the practices of early Nepali Christians: “It has been the tradition and practices in Nepal that when someone becomes a Christian, he/she gives up almost everything and

anything that has to do with his/her previous way of life...The festivals are forgotten, the important national days are not remembered” (Rokaya1996; Keherberg 2000, 181).

1. General Observation of festival and day celebration (from 2006 to 20018).

Selection of Site: Approximately 200 churches in a different part of Nepal. Also Nepali speaking region of Sikkim and West Bengal India.

Who are Observed?: Participants/ Believers and leaders from various churches and denominations

What are Observed?: The way of celebrating Christmas, Esther and other festivals.

Subjective reflection and Analysis: During those observations, I have seen strong involvement of Nepalese churches celebrating Christian festivals like Christmas and Esther. Every local church had their own ways of celebrating Christmas and Esther. However, the combined programs were conducted to show Christian unity and to give the gospel to non-Christians from songs, message and play cards. Local government officials, political leaders, and social activist were invited, and they share the stage to give Christmas greetings to all. In a local church, believer invites their friends and relatives; after the program, delicious foods were served to everyone by the local church. After independence, the craze of celebrating Christmas by doing an open program is increasing day by day.

Findings: Nepali Christians have left their previous festival 100% by calming that all those festivals are related to worshipping idols and doing sacrifices of animals. Christians were not participating in those festivals. However, nowadays some Christians visit their non-Christians relatives during festival time and participate in lunch or dinner with them. Non-Christian knows very well that Nepali Christian will not eat the things that are an offer to the idols, so they prepare separate food for their Christian relatives.

2. Focus/selective Observation of festival and day celebration (20, 21 December. 2018)

Selection of Site: Two Combine Christmas program in Province no. 1

Who are Observed?: Participants/ Believers and leaders from 40 churches.

What are Observed?: The way of celebrating Christmas.

Subjective reflection and Analysis: In my focus/selective observation, I have visited and participated in two combine Christmas program organized by Christian society. In both programs, local government officials, political leaders, social activists, and parliament members were invited. They began the Christmas program with a peace rally. Singing

Christmas song, exchanging Christmas greetings Cultural dance and delivering Christmas message were some of the main activities. Attained parliament members, local political leaders, and social activist also share the stage to deliver Christmas Greetings. Nowadays it is common to wear cap/Santa Claus hat and to decorate the churches with stars, lights, and Christmas-tree. Even non-Christian guests were welcomed by putting Christmas cap in their head. Choirs have sung both contemporary and typical folk Nepali Christmas songs. Cultural dance with indigenous cultural dress drew the attraction of many people.

Many non-Christian new generations are interested in participating in the Christmas program with their Christian friends and relatives.

Findings: Nepali Churches have replaced their previous festivals and celebration with Christian festival and day celebration. However, Nepali Christians celebrate it in their own ways. Now days visiting their non-Christian relatives and eating together with them is common. Doing those act has opened the way to non-Christian friends and relatives to come in their home or church during the Christian festival and eat together with them. However, Nepali Christians are very strict about eating the things that are an offer to idols. They actively avoid drinking alcohol, smoking, eating blood and meat that is offered to an idol. Those who involve in those things they are not considered as Christians. Second generation Nepalese Christians are attempting to accommodate their previous festival and day celebrations remaining under biblical authority

4.2.7 Language & Literature

Nepali is an official language in Nepal. However, according to a census held in 2011, there are 125 castes/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal 2011). There are still large numbers of people who cannot speak Nepali. Where there is a majority of populations are from the particular ethnic group they prefer to speak mother tongue rather than the Nepali language. For example, if the Magar or Tharu (Magar and Tharu are the largest ethnic group of Nepal) are in the majority in particular geographical areas especially old age, people of that locality hardly understand Nepali, but they speak only their mother tongue. 99% of the churches in Nepal use the Nepali language in worship service there are very few churches where both Nepali and local/ethnic languages are used in worship service. The New Testament Nepali Bible was translated in 1821 by Carey's Serampore mission. The complete Bible was translated

by Newari pastor Ganga Prasad Pradhan in 1914 (Bible Translation into Nepali n.d.). Now, The New Testament is translated more than 20 languages of Nepal, and another remarkable work of has been doing by Jesus film project is a translation of Jesus film into local languages. Till now Jesus film is available in 36 languages of Nepal, and this project has been working continuously in other languages as well (Jesus Film Project n.d.). Also, there are gospel tracks and songs translated into major ethnic languages of Nepal. Believers love to sing a song in different languages, and Nepalese churches are accommodating different ethnicity, languages, and literature in the church.

Observation Summary: Above observation shows that First generation Nepalese Christians have rejected almost all cultural practices. They left the musical instrument, cultural dress, dance, songs, and festival. In another word whatever things were used or related during “Puja” (worshiping gods and goddesses), they left everything because for them being Christian is to be born again that means to follow and walk in a new way leaving everything that they have practiced previously. They understood it is necessary to enter into heaven. However, now second generations Nepalese Christians have realized the need for adaptation and accommodation of those cultural practices. Still, Nepalese churches are in the trail and error processes. Lack of theological base churches is learning by doing. In this process, they have made several mistakes.

However, the positive side of Nepalese churches is that they have a zeal for learning from error. They are on the process of contextualization. They are attempting to make the gospel and their Christian living more relevant in their own context. Also, they do not have a strong Christian tradition, so it is easy for them to adapt to new methods and practices. But also there are chances of miss leading and go away from Biblical truth. That is why we are going to do a SWOT analysis in the next point to measure the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats of the contextualizations process attempt by Nepalese churches.

