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Identity-Based Conflict and the Role of Print Media in the Pahadi Community of Contemporary Nepal

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IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICT AND PRINT MEDIA

IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA IN THE PAHADI
COMMUNITY OF CONTEMPORARY NEPAL

by

SUNIL KUMAR POKHREL

A Dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in International Conflict Management

in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia

March 2015

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DEDICATION

My mother and father, who encouraged me toward higher study,
My wife, who always supported me in all difficult circumstances, and
My sons, who trusted me during my PhD studies.

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I am grateful to the opinion leaders such as those from the political parties including Nepali Congress, Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist), United Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), university professors, school teachers, members of Parliament, bureaucrats, and trade union leaders who spared their valuable time for focus group meetings and interviews.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the formal abolishment of the discriminative caste system in Nepal in 1963, caste still influences social, economic, and political sectors of Hindu society. Indicators and existing research suggest that caste-based discrimination remains one of the major sources of unrest in a Hindu majority nation such as Nepal. Questions remain, however, about the media's role in caste-based identity conflict. This dissertation seeks to answer the question: How do various print media outlets (i.e., public vs. private) depict Pahadi identity-based conflicts in contemporary Nepal? In this study, I employed focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with Nepalese opinion leaders. Further, I conducted content analyses of national newspapers in order to examine caste identity conflict and media coverage in contemporary Nepal, specifically among the Pahadi community. Results indicate that private print media correlates with reported events-based data on caste-based identity conflict to a higher degree than public print media. Opinion leaders' views were partly influenced by print media, which helped shape and reshape their opinions on caste identity conflicts in complex ways. Ultimately, this study found that both the private and public media outlets seem to help manage caste-based identity conflicts more than aggravate them, although variability between media outlets is expected. The media can play a role as a "voice of reason" or as a facilitator when identity-based conflict obstructs the process of reconciliation and cultural harmony; whereas its ability to influence more embedded cultural practices such as the non-acceptance of inter-caste marriages seems to be less successful in the Nepalese context. This study suggests that the media can play a significant role in creating social harmony by helping manage identity conflict.

Keywords: caste-based identity conflict, print media, mass communication theory, Nepal, newspapers, opinion leaders, Pahadi community

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GLOSSARY

Abhadi	Local language of some districts of the plain areas
Adhivasi	Tribal group or indigenous peoples located all over Nepal
Akhanda	United, integrated geographic area
Andolan	Peoples' agitation against the government
Bahun	Brahman; Brahmin; a higher caste in the Hindu society; educators or priests in the Hindu temple
Bhote	Tamang people from Tibet also called Bhot
Bishwarup Birat Purush	Male god named Krishna or Bramha
Chepang	Small indigenous group of less than 10,000 located specifically in Dhading and Chitawan districts
Chhetri	Chhetry; Chhetria; Kshatriya; Thakuri; the high caste in Hindu society; fighters primarily employed specifically in Nepalese, Indian, and British military
Gorakhaland	Territory demanded by the Nepalese speaking people in and around Darjeeling, India as a separate state/province
Gotra	Clan, especially in Hindu society; it refers to people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor
Jamindar	Landlord who holds lots of agricultural land and employs many laborers; the landlord-laborer relationship is exploitative. Before 1964, government-authorized land revenue collectors

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Janandolan I and II	Peoples' movements in Nepal, two big agitations in 1989-1990 and 2006-2007
Janjati	Tribal groups; indigenous people located throughout Nepal
Jat	Caste or ethnic group in Nepalese Hindu culture
Jyapu	Untouchable caste in the Newar community
Khukuri	Traditional Nepali knife with a curved blade
Kipat	Land tenure system based on Kirat community lineage
Kirat	Pahadi indigenous people including the Limbu, Rai, and Sunwar
KYC	Kirat Yakthung Chumlung; a Limbu indigenous youth organization
Kuwa	Shallow water well dug by local people
Madarasa /Madrasah	Islamic school, especially attached to a mosque where young men and women study theology
Madhesh	Plain land in Nepal also called the Terai; Madhesh areas lie along the southern border with India
Madheshi	People of the Plain
Mantra	Religious incantation; priests preach Mantras in many Hindu religious and cultural rituals
MS Nepal	Danish Association for International Cooperation in Nepal
Narka	Hell
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
Panchayat system	Political system in which only select people could contest parliamentary elections. (This political system was implemented

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from 1960-1990 during the absolute monarchy. During this system, political and civil liberties and press freedoms were curtailed.)

Puja	Worship, generally performed by devotees every day in the morning and evening
Pundit	Hindu priest
Sadhu	Ascetic and wandering holy man
Shudra – atishudra	Dalit or untouchables such as Dom, Mushahar, Chamar, Kami, Sarki, Bode, and Jyapu
Sudurpashchim	Far-western part of Nepal; it has nine districts
Swarga	Heaven
Terai	Tarai, Terai; Madhesh plain land along the southern border of Nepal with India from Jhapa district in the east to Kanchanpur district in the west
Teraian	People living in Madhesh
Thangka	Buddhist scroll painting
Vedas	Hindu's principal holy books

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nepal has suffered many intrastate conflicts since its unification in 1769 including the Rana regime in 1949, the first multiparty democratic movement in 1990, the Maoist civil war from 1996 to 2006, and the second democratic republic movement of 2006. The 1949 movement was against the Rana regime for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. In 1990, the movement was against the Panchayat regime for the re-establishment of the constitutional monarchy with reduced power in the governance and multiparty democracy. The recent 2006 people's movement was against the absolute monarchy and helped establish the republic and federal structure in the country. In addition to economic conflicts related to unemployment, landlessness, and poverty, caste-based identity conflict is also one of the major problems that showed itself during each of the major people's movements in Nepal. For this study, caste-based identity is defined as in-group perceptions of particular castes or indigenous groups who unite together based on kin relationships, the same caste or same sub-caste membership, the same culture, or belong to the same language-speaking-group. According to Regmi (2003, p. 9), identity conflicts pose a challenge to both communist as well as non-communist political groups in Nepal. Caste and cultural identity issues, which were a less dominant subject before the 1990 multiparty democratic movement, have gradually accelerated between the First Janandolan in 1990 and Second Janandolan in 2006. The caste and ethnic identity issues, such as the Madheshi-Pahadi conflict, reached their climax after the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006.

More recent observations by The Carter Center (2013) noted that identity-based political activities in Nepal have declined since April 2012. Simultaneously, the report admits that

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“identity politics as a contested issue in Nepal is beyond question” (p. 38). In this dissertation, I follow The Carter Center’s lead and define identity politics as political and social mobilization of self-identified caste and ethnic groups, which revolve around self- or group-interests. Most of the political leaders in Nepal have since felt compelled to respond to The Carter Center report due to the substantial coverage of this report in the Nepalese media. What became apparent from this incident was the potential effects of global communication on countries like Nepal, whose politics may be influenced by external actors. The influence of information about identity-based intrastate conflicts disseminated through mass media impacting Nepalese society, therefore, deserves further analysis and understanding.