4.3 SWOT Analysis of Contextualization in Nepalese Context

The above observation shows that Nepalese Churches are on the way of contextualization. As I have mentioned in chapter two, we have a concise Christian history in Nepal. In the 1960s a dozen of baptized believers have sacrificed their lives, and without knowing the next steps, they faithfully followed Jesus and share their faith to their friends and relatives. Whenever they got the opportunity, they spoke about Jesus. Their decision to remain separate from

foreign missions and doing fellowship according to the situation (in the midnight, in the forest, in a house, etc.) is and will be a remarkable task in Nepali Christian Church history. It was the divine presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit who gave the wisdom to lead the congregation in the time of persecution and difficulties. This is the right time to analyze and to formulate theology to make it more live and contextual. This SWOT analysis is done based on a few available pieces of literature, personal observation and my own experience in the ministry for many years. Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) of contextualization in Nepalese churches will be analyzed. This analysis will help to formulate the strength, promote the opportunity, correct the weakness and protect from the thread in the contextualization of the Gospel, Biblical truth Christian faith and life.

Strength: These are some of the strengths of Nepalese Churches as they attempt for contextualization:

1. Native/indigenous leadership in the church from the beginning
2. Local governing body to run the local church administration
3. Independent from a foreign mission
4. The composition of Nepali Hymnbook
5. Adaptation of Cultural dress and dance
6. The way of evangelism, worship and church building structures are situation orient. There is no particular traditional form.
7. Translation of Bible in local/ethnic languages and uses of typical ethnic folk songs in worship.
8. Following the eastern pattern of sitting arrangement (sitting on the floor and in men and women are in a different row) that is culturally appropriate.
10. Adaptation of different cultural program (song, dance, dress, music, and food) in the Christian festival and day celebration.

Weakness: These are some of the weaknesses of Nepalese Churches as they attempt for contextualization:

1. Seeing all the cultural practices as evil by the first generation Christians
2. Adaptation of western costumes in marriage and church services by the first generation Christians instead of using their own cultural costumes which is still in practice.
3. Identified themselves as heavenly citizens.

4. Excluding themselves from social functions, festival and day celebration rather than giving their valuable presence.
5. Lack of Local/contextual theological construction and Proper Biblical guidelines for contextualization.

Opportunity: These are some of the opportunities of Nepalese Churches as they attempt for contextualization:

1. To be acceptable among the entire 125 ethnic group
2. To be able to remove the tag given by non-Christian as a follower of foreign religion and destroyer of native culture
3. To establish a mutual relationship with non-Christians community or other religious people.
4. To be able to introduce Jesus as a God of the universe and savior of the world in every culture.
5. To bring the understanding that Jesus is not against the local culture and cultural practices.
6. To bring the understanding that Jesus is the liberator and transformer of evil and dehumanizing practices of every culture.
7. To prove Nepali Christians are a lover, caretaker, and developer of the nation
8. To make Christian faith more relevant and action orientated among the new generation
9. To produce mission-oriented church and individuals
10. To be able to address the holistic issues of society.

Threat: These are some of the threats of Nepalese Churches as they attempt for contextualization:

1. Fear of syncretism. Among the billions of gods, Jesus could be understood as one of them.
2. Fear of Ethnocentrism. Minority ethnic group may not feel secure and respect in the church.
3. Unhealthy competition in church planting and denominational extension among the various ethnic groups.
4. Limitation in the understanding and extension of the mission.
5. Isolation from universal Christian practices and belief.

4.4 Fear of Syncretism

Doing Contextual Theology itself is a challenging task. Formation of local theology in a local context may have a chance to the original message of the Gospel and Christian Tradition. According to Robert J Schreiter:

Syncretism, as the etymology of the word suggest, has to do with the mixing of elements of two religious systems to the point where at list one, if not both, of the systems, loses basic structure and identity. The term derives from the study of the religious ferment in the Mediterranean basin at the beginning of the Common Era when competing cults borrowed heavily from one another and were constantly reshaping themselves into new forms. Christian literature regarding syncretism has always taken a negative stance towards the phenomenon. Anything that would dilute or substantially alter the basic structure of Christianity was combated strongly. The importance of keeping the gospel message pure and unadulterated has been a constant concern of the Christian Church (Schreiter: 2015 p. 165).

Since the rapid growth of missionary movement from the seventeenth century, the question about syncretism raised again and again. In the recent shift in perspective of mission as contextualization has raised some of the critical questions. Are there limits to contextualization? Can it reach a point where the gospel message is lost, or communion between the churches is no longer possible? Should the independent church movement be seen as the outcome of contextualization? (Schreiter 2015). What are the criteria for contextualization? Is it possible to construct local theology without losing the original message of the gospel? These are the questions that need to be answered in the process of constructing local theology. Schreiter further suggests:

these three forms of syncretism represents three foci around which many syncretistic phenomena can be grouped: (1) Where Christianity and another tradition come together to form a new reality, with the other traditions providing the basic framework; (2) where Christianity provides the framework for the syncretism system, but it reinterpreted and reshaped substantially, independent of any dialogue with established Christianity; (3) where selected elements of Christianity are incorporated into other systems (Schreiter: 2015 p. 169).

In the case of Nepal, there is a chance of syncretism based on Schreier point number one and three. Because among the thirty-three millions of gods they can also define Jesus as one of their god and miss used His name to spread the incarnate nature of Jesus; also there is a chance to form new reality from both newly converted Christians and people from other religions and traditions. They may pick up some the ironic points and message of Jesus and mixed with their own philosophy to create a new form of a religious group. Therefore it is essential to examine any forms of local theology with the pure biblical message syncretism may not be a long-lasting problem because with the dualistic notion of any thoughts may not last for the long run. However, it will affect the normal growth of the Christian faith where Christianity is struggling to keep its identity morally and ethically under consideration.

4.5 Conclusion

In this analysis chapter the both textual and observation resources shows that Nepali churches are on the way to contextualization. Though they are not much aware of this theological term and it has not brought in the leadership circle for serious discussion. However, the Holy Spirit is guiding the leaders of the Nepalese churches to be contextualized from the beginning of church establishment in order to present the Gospel of Jesus appropriately. They are seeking a suitable way to bridge the gap between other religious people. The autocracy system of government has banded to practice their faith openly until the 1990s. So the early Christian of Nepal hardly exposed in public due to severe persecutions. In that situation the way of evangelism was only through personal relationship or friendship; to do open evangelism in public places and to an unknown person was to risk their lives and the persecution was not only from government officials but they were persecuted several times from their own family members and neighbors who were against the Christianity. However, God revealed Himself through signs and wonders healing were instantly taken place after the short prayer in Jesus name and people have accepted Jesus in the midst of life-threatening challenges.

The leadership of Nepalese churches remained in the hands of the native/indigenous leader. All the attempts of the extension of foreign missions and denominations from foreign missionary to establish a church and direct involvement in evangelism and church planting were not a success due to strict government policy against foreigners and their foreign missions. This restriction has compelled foreign missionaries to involve only in development

projects. Ultimately, local/native Christian leaders have taken the responsibility to lead and nurture the Nepalese Churches.

Since the 1990s Christians in Nepal have experienced freedom under the multi-party democratic system and the Nepalese churches began to multiply. Now the situation is different as the country is declared the federal democratic republic of Nepal on 29 May 2008. The arrival of different denominations and connection of Nepalese Christians with foreign missions have been bringing the expansion of denominational churches and doctrinal differences. Most churches in Nepal are independent, and they are adapting, transforming, accommodating and interpreting the cultural issues without evaluating its long term impact; in such a situation constructing local/contextual theology is not only necessary but it is a compulsion. If the churches and theologians in Nepal fail to do this, newly established churches might be misguided, and the name of Jesus may be blasphemed where Christianity is minority religion and treated as the religion of lowly, untouchable and poor.

Above observation shows that Churches in Nepal stepping towards the contextualization of Gospel in cultural context; however, the issues of Nepali society is not only cultural. They have identical issues, oppression to the lowly, poverty, unemployment, corruption and disasters are burning issues that the Nepalese churches have to address. So constructing local/contextual theology does not mean to only deal with the gospel and cultural issues, but it has to deal with the real situation of the people who are struggling for their survival. SWOT analysis shows that the strength and opportunity of contextualization are optimistic among the Nepalese churches, but they need a strong foundation to stand firm with the correct selections of the contextual model which is even biblically sound and accepted by the large community of Christian faith. Also, the understanding of mission is needed to be evaluated. The mission is not only sending and receiving from higher to lower or from wealthy nation to developing nations. However, the understanding of mission must be defined among the Nepalese churches as God's involvement of mission and the Church is a part of God's mission. The church is not doing God's mission, but God is inviting the church to involve in His mission. So this understanding may bring a holistic understanding of mission among the Nepalese churches.

Syncretism is another issue that we have discussed. The effect of syncretism could be a danger for newly converted Christians and also for independent churches. Analyzing and observing various activities of the Nepalese churches and measuring the strengthen, opportunity, weakness and threat of the contextualization in the Nepalese churches now we are moving to concluding chapter where some new insights and theological foundation will be laid to do adequate contextual theology among the multi-religious and multi-cultural Nepalese context.

5 Chapter Five: Recommendation and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Now, this will be an exciting chapter to draw some of the practical and insightful recommendation and conclusion after the long discourse apart from introductory chapter one. Contextual background of Nepalese churches, theoretical approaches of contextualization and analysis of both historical records and observation in the field to see what extend Nepalese churches are on the move of contextualization in the age of paradigm shift of the theology of mission and contextualization. In one hand, the issues of ethnic identity and culture are becoming the pride of their existence in the human history; another hand the urbanization, globalization, and utilization of modern technology and access of internet in each pocket are drawing the attention of the new generation towards secularism and individualism.

Data provided by the world Poverty Clock 7.9% of the total population in Nepal still live in extreme poverty line that is 2,470,486 out of 31, 415, 325 Total Population (World Poverty Clock n.d.). However the user of the internet has been increasing rapidly According to data Provided by Nepali Telecom in 2011 there were only (9.0% of the total population had internet access whereas, the users of the internet reached 63% of the total population in October 2017. And now (2019) it is estimated that the users of internet in Nepal reached 78% of the total population (Nepali Telicom n.d.) this account shows that the access of the internet and connections with global world have been influencing especially young generation to be more individualistic and self-Centre by choosing his/her freedom being apart from social and community ways of living. In this context, the Nepalese churches have to do something different where people may feel the presence of God amid struggle, identity crisis at the same time over engagement in social media and use of the internet for the wrong purpose. The growth of churches in Nepal cannot be denied; it can be seen everywhere. However, the theological foundation is needed to be laid standing on the experience of the first generation Christians and making relevant in the present context. Therefore by highlighting the present scenario of the churches in Nepal we are stepping forward to recommend and construct some of the models of contextual theology and affecting ways of doing mission in the midst of multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of Nepal.

5.2 Present Scenario of the Churches in Nepal

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity, based at Gordon Conwell Seminary, published In June 2013, among the top 20 countries that have the highest percentage Christianity Average Annual Growth Rate (AAGR); Nepal is in Number one rank with 10.93% AGRV followed by China 10.86% (Disciple All Nations n.d.). Not only on the report but, practically is it seen that the number of churches is continuously growing. Mainly protestant (Pentecostal, evangelical, Baptist, Methodists, Presbyterian, Believers Eastern Church, Charismatic and Independent) Churches are aggressively doing the work of evangelism and church planting. By nature all most all churches are charismatic.

Norma Kehrberg who had spent 30 years in Nepal as a foreign mission expatriate and carefully observed and gave her reflection about the Christianity in Nepal writing a book “The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri). She has noticed that “The churches in Nepal primarily share the same doctrine but with different practices. All churches in Nepal can be described as charismatic, but some groups put more focus on having the gift of speaking tongues thank do others” (Kehrberg 2000, 120). This is absolutely true among the first generation Christians. Now the various foreign missions and denominations have been arrived and introduced doctrinal differences and teachings. However, the leadership of the Nepalese churches is still in the hands of Nepali leaders.