In connection to this theme, I received a call on June 4, 2014 from a former Deputy Prime Minister, a senior MP in the present parliament, and chairman of the second largest political party, K. P. Oli, in response to the publication of my article in the journal *Dishabodh* in May 2014. The article focused on the caste-based identity issue on Nepal’s development perspectives. The political elite of Nepal were clearly interested in the implications of caste-based identity conflicts in the country. Similarly, I received many positive responses after an article published in *Kantipur* on April 16, 2010¹ and after a live interview on *Avenues Television* on July 10, 2011.² Both the article and interview were focused on caste-based identity conflict, natural resource management, and the contemporary peace process in Nepal. After examining the role of caste-based identity conflicts on development and natural resource management, I decided to turn my attention to media affects in the Nepalese context.

¹ Refer to website: <http://www.ekantipur.com/np/2067/1/3/full-news/310088/>

² Refer to website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixjyV0mahAI>

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Information received through mass media channels may produce varied influences on ethnic, cultural, and identity-based conflicts. Caste-based identity conflicts have many facets. . However, for this dissertation, caste-based identity conflicts are defined as any conflict that is related to caste discrimination, cultural discrimination, and caste-specific demands and agitations such as caste-based restructuring of the state, social rejection of inter-caste marriages, caste aggression to other castes, internal displacement due to caste aggression, discrimination based on language or culture, and untouchable issues. Identity-based conflicts are, by nature, very complicated social phenomena involving multiple social variables at any time. At the risk of simplification, six types of identity-based conflicts are found in Nepal. These are: Madheshi in conflict with Pahadi in the plain areas; Pahadi indigenous people in conflict with non-indigenous people in the hills and plain; Madheshi indigenous people such as Tharu in conflict with other Madheshi and Pahadi in the eastern and western plains; Maithili language groups in conflict with Nepali speaking people in the mid plain;, and regional issues such as Akhand Sudurpaschim in the far-western areas. Because these are identity-based conflicts, they share multiple points of overlap and contradiction along the lines of caste, ethnicity, language, religion, and region.

This dissertation focuses on Pahadi identity politics and conflicts in the plain areas of Nepal. Pahadi people are in the majority in Nepal. However, they are in the minority—making up less than 36% of the population—in the plain areas. Therefore, Pahadi people have a majority sentiment and behave in the minority plain areas as if they are the largest ethnic group. On the other hand, the majority Madheshi people—55% in the plain areas—feel that they have first-settler rights in the Terai land and the Pahadi people promoted the settlement of hill people lands in Madhesh to capitalize on the resources in the Terai (Karna, March 14, 2015: Para. 1). This dissertation, examining the Madheshi-Pahadi caste-based identity conflict, focuses on three

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primary issues of contention: inter-caste and inter-cultural marriage, internal displacement, and the quota/reservation system in the plain areas. Further, this conflict will specifically be examined through the lens and influence of the mass media as an important interlocutor.

Mass media are very commonly regarded as “effective instruments of power, with the potential capacity to exert influence in various ways” (McQuail, 2010, p. 87). Singh (2010) described the positive impact of new media/Internet as enriching “the indigenous cultures and provid[ing] for the deep cultural roots which adhere to their identities with thicker bonds of cultural threads” (p. 88). On the other hand, McQuail (2010) discusses detrimental perceptions of media, which increases social and moral disorder such as crime, sex, and violence. Today, the influence of mass information around the globe is undeniable.

There are numerous examples available to demonstrate media effects and how they are managed. For example, on February 1, 2005, King Gyanendra seized the information and communication systems in Nepal to re-strengthen his coup. “Perhaps the most striking aspect of this coup was that the king cut all technological communication outside the valley and overseas for a period of several days” (Kunreuther, 2006, p. 323). Almost all contemporary coups around the world start by targeting and seizing control of the domestic media outlets, often even before capturing the sitting leadership.

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On the other hand, social media such as Facebook and Twitter are used as effective tools to gather people in protest against human rights violations, discrimination, or campaigning for women's rights.³ This dissertation focuses on the role of print media information conveyed through opinion-leaders on the Pahadi identity conflict in contemporary Nepal. The rationale for selecting print media as a proxy for all mass media in Nepal is explained in the methodology chapter.

I analyze the roles of print media through the lens of mass communication theory (McQuail, 2010), impacts of communication (Singh, 2010), and influence of media (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet et al., 1944; and Katz, 1957). Much of the theoretical literature on identity explores conceptualizations (Hall, 1996; Narroll, 1964), caste identity in South Asia (Gupta, 2004, 2005), explorations of how identity is fashioned (Guney, 2010; and Singh, 2010), and the media's role in identity-based conflicts (Hachhethu, 2007; Olorunyomi, 2000; Reuban, 2009; and Stroh, 2011). I reframe the Nepalese Pahadi identity-based conflict based on the above theoretical perspectives and link them to the information flows from Nepalese print media over the last twelve years.

³ The role of Facebook and Twitter on the Egyptian uprising was quite dramatic. According to FRONTLINE:

Revolution in Cairo (2013):

On March 23, 2008, a small group of young Egyptian activists—calling themselves the April 6 Youth Movement—launched a Facebook page in support of a planned textile workers' strike in the city of Mahalla al-Kobra to protest low wages and high food prices. The group invited about 300 people to join its Facebook page; within a day it had 3,000 members and within a few weeks, 70,000 had joined the call for strikes across Egypt in support of Mahalla's workers. Retrieved from: FRONTLINE: Revolution in Cairo (2013). April 6 Youth Movement. Retrieved from: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/inside-april6-movement/>

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In this study, I focus on contemporary Nepalese society, which is overwhelmingly Hindu, experiencing many unresolved issues related to caste-based identity conflicts within and between major political parties since 2006. In addition, this research uses both qualitative and quantitative analyses based on data collected from newspaper content analyses, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and other primary and secondary sources. This research provides additional understanding on the roles of print media information conveyed through opinion-leaders on caste-based identity politics and conflicts specifically focused on the Pahadi identity-conflict case. This dissertation also examines the print media of Nepal to show how these types of caste-based identity conflicts are affecting the writing of the new constitution and how opinion-leaders are helping to play positive roles in completing the present conflict transformation process as played out, and therefore observable, in the print media. I also developed various maps using Geographic Information System (GIS) related to caste, indigenous, and ethnic settlements to explore geographical elements of these conflicts such as identity-based quota demands.

This dissertation is divided into 10 chapters. This opening chapter offers a blueprint to the entire thesis with an initial justification for the study. It also provides an administrative map and a history of identity-based conflict in Nepal. In the second chapter, I describe the concept of identity in Nepalese society by introducing six different identity-based conflict issues related to caste, language, and regional politics. The third chapter portrays the conflict history of Nepal where I describe various conflicts in different time periods in Nepal such as those during absolute monarchy, Maoist insurgency conflict, and caste and ethnic conflict.

In the fourth chapter, I review three main theories: identity-based conflict theory, mass communication theory, and roles of media in identity conflict. I further discuss the role of

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opinion leaders in two-step flow of communication theory. Within identity theory, I examine the ethnic, cultural, caste, and social identity theories in relation to caste-identity conflict of contemporary Nepal. I also examine the theoretical perspectives on media's influence on caste-based identity conflict. The fifth chapter outlines the research methodology including the research questions and hypotheses as well as sampling and site selection, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, content analyses of both public and private media, and INSEC datasets. Eight GIS maps show these identity conflict areas and the places where focus group discussions were conducted. I also discuss some ethical implications of the research.

The Nepalese caste-identity conflict story is discussed in the sixth chapter. In this chapter, I analyze the news content about identity conflict depicted in the print media, *Gorakhatra* and *Kantipur* over a twelve-year period. Further, the content analysis of these newspapers after the *Kantipur FM Radio* seizure is also examined. In addition, the nature of media coverage during the termination of the First Constituent Assembly (15 days before and 15 days after the end of the CA) has also been investigated.