At present, three organizations are introducing themselves as the umbrella organizations of Nepalese Churches. These are brief outlooks of those three organizations who claimed themselves as the representatives of Nepalese churches from all over the country

1. NCF (National Christian Fellowship): at present known as NCFN (National Churches Fellowship of Nepal) was form in 1960 by the group of 30 believers, and NCF Nepal has been consistently working to strengthen and unify the Christian Church in Nepal. NCFN Claimed, it is the broadest coalition of indigenous churches in Nepal and currently represents approximately 1000 Churches (National Churches Fellowship of Nepal n.d.). National Churches Fellowship of Nepal (NCFN) claimed that it gives the concept of indigenous Church which is self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Moreover, it has been playing a vital role in maintaining spiritual unity providing joint fellowship to all Churches,

representing the Churches of Nepal as National body both nationally and internationally (National Churches Fellowship of Nepal n.d.). For more information (<http://www.ncfnp.org/>)

2. NCS (Nepal Christian Society): According to web information NCS also is an umbrella organization. It comprises more than 53 denominations and church groups which have estimated 10,000 churches affiliated to them, Para churches, theological institutions, and Christian development, social and mission organizations. The main Objectives of NCS is spiritual unity, protect the Christian rights, to encourage Christians to be involved in social service, to protect ecology and culture and to facilitate Nepali churches and organizations which are not able to act as a single church or organization (Nepal Christian Society n.d.). For more information (<http://ncsnepal.org.np>).

3. FNCN (Federation of National Christian Nepal): According to their claim FNCN is a first formal national wide nonprofit making umbrella organization committed and accountable for the promotion and protection of Church and other organizations. It was established in 2011. It has been actively working to end religious injustice historically existed in Nepali society and practical implementation of secularism and social equity by being committed in the universal principles of democracy and human right. It deals with the fundamental, cultural, economic rights of Nepali Christian communities in collaboration with many other related parties like government, NGOs/INGOs, religious organizations and others. The major goal of Federation is to create a transparent and just democratic behavior institutionalizing goals and objectives adopted by various churches scattered across the nation and establishing the practices of right to expressions and information and the basic principles of human right and democracy.

According to information provided in their website FNCN has large numbers of central committee (151 members), 7 province committees, 75 (now 77) District Committee and other regional Committee in the regional levels have been formed under the federation whereas almost all the churches of nation have already got membership of the Federation (Federation of National Christian 2017) for more information (<http://fncnp.org/>).

Among these three organizations, NCFN has a great history of establishing the indigenous concept of Nepalese Churches and uniting and strengthening them from the time gigantic persecutions from the 1960s to till now. NCS and FNCN focus is to do advocacy with Nepal Government to provide justice, religious freedom and representing the voice of Nepalese

Christians minority ensuring human rights. Apart from these so call umbrella organizations some of the Nepalese Church leaders felt the active involvement in frontline politic, and they have opened the political parties and even involve in the historical legislative election in 2017. All these issues mentioned above within the Nepalese Christian community shows that Nepalese Christians do not want to isolate themselves from the present socio-political, economic, cultural and identical issues. They are seeking the right space to respond and reflect the written word of God as they have been reading and hearing in their daily lives. However, the danger is that without a strong theological base the young energies of growing Nepalese churches might be misused or misguided by selfish leaders the name of Jesus might be blasphemed.

In this context, the Right theological approach is heavily needed to address the present issues. So that the zeal and energy of Nepalese Christians might not be limited only preaching the gospel in word but turn to love and action bringing holistic transformation for joy, peace, hope, healing, restoration to experience the abundant life.

As Bevans Describes the church of the twenty-first century is: a church of great diversity, a world church/global church, a minority church, multicultural church, a young church, a persecuted church, a poor church. However, Bevans acknowledges that not everything he says fit every church, and possibly nothing he says will describe one or the other church because each church has its own context (Bevans, B Stephen 2011, 3-7). Today if someone asks what the church of Nepal is? Or what is the present scenario of the Nepalese church? The Church of Nepal is a minority Church, a Multicultural Church, a young church and poor church. Based on these scenarios we are going to discuss some suitable model of contextual theology and basic ground for the construction of local theology.

5.3 Need for constructing local theology

Catholic contextual theologian Robert J. Schreiter uses the term "Local Theology" as the latest form of a shift in perceptive in theology. Instead of indigenious theology, ethno-theology, Inculturation and contextual theology he introduces the term Local Theology because of these three advantages:

First, it allows the overtone of the “local church” to be sound. Second, as we shall see, not all attempts in theology are equally sensitive to the context; indeed, they can take

quite different approaches to it. This allows keeping the term “contextual” for those theologies that show greater sensitivity to context and finally, it avoids undue of neologisms (Schreiter 2015, 7)

Based on this concept I am using local theology acknowledging the importance of local church and its context. The basic purpose of theological reflection is, the reflection of Christians upon the gospel in the light of their own circumstances but now according to Schreiter, “much more attention is now being paid to how those circumstances shape the response to the gospel” (Schreiter 2015, 1).

Local Culture and the circumstances are the significant issues to be kept in mind while constructing local theology. Around two decades before, Kehrberg identified Nepalese Christians are in the first phase of Donald Jacob’s identification of three phases relating to culture and Christianity. Frist was the rejection phase, the accommodation phase and reestablishment-of-identity phase (Jacobs 1978; Kehrberg:2000, 179). During 2000 Nepalese churches were going through the rejection phase as they rejected most of their previous culture (Kehrberg 2000). However, now the situation has been changed, and Christianity in Nepal is going through the accommodation phase and proceeding towards the third phase that is the reestablishment-of-identity phase. As I have personally experienced and closely observed that Nepalese Christians are adapting and accommodating their previous culture except for the practices that are closely related to idol worship and forms of worship to various god and goddesses. Still, the question is “how to be a citizen of Nepal and also a Christian”? Because a common understanding of life in Nepal is “being Nepalese is being Hindu” (Kehrberg 2000). So without constructing a strong theological base, Nepalese Christians will not be able to answer this question because still, the general understanding of non-Christians community in Nepal is to accept and follow Christianity is to follow the religion of others or follow the religion of America and West.