In the seventh chapter, I make a comparative analysis of the content from these two print media outlets. Further, I discuss the differences and similarities of the content as well as how the opinion-leaders are involved in the creation and dissemination of this information. I pull seven representative caste-discrimination cases from the INSEC database and examine the media's roles in information dissemination. I further cross examine how the media represents the caste-based identity conflicts which were reported in the INSEC dataset. Moreover, I examine how the newspapers cover the Pahadi identity-conflict related to internal displacement and the quota system. In addition, I analyze the pattern of caste/ethnicity representation in mid- and high-level professional institutions and the demands for and against implementing a quota system in Nepal.

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In chapter eight, I discuss the findings related to the role of the print media in Pahadi identity-based conflict in the Madhesh. In chapter nine, I examine how the Nepalese society is moving from a Hindu caste system into the politics of caste-based identity conflicts including new demands for territorial quotas and political representation in various sociopolitical and economic sectors of Nepalese society.

In the concluding chapter, I propose conclusion and policy recommendations. I also suggest further lines of research related to caste-identity conflict and limitations to this research.

Introduction to Nepal⁴

Nepal, physically small and economically poor, is landlocked by India on three sides and China's Tibet region to the north. Nepal has a very formidable terrain and tremendous geographic diversity. The country is comprised of plains, hills, and mountains that stretch over 145 to 241 kilometers at its breadth (Figure 1.1.).

⁴ Unless specified otherwise, all data related to Nepal's physical, economic, political, social, ethnic, and caste has been retrieved from: National Population Census (2001) and National Population and Housing Census (2011) (National Report), National Planning Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal.

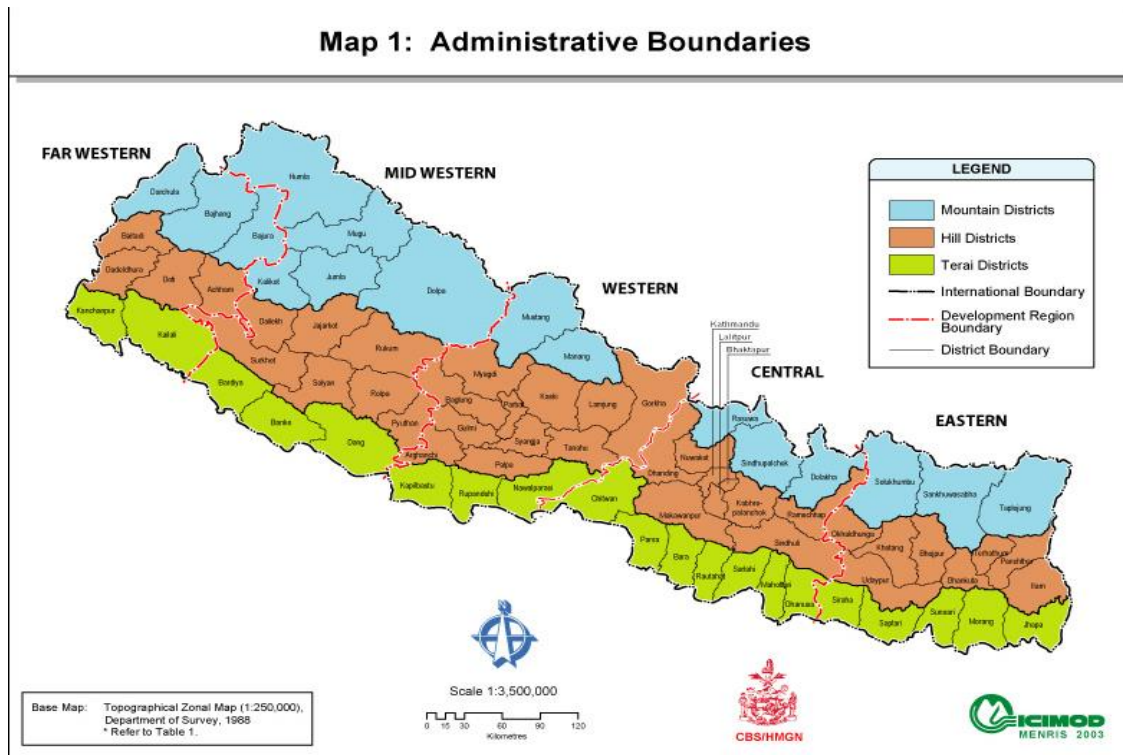


Figure 1.1: Map Showing Five Development Regions and Three Geographic Landscapes: Mountain in blue, Hill in red, and Terai in green⁵

Figure 1.1 shows the 75 districts, five development regions, and three geographic landscapes of Nepal including the high altitude mountains shown in blue, the middle hills in red, and the plains in green. The capital city of Nepal is Kathmandu. The southern plain areas along the border of India are called Terai or Madhesh and these lands stretch from Jhapa district in the east to Kanchanpur district in the west.

Nepal’s elevation is between 59 and 8,848 meters above sea level. It has seven of the 10 highest mountains in the world including the tallest, Mount Everest, bordering China in the north. The country has huge potential for green energy, especially hydropower with up to 80,000

⁵ The map is retrieved from the Districts of Nepal: Indicator of Development, updated in 2013, from the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

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megawatt capacity from that alone. Nepal has a low level of infrastructure such as road networks, railway networks, educational institutions, and access to health care. Many people still depend on raw river or pond water for drinking. Over the last decade, the GDP per capita has fluctuated between US\$321.00 and US\$699.00 (World Bank report, 2014). In spite of above, Nepal is very rich on cultural diversity. Nepal is also the birthplace of Gautama Buddha. As a religion, Buddhism is followed by 350 million people worldwide (Buddhist Studies, 2014).

According to the National Population and Housing Census (2011), as of June 22, 2011, Nepal's population was 26,494,504. Terai constitutes 50.27% of the population (13,318,705) while the hill and mountain terrains constitute 43% (11,394,007) and 6.73% (1,781,792) of the population respectively. The average household size has decreased from 5.44 persons in 2001 to 4.88 persons by 2011. The growth in the literacy rate from 54.1% in to 65.9% as well as the growth rate of telephone penetration (including cell phones) from 3% to 72% over the same period. Additionally, an increase in radio and visual media coverage are quite promising and in need of investigation to see how these rapid developments are affecting society at the social, economic, and political levels.

Piped water is the main source of drinking water for 47.78% of the total households. More than one third (38.17%) of the total households in Nepal do not have toilets in their homes. About two-thirds of the total households use firewood as their main source of fuel for cooking.

Sex ratio (number of females per 100 males) at the national level has decreased from 99.8 in 2001 to 94.2 in 2011. The decreasing trend of female births compared to male indicates the importance of male heirs in Hindu culture. Sons are considered to be the successors of the family name, and the one who will take the parents' ashes after their death to the Holy Ganga River and wash them so that they will go to heaven.

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There are 125 castes and ethnic groups reported in the 2011 census. Table 1.1 shows the details about the population divided by main castes and ethnic groups in Nepal.