Here the issues are not only cultural and identical but Nepalese community is going through oppression, injustice, rejection, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and disasters are burning circumstances Nepalese churches have to address. So constructing local/contextual theology does not mean to only deal with the gospel and cultural issues, but it has to deal with the real situation of the people who are struggling for their survival.

5.4 Biblical guideline for constructing local theology

In the process of constructing Contextual Theology or Local Theology, there is a risk of missing out vital aspects of the message if it is not done effectively based on scripture; and the danger of compromise and syncretism will be there if contextualization is taken too far, i.e., towards adjusting the message of the culture (Bergh 1999, 35). Therefore theology must be constructed in such a way so that core message or original message should not be lost from its original text and context. Rereading of the four Gospels and the book of Acts will help to construct the Local theology based on apostolic practices in the Book of Acts and by following the working pattern of Jesus in Hellenistic context. The council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 gives a clear vision to deal with cultural issues. Life and work of Jesus being with poor, marginalized and lowly, healing the sick, delivering the bondages, restoring the sights, giving the hope to the hopeless and feeding the hungry and thirsty should be the mission of our theology.

The central figure of Our Theology is the person of Jesus-His six Major salvific events in the New Testament should not be missed in the construction and implementation of Christian Theology. Bosch figures these events as The incarnation of Christ, His death on the cross, His resurrection on the third day, His ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the Parousia (Bosch 2011, 524). At Present, we need theology along with orthopraxis (Right acting) and orthopathos (right affection/solidarity) more than orthodoxy (right thinking) (Bevans 2017, 72-73).

5.5 Experience as a tool for contextualization

Stephen Bevans in his book, “Models of Contextual Theology” clearly defines that doing theology contextually means doing theology in a way that takes into account two things. First, Experience of the past-recorded in scripture, preserved and defended in tradition. Secondly, Experience of the present, the context (Bevans 2017, 7). Also, Schreiter has described in his book, “Constructing Local Theologies” experience as a tool for constructing local theology (Schreiter 2015). He states,

The experience of those in the small Christian communities who have seen the insight and the power arising from the reflections of the people upon their experience and the scripture has prompted making the community itself the prime author of theology in

local contexts. The Holy Spirit, working in and through the believing community, gives shape and expression to Christian experience (Schreiter: 2015, p. 21)

This is very true in the case of Nepalese Churches. First generation Christians in Nepal have experienced the clear guidance of the Holy Spirit, and they have reflected the understanding of scripture in action through prayers, songs, message, and attitudes. For example, in my childhood, I have heard so many time pastors or older (mature) believers encouraged newly converted believers from the bible verse John 14:18 where Jesus said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”(NIV). They emphasized in the first sentence, “I will not leave you as orphans” the context of that time was that newly converted believer felt like an orphan because to accept Jesus means to deny all the family members, relatives and even boycott from society. In that situation, this bible verse gave hope and encouragement to the new believers. Also, they encouraged from Isaiah 49:15, “can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you”(NIV). They have found this verse very applicable because many new converts had been driving out from their mother and father because of accepting Jesus. Believers have experienced the power of the scripture, and this experience shaped their growth and Christian living.

Another example is when the first generation Nepalese Christian knew that Baptism and Lord Supper is the commandment of Jesus for the church (believers) to follow until His second coming they practice just as it is written in the scripture. They followed the pattern of Jesus in baptism; as gospel records that Jesus took water baptism in the river of Jordan fully immersing in the water by the John the Baptist. So Nepalese First generation Christians practice the same pattern of Baptism as Jesus did because the river is available everywhere in Nepal. However, in the case of Lord Supper, they made bread from rice or wheat flour which is readily available everywhere in Nepal. However, wine is translated into Nepali bible as Grapes juice that was not available during the 1990s. So it was impossible to apply by the early Churches of Nepal the wine (Grapes juice) literally in the Lord Supper. They used lemon or orange juice instead of wine. The Holy Spirit guided in that situation and taught them to be contextualized and even today in some of the churches they use orange juice in the place of grapes juice because grapes juice is not readily available in the remote villages of Nepal.

Another interesting example is the adaptation of cultural dance and dress by the Nepali Christians after the 1990s. Nepali Christians are always blamed “the people who are destroying local culture and adopting the western culture,” in this critical condition Nepali Church leaders realized the need of adapting cultural dress and dance at the time of presenting the gospel in the public places. People from other religion not only astonished by the appearance and performance of Christians people but it drew the attention of many people in the gospel program when it presented with cultural appearances. This is how the experience of the past and present situation is engaging Nepali Christians to be contextualized. From the experience of the past, they have learned, and from the experience of the present, they have been encouraged to present the Gospel appropriately and accurately in the given context. In this sense, the saying of Robert J Schreiter is correct as he acknowledged the community as a theologian ((Schreiter 2015). According to Schreiter:

The emphasis on the role of the community as theologian has been an important one in correcting the idea that only professional theologians could engage in theological reflection...the role of the whole community is often one of raising the questions, of providing the experience of having lived with those questions and struggled with different answers, and of recognizing which solutions are indeed genuine, authentic, and commensurate with their experience (Schreiter:2015, p.20).

The role of the professional theologians in the development of local theologies is to serve as an important resource, helping the community to clarify its own experience and to relate it to the experience of other communities past and present. The theologian cannot create a theology in isolation from the community’s experience; but the community needs the theologians’ knowledge to ground its own experience within the Christian tradition of faith ((Schreiter 2015, 20-21). This is the lacking point of Nepalese Churches. Where there is a vast experience how to do mission and evangelism effectively and even they have experienced the presence of God in the time of persecution, difficulties, need, and loneliness but due to lack of professional Nepalese Christian Theologians, there is no such a theological formulation. They are in learning by doing the process, but there is no written record what they have learned; only we can guess by observing their present activities and during the 1990s how they have been learning to be contextualized.

In chapter three I have recommended two models of contextual theology: Countercultural model and Praxis model. I have already mentioned why these models are appropriate in Nepalese context. Now I am linking those two models with the two approaches first one is inter-religious dialogue, and the next one is the spirit of hospitality.

5.6 Inter-Religious dialogue

Christianity as a minor religion in a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious Nepalese context attempting for the inter-religious dialogue itself is the bold task. It takes enormous courage and confidence. It is not just a conversation between different religious group(s) of people concerning their faith; it has to do more depending on its context. As Jonathan Y. Tan notes that “The Asian Bishops recognize that the task of doing Christian Mission in Asia has to take place within a threefold dialogue with Asian cultures, religion, and poverty in a spirit of goodwill” (Tan 2014, 112). The intention of dialogue could be primary and secondary. For some people, it is just to maintain social harmony in diverse religious faith people securing their own faith doing no harms to others. However, for some others, it is the Proclamation of Gospel and ultimately inviting for the conversion. Tan states that:

Asian Bishops have understood evangelization as the building up of the local church through a threefold dialogue with the cultures, the religion and the poor of Asia. Inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and liberation are the three dimensions of evangelization. Proclamation is not a fourth dimension added to these three but is the aspect of witness that is an integral element of all the three dimensions of evangelization (thesis on interreligious dialogue, art.6.4, in FABC 1987, 16; Tan 2014, p. 116).

They further clarified that:

The proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the kingdom of God, a proclamation through Christ-like deeds. For Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds-this

is the first call to the churches in Asia (FABC V art. 4.1, in Rosales and Arevalo 1992, 281-82; Tan 2014, 117).

Above statement clearly shows that Roman Catholic strategy for all three fold dialogue is being a faithful witness living life and doing deeds as Jesus live and did. I am not sure, what the outcome of their strategy was but according to my experience and observation in Nepalese context if we (Nepalese Churches) limit proclamation only as living and doing like Jesus the growth of Christianity would not be possible as today we have. It is for sure; there is not a better option to be the witness of Jesus by living and doing Christ-like. However, speaking out, declaring and proclaiming through the word is very important in the Nepalese context. Sometimes people misunderstood dialogue and debate in the same category, and Nepalese churches are afraid to do the dialogue. Interreligious dialogue is not blaming other's religion and calming his/her religion is superior to all; rather it is simply giving respect to their views and telling the truth that we have found in Jesus. The idea of Prophetic dialogue presented by Stephen B. Bevans is more impressive for me. He argued that "mission simple as dialogue is not enough. Ultimately, we believe, the mission is best done in prophetic dialogue"(Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 38). Bevans & Schroeder state that:

Mission must and foremost be done with openness and respect for the others, recognizing that God was present before our arrival, that the spirit has sown the seeds of the word among all peoples and all cultures, and that we missionaries need to be evangelized by those whom we evangelize. However...we do have something to say, and we speak, like the prophets of the Old Testament, not in our own name, but in God's. As God sent Jesus, so Jesus has sent us, to be His witness to the end of the earth (see John20:21; Acts 1:8)...Christian must speak in the context of dialogue, but we must speak, for we indeed have something to say: we are not ashamed of the gospel, because "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (Roman 1:16) (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 38).

Here the Gospel as "power of God," which is not power that overwhelms or forces, but the power that leads patiently and gently to freedom and abundant life (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 38). Inter-religious dialogue in Nepalese context should be prophetic in nature where Christians have come to speak and proclaim but with a humble attitude in a gentle manner.

Bevans & Schroeder have given meaningful insights mission as a prophecy which is closely related to inter-religious dialogues.

1. “Speaking Forth” without words: Witness: always listening, always open, always learning being a witness of the truth, the joy, and the life-giving power of the Gospel among the people with whom we engage (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 43-47).
2. “Speaking Forth” with words: Proclamation: To be prophetic in our mission is to share with the world the good news of God’s future, the good news of a gracious, gentle God (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 43-47).
3. “Speaking against” Without Words: Being a Contrast Community: Living a life of holy (1 Peter 2:9-10). It does not mean anti-cultural, but it is profoundly countercultural.
4. “Speaking against” in Words: Speaking Truth to Power: to speak truth to power is this way is to risk a lot-but there is no doubt having such a prophetic voice for the poor, for human life, and for the integrity of creation is constitutive of its mission (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 43-47).

All the points mentioned above are profoundly true, and there is no other way to attempt inter-religious dialogue at list Nepalese churches, and the leaders/pastors have to choose point number one and three. However, in my experience and observation point, 2 and four are immediate results oriented. Taking more risk is also to gain more. However inter-religious dialogue is necessary but what extent we proclaim or speak depends in the given context.

This process will bring together all religious people into one platform and there will exchanges of thoughts, ideas and understanding of God and individual’s faith. Then, when we speak the prophetic word, it has the power to change the heart and lives of people who listen to it. The encounter of Jesus and Samaritan woman in the gospel of John chapter four could be the best biblical text for inter-religious dialogue where both Jesus and Samaritan woman has some to give and something to take. Doing so, not only Samaritan woman was saved, but she was able to win many Samaritans, and they followed Jesus.

For me, inter-religious dialogue with the three-fold reality of Asian Religions, Cultures, and Poverty described by Jonathan Y. Tan (Tan 2014, 112) and Prophetic dialogue proposed by Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 40-54) are the best approaches to apply the countercultural model of contextual theology in Nepalese context. As I have mentioned above Bevans & Schroeder, have given meaningful insights mission as a prophecy which is closely related to inter-religious dialogues.

Mainly, “Speaking against” Without Words: Being a Contrast Community: Living a life of holy (1 Peter 2:9-10). It does not mean anti-cultural, but it is profoundly countercultural and “Speaking against” in Words: Speaking Truth to Power: to speak truth to power is this way is to risk a lot-but there is no doubt having such a prophetic voice for the poor, for human life, and the integrity of creation is constitutive of its mission (Bevans & Schroeder 2011, 43-47). My observation shows this is what we need Speaking without words with action and speaking word with truth and power. Nepalese churches have been encountering the cultures from rejection phases to adaptation and accommodation, but the dialogue is much more needed with a prophetic voice and affirmative action.