Table 1.1

Changes in Caste Population in 2001 and 2011 Census

Caste and/or ethnicity	2001 Census	2011 Census	Religion
Chhetri/Chhetriya	15.8	16.6	Hindu
Brahman-Hill	12.74	12.2	Hindu
Magar-Hill Indigenous	7.14	7.1	Hindu
Tharu-Terai Indigenous	6.75	6.6	Hindu
Tamang-Hill Indigenous	5.64	5.8	Hindu, Buddhist
Newar-Indigenous	5.48	5.0	Hindu, Buddhist
Kami-Dalit, Untouchable	3.94	4.8	Hindu, Christian
Musalman	4.27	4.4	Muslim
Yadav-Madheshi	3.94	4.0	Hindu
Christian	<1	1.4	
Other religious people such as Prakriti, Bon, Jainism, Bahai, and Sikhism combined	<1	<1	

From the above table on caste/ethnicity data (Table 1.1), an interesting pattern emerges: The Brahman, Newar, and Tharu population have been reduced compared to the 2001 census. The cause of this reduction among the Brahman caste may be due to hypo-descent in which, due

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to the purity concept within the Hindu caste system, children of inter-caste marriages between Brahmin and another caste take on the identity of the lower (i.e., non-Brahmin) caste. However, most other caste populations have increased over that same period.

There are 123 primary languages spoken in Nepal as reported in the 2011 census compared to 92 languages in the 2001 census. Nepali is spoken as the mother tongue by 44.6% of the total population followed by Maithili (11.7%), Bhojpuri (6.0%), Tharu (5.8%), Tamang (5.1%), Newar (3.2%), and others (Figure 1.2). The huge increase in the language registration in the 2011 census suggests that caste and cultural consensus has been increased during the last 10 years in Nepal. Various organizations and political leaders campaigned for the proper and accurate registration of caste and culture in the 2011 census. For example, Asian Human Rights Commissions (AHRC), Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), and many political and NGO leaders launched a census drive to engage all castes and Dalit communities in the 2011 census (IDNS Nepal Report, 2011, p. 3).

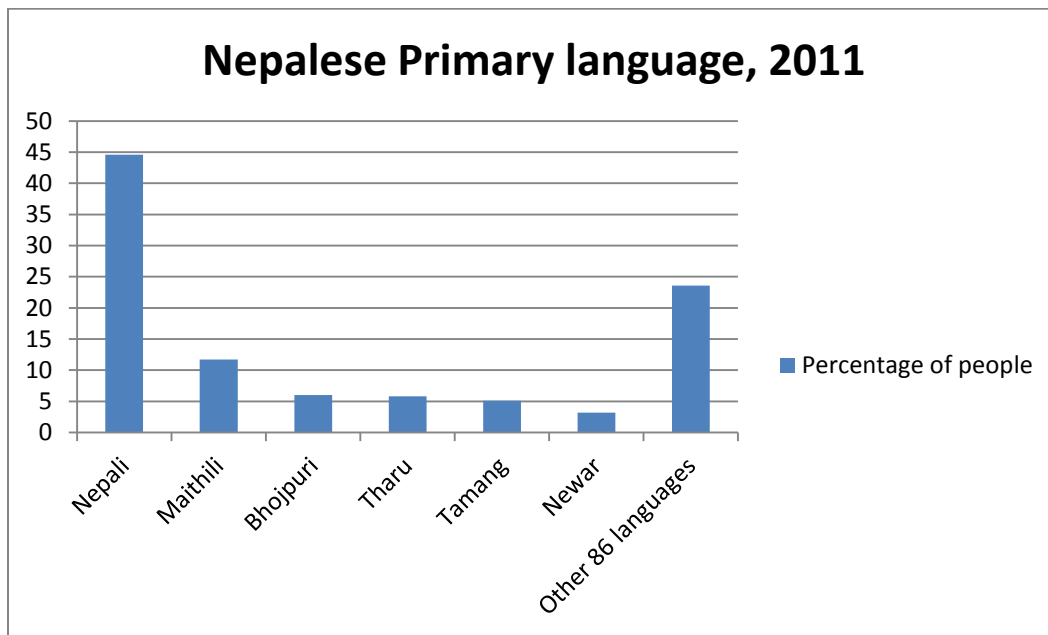


Figure 1.2 Percentages of Primary Languages

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There were 10 religions reported in the 2011 census. Hinduism is practiced by 81.3% of the population, which is the highest national percentage in the world. Table 1.2 shows the religious populations in 2001 and 2011.

Table 1.2

Changes in Religious Populations (%), 2001 and 2011

Religion	2001	2011
Hindu	81.8	81.3
Buddhist	11.0	9.0
Islam	3.5	4.4
Kirat	2.9	3.1
Christianity	0.4	1.4

When comparing the census data on religious affiliation, the mass conversion from Hindu and Buddhism to Islam and Christianity are apparent.

Until early 1990, during the absolute monarch regime—the Panchayat regime—print, visual, and radio media were fully controlled by the state. After the first People’s Movement in 1990, King Birendra was forced to accept a multi-party democratic system, which respected civil liberties, human rights, and press freedom in the country. “Due to a confluence of several factors, the demise of the Panchayat, of course, being the most significant, media was the one sector which recorded massive growth during the decade of the 1990s—growth seen not only quantitatively but also qualitatively” (Onta, 2001, p. 231). The growth of media in recent years is

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more robust and exponential. Table 1.3 shows the percentage of people using various information systems and mass and social media in Nepal.

Table 1.3

Percentage of Households Using Various Information Systems in Nepal

Household facility	Percentage of Households					
	2011			2001		
	Nepal	Urban	Rural	Nepal	Urban	Rural
Radio	50.82	53.56	50.17	53.1	64.7	50.9
Television	36.45	60.67	30.66	22.5	54.9	16.4
Cable Television	19.33	53.80	11.10	Data not available		
Computer	7.28	23.66	3.37	Data not available		
Internet	3.33	12.11	1.24	<1		
Mobile Phone	64.63	84.07	59.98	< 10,000 cell phone		

Table 1.4 gives the total newspapers published according to the Press Council in 2000 and 2011.

In comparison to 2000, print newspaper publications in number and circulation have increased from 114 to 795. In 2011, local newspapers were being published in more than 65 districts.

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Table 1.4

Number of Newspapers Published in 2000 and 2011

Number of newspaper published	In 2000	In 2011
Print Newspapers	114 in total	298 Daily, 25 Bi-Weekly, 381 Weekly, and 273 Bi-monthly

From the above socio-economic features of Nepal, one can conclude that one third of the Nepalese people are out of electricity, more than two thirds still depend on firewood for cooking, more than half do not have clean drinking water, more than one third do not have toilets in their homes, and more than one third are still illiterate. Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world. In the world ranking in 2014, the Nepal Human Development Report (2014) ranked Nepal 145th out of 195 countries. Compared to 157th in 2013, Nepal's progress in social, economic, and other development indicators is better than in previous years. According to the Nepal Human Development report (2012), the percentage of the Nepali population living under multidimensional poverty has reduced to 44.2% in 2012 from 64.7% in 2010. Transportation, communication, health, and education facilities are still underdeveloped in the country. However, some indicators such as the reduction in household size, decreasing trends in population growth, increasing trends in literacy rates, a reduction of the percentage of people under multidimensional poverty, a high expansion rate in communication networks, and qualitative and quantitative media growth between 2001 and 2011, show that the people's level of social awareness is increasing alongside real development improvements. Similarly, the reduction of birth rates and people's increasing interests in the registration of their caste and

culture (125 castes in 2011 compared to 101 in 2001) demonstrates an advancing awareness of people's caste, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. Despite some improvements in several socio-economic indicators compared to 2001, however, Nepal remains quite underdeveloped.