5.7 A spirit of Hospitality

Spirit of hospitality and religious tolerance is a vital task of the Nepalese church. An individually as well as collectively as a church we must have a spirit of hospitality and religious tolerance because Christianity in Nepal is the religion of minority and we are living among the pluralistic religious community. Theologians like, Jonathan Y. Tan, Peter C. Phan, and Amos Yong all agree that Asian Christians need to acknowledge that the Asian context of religious pluralism is not a dilemma to be eradicated, but a distinctive characteristic of being Asian and Christian. Jonathan Tan Noticed that “Without diversity and pluralism, there is no room for the Christian gospel in Asia amid the dominance of the great Asian religion. Asian Christians know very well unless they defend religious diversity and pluralism against exclusivist religious chauvinism, there will be no room for Christianity in a continent dominated by the other great religion of the world” (Tan: 2014, P.95). According to Jonathan Y. Tan, “Mission among the peoples, is empowered by an orthopraxis that enables the Christian Gospel to engage with religious pluralism of Asia in a spirit of hospitality” (Tan 2014, 151). Nepal as being as one of the Sought Asian countries there is no other alternative rather than to admire the spirit of hospitality and accept the religious pluralism with great

tolerance for listing and sharing diverse religious views. Tan cited the statement of Amos Yong as follows:

Do Jews need to love their neighbors in order to inherit eternal life, even if such neighbors were despised as their enemies? Put in our context, do Christians not need to love their neighbors of other faiths in order to be saved? If so don't Christians need those in other faiths for our own salvation as much as if not more than those in other faiths need Christians to bear witness to the gospel for their salvation? Yong 2007,61; Tan 2015, 152).

Yong introduced the term “pneumatological theology of interreligious hospitality” (Yong:2007, 61; Tan:2014, 151). The main concern is that Christians should take first responsibility without the attitude of judgment to their act. As Yong concept is apparent:

Pentecostal and all Christians can and should bear witness to Jesus the Christ in word and in deed while listening to, observing, and receiving from the hospitality shown them by those other faiths. The result may be either mutual transformation of an unexpected kind, perhaps akin to the transformation experienced by Peter as a result of his encounter with Cornelius, or perhaps even our very salvation, such as described in the parable of one whose life was received as a gift through the hand of the good Samaritan (Yong:2007,66; Tan:2014, 155).

When we compare the social and cultural context of Nepal, it is almost similar to the cultural context of Jesus's time. Nepalese Christians are treating as Samaritan in the hierarchical castes system. Many time Nepalese Christians are treated in Nepali society as lower class and groups of poor people who have exchanged their religion and tradition due to material goods and monitory support with western people. In this context, the parable of Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) would be the best passage to construct the theology of Hospitality in Nepalese socio-cultural and religious context. People are wounded, they are in need, fractured, broken, hungry and trusty, seeking help, crying and raising their voice expecting some one's help. So-call rich, high caste people, religious Gurus (priests) are turning their face from those people and only running after the name, fame and personal benefits. In this situation, Nepalese Christians are like Samaritan in the eyes of so-called religious Gurus and high social class people. They can extend the tender hands of hospitality giving a living hope,

initiating to rub their wounds and giving water and food to quench their hunger and thirst. There is no better way to demonstrate the love of Jesus to give hospitality to those who are in real need. Theology of inter-religious hospitality would be the best approaches of the praxis model of contextualization in the Nepalese context. This could be one of the leading theological foundations to be the humble witness of our Lord Jesus.

5.8 Multi-Ethnic Church: the ultimate goal

Nepal is the home for multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic groups of people; where all types of peoples (ethnically, culturally, economically, socially, linguistically, professionally etc.) are living together. However, almost all churches in Nepal use national (Nepali) language which is an official and common language for everyone in the church service. There may be very few churches in a particular geographical area where people do have church service in their own ethnic language. Major cities, town and market places are occupied by multi-ethnic people due to urbanization and migration. What I have seen and experience is that Churches in Nepal are discouraging ethnocentrism and promoting unity and equality in Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Church must not promote ethnocentricity. In every culture, there is both good, and evil exists. When we accept Jesus automatically, we remove evil practices from our culture. However, the good parts of our culture may remain as a tool for evangelism.

The church needs to be opened for everyone all the members must feel like their own home when they come for worship. What we believe is that the church is a place where diverse culture or ethnic group exists. Intentionally Nepalese churches need to make a church as a home for the diverse culture and ethnic group because the vision of New Testament church is to see where all tribes, social class, ethnic group, different linguistics and age group people join together and worship one living God. (Revelation 7:9-12). When we see the ministry of Jesus and His Teachings all the ethnicities or all nationalities were included in the themes like Persecution (Matt 24:9), Preaching (Matt 24:13 and making disciples Matt 28:18-20). Ministry of Jesus was among the multi-ethnic or diverse groups: Tax collectors (Luke 19:1-10), Samaritan (John 4; Luke 10:25-37), Canaanites (Matt 15:21-28), adulterous (John 8:1-11) and Widows (Matt 18:1-8; 21:1-4). Early churches went beyond crossing ethnic, cultural and linguistic barriers (Acts 2:1-8; 10:1-43; 8:26-40; 13, 14, Roman 10:13). However, for the sake of evangelism according to context use of local language, cultural dresses, and even

local speaker is very important who can preach in their own language; so that we may be able to convey the full gospel of Jesus Christ in a suitable way. The actual understanding of Nepalese church must be this: “we are from one blood and made from one man nothing else rather than the very image of God Himself”.

There are some good examples where God uses His servants to cross ethnic barriers and to established multi-ethnic church. God forced Apostle Peter to take some of the bold steps to break ethical and cultural barriers. Jewish Tradition (law) was not merely tradition, but it was written Law of Moses it was not a simple thing to break this law, but intentionally God sent Peter to Cornelius house showing the vision of freedom from traditional barriers. Not only that Apostle Peter ate together with the Gentiles though he was not so much comfortable to do that in front of Jews (Acts 10:1-48; Galatians 2:11-13). However, later on, Apostle Paul declared as an apostle of Gentiles though he was Hebrew and teacher of the Law. He said, "...I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means might save someone. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings" (I Corinthians 9:22, 23).

Intentionally but with a humble attitude, Paul became all things for all men. He became like a Jew, to win the Jews, He became like a gentile to win the Gentiles, and he became like a weak, to win the weak. Intentionally Paul has become all things to all men for the gospel sake.

Notably, new generations are curious to explore and adopt new ways of living. Other hand people are more conscious of their culture, ethnicity, identity, and nationality. In this context the concept of the multi-ethnic church will be the best way to have inclusive mission work among the 97% non-Christian Multi-Cultural and community and also, to encourage local churches of Nepal to be a part of God’s mission in effectively and efficiently among the pluralistic religious society keeping the strong sense of national identity.

5.9 Conclusion

The numbers of believers and Churches are continuously growing all over Nepal. First generation Christians had crossed various situations. It could be trail, persecution, hunger, thrust, insult imprisonment, etc. at the same time they are the persons who experienced first love of Jesus in their lives. As a result of their hard labor and unmovable faith in Christ second generation Christians are coming up and taking leadership positions. What the first

generation Christians have done for the sake of Gospel and Christ is incredible! Though they were uneducated, poor and people without respect in the society but God has been using them mightily because of their faithfulness.

As the world is changing, culture, languages, and understanding of peoples are too changing. Materialism, individualism, secularism, humanism, atheism have been entering and influencing the mindset and living ways of Nepalese people. Scientific advancement and modern technology have devalued the desperate need of God, but still, people are not able to get peace. This is the right time for Nepalese Christians to wake up from their warming beds and to do something standing in the gap between God and humankind who are not able to understand the saving plan of God. The second generation should not limit oneself inside the traditional framework of the mission of the first generation, Christian, instead of remaining faithful in the word of God we need to have a different approach in mission, evangelism and church responsibility that includes every aspect of a human being.

Christianity should not be altered with anybody else except the devil that is always against children of God. Especially churches need to be revived not with sophisticated western preaching and prosperity theology but through the new theological approaches that have to come out of human struggle from the local context. The church should not be only a religious institution, but it has to be an active device to connect the lost human relationship with God. If the entire churches come together and involve in God's mission by finding His presence in the current context; surely there will be great changes in Nepal, then we will be able to influence people through the love of Jesus Christ.

Society is always moving forward to achieve something new at the same time drugs, poverty, exploitation, unemployment, sexual abuse, and other various crimes have been crippling and damaging the real figure of our society. Other hands scientific advancement and modern technology is throwing significant impact in our churches and society, in this situation churches have to stand as a role model for human dignity and spiritual up-liftmen encountering all the challenges making theology contextual and relevant. I firmly believe that by adopting the countercultural and praxis model through the approaches of inter-religious dialogue and spirit of interreligious hospitality. Nepalese churches can make a fine adjustment by witnessing through word and deeds. So that churches and Christian community

may not be left behind all these prejudices but stand firm being a genuine and dynamic icon to influence other people and lead them ultimately into the saving plan of God.

These are the primary or common ground where our spirit is united, and we can claim ourselves as an active member of the universal church through our local function is different. Churches in Nepal must have a spirit of accommodation and spirit of hospitality between various denominations which comes under the seven truth; mention in Ephesians 4:4-6. Diversity does not mean disunity neither unity means uniformity it is human's formula whereas God's formula for unity is diversity in the spirit with its various gifts which enables the universal body of Christ. Churches in Nepal must have a universal understanding of the body of Christ, where there is freedom of each member to accomplish their entrusted task.

This understanding helps us to follow Pauline thought for the unity of the churches. In Roman 15:5-7 he says, "May the God who gives endurance and the encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." If churches are not able to practice this word they cannot move towards maturity. Our church always should not be a baby church, that is not a sign of the healthy church, but the church must grow into maturity with sound doctrine and applicable local theological based then she can give birth to other churches.

Churches in Nepal should no longer to be children; tossed here and there by the waves, and carried out by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth and love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body (Church), being fitted and held together (Ephesians 4:14-16); when every joint supply, according to the proper working of each part then it causes the growth of the church for the building up of itself in love, where our society is under the need of this love. If the body of Christ is not functioning correctly, we need to know that there is disunity and it shows our immature character that hinders other parts of the body to join together in love and unity.

So it is the responsibility of Nepalese Theologians and church leaders along with believers to develop Local/contextual theology based on the countercultural and praxis model initially involving in the inter-religious dialogue and inter-religious hospitality by sharing our table

following the example of Good Samaritan and Samaritan women. Simultaneously, the concept of Nepalese Church must be a multi-ethnic church where 125 castes/ethnic groups and 123 languages may feel their own home. Nepalese theologian should not limit only within these recommended model but need to explore critically and constructively standing firm in the biblical truth and coping with live situations of the people in a particular given context

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Attachments

Name of the Churches Observed during 1st November 2018-28th December 2018.

1. Itahari Baptist Church
2. Salom Assemblies of God worship center, Itahari
3. Anugrah Church, Dharan
4. Himalaya Pentecostal Church, Itahar
5. Prashansa Church Letang
6. New Life Gospel Church Itahari
7. United Methodist church, Itahari
8. Himalaya Pentecostal church Sinam, Taplejung
9. Santinagar Baptist Church
10. Good NewChurch, Damak
11. Faith Church, Lalitpur
12. Abundant Life Church, Lalitpur
13. AnugraChurch, Kathmandu
14. Nepali Isai Mandali Gyaneswar Kathmandu
15. Santinagar Baptist Church
16. Zion Methodist Church, Itahari
17. Isai Prauko Mandali, Itahari
18. Elohim Church Itahari
19. Nazarin Church Itahari
20. Trabanecal Church, Itahari

Two major Christmas events

1. Organized by Itaharai Christian Society
2. Organized by Dharan Christian Society