History of Different Castes and Cultural Groups

I now turn to a brief description of the origins of the caste system in Hindu society. I explore historical linkages of Pahadi, Madheshi, and indigenous people and languages as they relate to the topic under investigation. Further, I depict issues of spreading secularism in Nepal and the parallel caste issues in other South Asian territories such as India.

Origins of the Caste and Caste System

According to Kisan (2005), "caste is generally regarded as: all the activities of human life; duties; rights; fate; future; occupation; and all those things that are fixed on the basis of heredity" (p. 5). Beteille (1996) also includes tradition and ritual status in his definition of caste:

Caste may be defined as a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership, and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system. (p. 46)

Similarly, Dumont summarized Bouglé's definition:

Caste system divides the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups, distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics: *separation* in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect; *division* of labor, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which their members can depart only within certain limits; and finally *hierarchy*, which ranks the

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groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another. (1970, p. 21, emphases in the original)

In the Hindu caste system, there are vertical as well as horizontal divisions between and within the main castes. In rural areas, pure or non-pure, touchable or untouchable, and socially acceptable or unacceptable are still practiced in many parts of rural India and Nepal as well as other Hindu dominated societies. Vertically, the Nepalese caste system is divided into four main categories: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and, on the bottom, Sudra or the Dalit. In this system, everyone was organized in terms of their relative ritual purity (Bennett, Dahal, and Govindasamy, 2006, p. 1). Within these main categories, many sub-castes exist. This broad framework of the caste hierarchy is replicated with countless local variations and elaborations all over the Indian sub-continent (Bennett et al., 2006, p. 1). Similarly, the Nepalese caste system has a horizontal division based on language, culture, customary practices, and historical and regional belonging. Social disparity (i.e., inequality) is closely linked with the vertical as well as the horizontal differentiation of people (Dahal and Kumar, 2009, p. ix).

The caste system is a system of discrimination based on heredity and style of life mainly related to customs, traditions, and associated with ritual status. Based on these definitions and features, Nepalese caste has been formally registered by the Government of Nepal into 125 main and sub caste categories in the 2011 census. The caste categories in the 2001 census only numbered 101 (Table 1.1). One can observe that there is some change in the percentage of different castes from 2001 to 2011 according to the census data. The percentage of the higher caste was reduced while the lower caste membership increased in size when comparing 2001 to 2011. One of the causes of the population reduction of the lower caste is that many Dalits

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converted their religion from Hindu to Christianity, Buddhism, or Islam to get rid of their untouchability status which also took place in India (BBC, 2006).

The movement between different castes is theoretically not possible as an ascribed status. However, in practice, there is some caste movement in Nepalese society, which can be directly observed. According to Beteille (1996), “mobility in the caste system is a much slower and more gradual process than in the class system” (p. 190). In the caste system, the movement is dependent on the people’s acceptance culturally and traditionally of the shift. How fast the social acceptance occurs depends upon the structural distance between different castes as well as other societal changes taking place. Beteille (1996) noted that “the structural distance of one caste to another in Nepal may be great or small, depending upon their mutual positions broadly based on social, economic, and cultural status” (p. 46). For example, the structural distance between Brahmin and Chhetri is different than Brahmin and Baisya or Chhudra. Some areas of social life in many parts of Nepal, mainly in urban and suburban sectors, experience relatively less caste discrimination because of the information access and busy urban lifestyles. For example, in a study on Dalit discrimination in India, the magnitude of discrimination was less severe in urban centers (Thorat, October 2008, Para. 44). There are many other areas, especially in the rural parts of the country, where social decisions are made based upon the peoples’ caste in the community. For example, choices of arranged marriage partners, house construction site selection, and attendance at rituals and festivals can all be determined largely based on caste classification.

Caste System in Hindu Religion

One of the important features of the Hindu caste system is *Gotra*. According to Beteille (1996), “the Gotra is an exogamous division whose members are believed, particularly among the Brahmins, to be agnatically descended from a saint or seer” (p. 48). All castes whether

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Madheshi, the people of plains, or Pahadi, the people of the hills and mountains, are linked to each other through their particular *Gotra*. In the Nepalese caste system, marriage within the same *Gotra* is prohibited. In some communities, a marriage within the same sub-caste is accepted if their *Gotra* is different. Social prestige in the Hindu caste system is very closely tied to cultural and ritual values.

The caste system in the Hindu society is similar in both India and Nepal. Both countries have four main categories of caste: Brahmin,⁶ Chhetri, Vaishya, and Chhudra. However, there are some differences in sub-castes within the major castes. For example, in India, Brahmins are sub-categorized into different names in different states such as Karnataka-Tuluva, Maharashtra-Deshastha and Karhade, Andra Pradesh-Vaidiki, Niyogi, Dravida, Vaikhanasa, Tamil Nadu-Iyenger and -Iyer, Kerala-Nambudiri, Bihar-Mithila, and so forth. In the case of the Nepalese Brahmin, Pahadi Brahmins are known as “Upadhyay” and “Jaisi” whereas Madheshi Brahmins are “Maithili.” According to the 2011 census, Nepal has three major ethnic groups (Teraian or Madhesi, Pahade or Pahadi, and indigenous), four major castes (Brahmin, Chhetry, Baishya, and Chhudra), 125 sub-castes, and 81.6% of the people practice Hindu. The people of Terai (the plains), are divided into two main ethnic groups, Madeshi and Pahadi, who have been engaging in various levels of conflicts, especially identity-based conflict, for decades. This dissertation’s primary focus is on this caste-ethnic conflict and how it is influenced by mass print media through opinion leaders.

⁶ “Brahmins rank highest in the caste hierarchy, and along with Chhetris they formed a majority of the influential and wealthy people of traditional Nepal” (Bista 1996, p. 1).

Origins of Madheshi, Pahadi, Dalit, and Other Indigenous Peoples

Based on the Nepalese caste, ethnic, regional, cultural, and linguistic cleavages, Hachhethu (2003) classified the Nepali population into three major groups: “Pahadi (hill people) and Madheshi (plain people); Jat (caste groups) and Janajati (ethnic/tribal groups); and high caste and low caste Hindus (within Jat)” (p. 220). All four categories of the Hindu castes are found in both Pahadi and Madheshi, but their family names are different. Similarly, different forms of untouchability are practiced in both groups. Most of the Janajatis do not have the system of untouchability except the Newar. For further clarity, some details about Madheshi, Pahadi, Dalit, and Janajati are provided below.

The people residing in the plains, also called Terai, refer to themselves as Madheshi. Terai are the plane lands of Nepal along the border of India in the south. According to Yadav (2007),

The Terai region, a long and narrow strip of Indo-Gangetic plains in the south of Nepal, is called *Madhyadesh* and the people inhabiting the region are called Madheshi, whose religious traditions, language, caste system, food, style of clothing, and other social customs and manners are similar to those of the people of Indo-Gangetic plains. Not only geographically but also culturally, the Terai is distinct from the hills. (p. 92)

On the other side, there are some debates over the identity of the Pahadi people, who have inhabited the Terai for many generations, particularly whether these Pahadi people can be called Madheshi or still belong to the Pahadi. The debate raises the question: Who belongs to the Madhesh? This debate reached its peak in the Madhesh Andolan in 2006, (which will be reported in detail in chapter six under the sub topic “internal migration”) though later, the issue was normalized as the identity of all people residing in the Madhesh are now identified as Madheshi.

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Next, most Terai Brahmins such as Jha, Mishra, Bhumiya, and Thakur are either Jamindars (landlords) or priests. Chhetris such as Rajput and Sing are powerful people, and most of them are the wealthy landlords in the Terai. Gupta, Nuniyars, and Baniyas are traders and shopkeepers. Many of the Terai castes are based on their occupations such as Yadav, keepers of cattle and sellers of milk; Mali, gardeners; Dhanik and Kurmi, workers as personal attendants for Brahmins and Chhetris; Tatmas and Khatavas, agricultural laborers; Telis, businesspersons and makers of cooking oil; Barais, preparers of Pan;⁷ Dhobi, washer persons; Chamar, menial workers including carcass removal services; and Halkhors and Mehters, menial workers including cleaners of the village latrines. Terai people have unique festivals such as Durga Puja, Chhath, and Holi. However, these festivals are now celebrated in many other parts of Nepal by many other Pahadi communities. Most people of the Terai speak a language other than Nepali as their mother tongue. Their mother tongues are more or less influenced by the languages and cultures of the northern reaches of India. Indian languages and cultures are shared through open borders, cross-border marriages, cross-border festivals, cross-border economic activities, and cross-border politics in the Terai areas.

People whose ancestors came from India and are lighter skinned are called Pahadi. “Traditionally, fair skin-color has been associated with the Aryans from whom the Brahmins claim descent” (Beteille 1996, p. 48). Further, Whelpton (1997) noted that:

Before the mid-nineteenth century the Chhetris were known as Khas, and they were in fact a continuation of the people of that name who had lived in the Himalayas since ancient times. Above them in the Parbatiya hierarchy were the Thakuris, who claimed

⁷ Pan is made from betel-leaf and many mouth-fresheners such as Gutkha, betel nuts, and masala. Pan is a very popular item in South Asian communities.

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descent from Indian Rajput refugees, and the Brahmans, who were also supposedly of Indian origin. (p. 41)

An additional factor that contributed to the disbursement of language was the plain areas were heavily affected by Malaria before the 1960s and therefore, people who came from India during the Malaria outbreak, settled in Nepal's hills and mountains because they are cold and not affected by malaria. The Tharu, indigenous people of the Terai, were encouraged to settle in the Terai itself while clearing the dense forest because people believed that the Tharu castes had strong immune systems against malaria, allowing them to settle in there., Pahadi people settled in the hills and mountains, but after the eradication of malaria in the late 1960s, they again started migrating into the Madhesh areas.

Brahmins and Chhetris are the major castes of the Pahadi ethnic group. Often, hill Dalits such as Sharki, Bishwakarma, Damai, and Gaine are also categorized as Pahadi. Brahmin's and Chhetri's populations are widely distributed throughout Nepal. They are most densely populated in the western part of Nepal. It is believed that during medieval times, people who were wise developed a system of self-governance where they called themselves Brahmans and argued that as professionals they should not do any physical work. Because of this, Brahmans were involved in more intellectual pursuits such as working as priests or preachers. Khas, broadly Chhetris, were interested in farming in the ancient pastoral agricultural society. Therefore, "Brahmans took to the profession of priest and began preaching the importance of hierarchic social and ritual order" (Bista 1996, p. 76). The king and feudal Jamindars, mostly from Chhetris and Khas, willingly accepted the Hindu caste system as this hierarchical caste system enabled the king and feudal Jamindars to permanently place themselves in positions of social and political power.

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Today, the main occupations of Brahmans and Chhetris are farming and government service. Brahmins also act as family priests. Chhetris are more interested in joining the military or security sectors. The main festivals of Pahadi Brahmans and Chhetris are Dashain and Tihar. They also celebrate the festivals of other castes such as Holi, Dewali, and Chath. Nepali is the primary language of the Pahadi people as well as some other castes. Nepali is the official language of Nepal and it is spoken by a considerable number of the people. According to the 2011 census, 44.6% of the people of Nepal speak Nepali as their primary language.

The term “‘Dalit’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘dal’ which means burst, split, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed” (Massey 1997, p. 1). It has an ancient root in the Indian Dalit and social movement during and after the 1920s. For example, In the Oxford Dictionary,⁸ Dalit means a member of the lowest caste in the traditional Indian caste system. In the Macmillan Dictionary,⁹ Dalit means someone who belongs to the lowest caste (i.e., social class) in the traditional Hindu social system. The concept of Dalit is found in the writings of two great Indian personalities, the 19th century reformer and revolutionary Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and the 20th century intellectual and Indian constitution writer B. D. Ambedkar. Phule used the terminology shudra-atishudra for Dalits. “Shrudras are touchable backward castes and atishudras are ‘-untouchable backward castes’” (Massey 1997, p. 1). The manifesto of “the Dalit Panther Movement” in 1973 in India defines Dalit as: “members of scheduled castes and tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion” (Massey 1997, P. 1).

⁸ Retrieved on December 15, 2014 from: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Dalit>

⁹ Retrieved on December 15, 2014 from: <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/Dalit>

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Another Dalit activist, Kisan (2005), linked the Dalit issue to the Hindu Varna system,¹⁰ and describes, "In contemporary India and Nepal, there are tens of thousands of people suffering within the Varna system created by Hindu religion. Those categorized at the bottom of this Hindu social organization system have been designated as 'untouchable or Dalit'" (p.3). In the case of Madheshi Dalit of Nepal, an organization working in the Madheshi Dalit sector described the situation:

The exclusions and discriminations experienced by Madheshi Dalits are even worse than that of Hill Dalits. Bantar, Chamar/Ram/Harijan, Dhobi, Dom/Malik, Dushad/Paswan, Halkhor, Khatwe (Khan and Mandal), Musahar, and Tatma are some of the sub-groups of Terai Dalits. Among them, the situation of Dom and Musahar community is severe. Landlessness, lack of citizenship certificate, illiteracy, poverty, child marriage, dowry system, social boycott by non-Dalits, Sinopratha, etc. are the major issues of Terai Dalits. (NNDSWO, Feb 14, 2014)

Realizing the social, economic, and political conditions of Dalit, the Nepal government is trying to implement various programs such as Dalit inclusion programs, quota systems in employment, minimum political representation at all levels, strong rules against untouchability, and government support on cross-caste marriages. For example, 15% quota for Dalits (out of total 45% quota for Dalit, women, Madheshi, and lower castes) is reserved in all government institutions and, Nepalese Rupees one hundred thousand (equivalent to USD 1000.00) is provided for each cross-caste marriage couple since 2012, and this might be a good start to encourage cross-cultural marriage. "Even while there are efforts to redress the social atrocities of

¹⁰ Varna refers broadly to concepts related to "color." In Manu script, Brahmin is white, Kshatriya is red, Vaishya is yellow, and Shudra is black.

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the 20th century, new forms of exploitation, torture, war, and caste, racial and class divisions are developing and continuing” (Kisan, 2005, p. 3) in the Dalit sector of Nepal, although “the practice of untouchability was declared a ‘social crime’ and legislation was announced to punish it [untouchability] and promote the wider upliftment of the Dalit community in Nepal” (Lunn, 2013, p. 4). Further, the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007, Article 13, Section 3 (Right to equality)¹¹ now provides legal protections to all citizens against discrimination.

Lastly, indigenous peoples are those who arrived first to uninhabited territory (i.e., first settlers) or were the first to inhabit an area. These people have unique cultures and customs as well as in many cases, their own language. According to the Nepal Gazette (February 7, 2002), the government announced that there are 18 indigenous nationalities in the mountains, 24 in the Hills, seven in the Inner Terai, and 10 in the Terai areas of Nepal. Brief descriptions of some of the most relevant indigenous nationalities of Nepal are provided below which include the Sherpa from the mountains; Rai, Limbu, and Tamang from the Hills; and Tharu from the Terai. Figure 1.3 shows indigenous settlements throughout Nepal. I developed this figure based on the 2011 census using GIS software. Each dot represents an indigenous population of 1,000.

¹¹ Article 13, Section 3: “The State shall not discriminate any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these. Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of special provisions by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of women, Dalits, indigenous peoples (Adibashi, Janajati), Madheshi or farmers, workers, economically, socially or culturally backward classes or children, the aged and the disabled or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ccwb.gov.np/uploads/userfiles/resources/English/The%20Interim%20Constitution%20of%20Nepal.pdf>

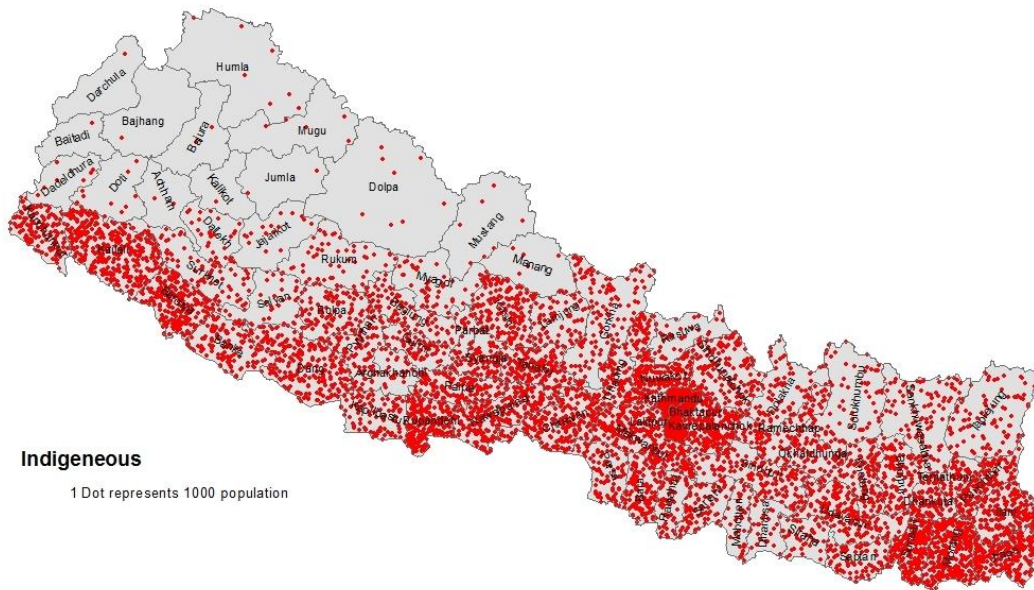


Figure 1.3: Indigenous People’s Settlement Patterns

Sherpas live in the high altitude of the Himalayan region and are very popular among mountaineering expeditions. Solukhumbu district, where Mount Everest stands, is the Sherpa’s indigenous territory. Sherpas retain much of their Tibetan culture. “Despite their close affinity with the Tibetan language, culture, and religion, Sherpas feel as much Nepali as any other people” (Bista 1996, p. 185).

The two main sub-divisions of Kirant (or Kirat) people of east Nepal are the Rais and Limbus. Most Rai settlements are located at altitudes of three to six thousand feet above sea level. Almost all agricultural land of the Rai community is under the control of inalienable communal rights of the Kiranti. This system is called Kipat. According to Bista (1996), “The Kiranti kipat were tax free and included domination over all cultivated lands, forests, streams and

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rivers within its bounds. Taxes were raised not from the land but traditionally from each household” (p. 38).

The Limbu are second in size to the Rai among Kirantis. The Kiranti kipat system was exercised in the Limbu community as well. The Kipat system was eventually abolished by King Mahendra in 1964 under the new land tenure system. Limbu were also favored recruits of the Indian and British army. The Limbu language is a dialect apart from Rai and includes a written form (Bista 1996, p. 47). Limbus have their own marriage system and culture, separate from Rais. According to Brian Hodgson, “the Kirati on account of their distinctly traceable antiquity as a nation and the peculiar structure of their language are perhaps the most interesting of all the Himalayan races” (Chemjong, 2003, p. 1). Further, Chemjong (2003) describes that “Kirat land is named ‘-Limbuwan-’ by Shan Monkwan people which lies between northern border of Tibet, southern boundary of Jalal Garh of India, eastern boundary of Teesta in India, and western boundary at river Dudkoshi in Nepal” (p. 51).

Next, the Tamangs live in the high hills east, north, south, and west of Kathmandu Valley. It is believed that they originally came from Tibet. In Tamang territory, a strict Kipat land system was maintained through the various clan divisions (Bista 1996, p. 57). Some Tamang Lamas, the Buddhist priests, are well trained in painting Tibetan-type *thangkas* (religious scroll paintings), and some others are experts in carving designs in wood (Bista 1996, p. 57). Those living outside the traditional area retain very little of their original culture, arts, or religion, and usually adopt the cultural patterns of their immediate neighbors (Bista 1996, p. 60). Most Tamangs fall into this category. Within the Tamang clan, the caste discrimination system was largely abandoned. Marriage between any clan except one’s own and one’s brother’s is possible. Tamangs have unique customs on marriage, death, and birth ceremonies. In addition,

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Tamangs have entirely different land tenure system called Kipat. The Kipat land system was abolished in 1964 by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. The land tenure system act of 1964 was applied to Tamang territory, which abolished the Jamindari system. Under the land tenure act, the landholding size for each family was restricted. Excess land was confiscated by the government for redistribution. Many landowners and Jamindars accused the government of offering minimum compensation for this land.

Whatever the timing of their arrival in Nepal, Tamangs are clearly a people of Tibetan origin. Physically, linguistically, and culturally, they bear strong affinities with their northern neighbors. "Not only do their own traditions have them coming from Tibet via Kyerong, but to the more Hinduized people of the hills, Tamangs are still 'Bhote,' the word used to describe the Tibetan peoples of the plateau" (Fricke, 1994, p. 29-30).

Newars are the indigenous inhabitants of the valley of Kathmandu. They are small shopkeepers, big business operators, importers, exporters, farmers, and craftsmen. "Among them, artisans and caste groups range from the lowest to the highest, from sweeper to priest, both Buddhist and Hindu" (Bista 1967, p. 19). Newars are found in every market center in the city as well as village centers including Madhesh. Newars have their unique culture and customs and have their own caste structure, and they also practiced untouchability within their caste structure. "States of purity and impurity separate Newar castes, and purity is one key idiom of rank: higher castes are relatively more 'pure' than lower castes" (Parish 1997, p. 26). This purity, as Toffin held, is expressed in different ways such as in the acceptance of boiled food and water and occupations:

We are facing here what can be called a process of ethnization or tribalization of caste.

The Jyapus claim to be the aboriginal inhabitants, adivasis of the valley. They pretend to

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have better preserved the most ancient Newar traditions (this is sometimes true) and to be less influenced by ‘Indian civilization’ than the other Newar castes (in this concern, they underestimate the impact of the Indian Buddhist great traditions among them). These claims closely parallel those of the hill tribes, such as Tamangs or Kiraties. (2003, p. 134)

Finally, Tharus are one of the largest groups of people settled in the plain land of Nepal in the south along the Indian border. “Tharu are probably among the oldest groups to inhabit the Terai” (Bista 1996, p. 141). Because they are the oldest inhabitants, they are often called “Adhibasi tribes” or “indigenous people of Nepal.” The traditional territory of the Tharu settlements is called “Tharuwan” or “Tharwot.” Tharu settlements are found in tropical malarial areas, and populated by wild animals such as elephants, rhinoceros, bears, tigers, and poisonous snakes (Bista 1996, p. 185). The Tharu language has been greatly influenced by various north Indian languages found nearby: Urdu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Bengali (Bista 1996, p. 141).

Issue of Language

Nepal is a country of diverse language and culture. People of 125 different castes speak 123 different languages or dialects. Figure 1.2 provides the percentage of people who speak the primary language in the country. Many languages have their own script whereas some have only a dialect and no script. . “The people of hill origin speak Nepali either as their mother tongue or, if a Janajati or Dalit or tribal, then as the second language” (Yadav, 2007, p. 92). Since the inception of the country of Nepal in 1768, the political rulers, mostly from the Nepalese speaking community, encouraged the Nepalese language as the single official language of Nepal. “With state protection and promotion, Nepali language—being the official language and medium of education as well—has increasingly received prominence with the development of infrastructure,

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particularly in education, media, transportation and communication” (Hachhethu 2003, p. 224). Often the issue of single language priority was challenged in the past by indigenous and Madheshi people, but their voice was weak during the period of the monarchy. “The so-called 1990 revolution and the restoration of a parliamentary system have opened the way to a more open political system where ethnic claims can be expressed” (Toffin 2003, p. 133). The demand of language rights and language inclusiveness accelerated after the dawn of the multiparty system in 1990. Nepal’s government has addressed some of the language issues such as offering local language courses in primary school, establishing culture and language commissions, funding various language foundations, and providing spaces to other languages in all government print, visual media, and radio; however, these efforts have not been enough to satisfy the diverse people with different linguistic interests and needs.

The language issue is a highly influential subject in the politics of the Terai areas of Nepal. In spite of Nepali being the official language of Nepal, the Hindi language, one of the official and national languages of India, is very popular in the Madhesh areas. In these areas, people have many cultural and customary relationships with the people of northern India. In addition, the Bollywood Hindi movies, which are very popular all over Nepal, are another influential factor encouraging the use of the Hindi language. In the Madhesh areas, people not only understand Hindi, but they can also speak and write it fluently. Bista (1996) observed that “the Terai people speak languages akin to those spoken to the south and practice the Indian social and religious customs” (p. 129). The Madheshi people’s cultural festivals are also similar to that of northern India such as the Holi, Dipawali, Chhath, and Rakchha Bandhan. Bista (1996) further noted that:

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The social and economic organization of the Terai people is similar to that of Brahmans, Chhetris, and the occupational castes of the hill region of Nepal, but by virtue of their Indian influences their way of life is much more like that of North India than that of Nepal hills. (p. 130)

Because of the familiarity of the Hindi language and the north Indian culture and festivals, the Madheshi people demand the inclusion of the Hindi language at the national official level and continue to lobby for equal status with Nepali. Lawoti (2005) noted that “the Madheshi demands include rightful citizenship, reservation (especially, in security forces), cultural autonomy, regional federalism, linguistic rights (declaration of Hindi as a medium language), and others” (p. 93).

Similarly, Newari, Maithili, Limbu, Tamang, and other languages also have been highlighted and demanded by concerned ethnic groups for inclusion at the official national level. Yadav (1992) found that out of 123 languages, “a total of 12 languages are spoken by above one percent of the population of Nepal” (p. 182). The Nepalese government has proposed that all citizens can take primary education in their own mother tongue; however, the proposal has not been implemented adequately for two reasons: “lack of the textbooks and educational materials in the local languages” (Yadav, 1992, p. 183) and a strong commitment to the official language policy of the state privileging Nepalese. Primary school level books were translated into less than a dozen languages. However, the political demand of many regional parties over language rights and identity is not coinciding with the country’s reality. People are not actually that interested in sending their children to local schools that teach using the local language even though the parents are from the same linguistic community. According to Tumbahang (2014), parents think that “education in the mother tongue will not help them attain their goal but would rather restrict

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their children to a limited area. Therefore, those who can afford the expenses (ironically, advocates of mother tongue education, too) send their children to English boarding (private) schools” (Paragraph 14). Because of this, the enrollment in the local language medium other than English and Nepali are extremely low, which indicates a lower level of interest over indigenous language education. All national newspapers are published either in the Nepali or in English languages. However; Gorakhatra releases its four-page supplementary issue once in a week in various local languages. The Newspaper in Nepali language are circulated in all 75 districts in more than 200,000 numbers compared to local language newspapers such as Sandhya Times or Jheegu Swanigah in Newari language which has less than 5000 numbers and circulated in Kathmandu Valley only.

Issues of the Hindu Kingdom and the Secular State

The “unified” state of Nepal was established by Prithivi Narayan Shah (1723-1775), an ancestor of the last King Gyanendra, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Since its inception, the Hindu religion was advanced as the state religion. During the unification of the state of Nepal and subsequently, “high-caste Hindus from the hill region, including the Hindu monarchy, constitute the politically-dominant group in Nepali society” (Hagen 2007, p. vii). Later, the “Rana,” who seized power from the monarchy in 1846, consolidated their political power by making the position of Prime Minister hereditary within their own family network. Ranas also used the Hindu religion and culture as a means to control and dictate to the Nepalese people for their political gains. “The political and cultural aspects of Rana rule, especially the Ranas’ use of Hindu ritual and the codification of castes and ethnic groups in the Muluki Ain (Legal Code) of 1854” (Gellner 1997, p. 5) was an important step to maintaining Rana hegemony over Nepal. This code divided the Hindu caste into four major layers and set up certain rules related to caste

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and religion. The Hindu religious and cultural hegemony were further strengthened from 1962 to 1990. Hagen (2010) argued that:

During the Panchayat era (1962-1990) the state solidified the idea of Nepal as a Hindu society and sought to create a culturally homogenous population. The state promoted the Hindu religion, the Hindu monarchy, and the Nepali language as signifiers of the national community. The Panchayat-era slogan “One language, one form of dress, one country” reflects the state’s efforts to create cultural uniformity. (p. 31)

During the monarchy reign, the king, queen, and crown prince acted as chairpersons in various religious and cultural institutions, which have very strong religious and cultural value for the Nepalese people. One of the unwritten cultural beliefs was that the “king is the incarnation of a Hindu deity¹²,” and if a normal Nepalese person sees a glimpse of the king, then the person’s sins can be absolved. “As the ideology of Hindu religion and polity provided legitimacy to the Shah regime, the rulers tried their best to spread Hinduism all over the country” (Hachhethu 2003, p. 222). Because of the deep cultural beliefs among the Nepalese people about the king, religious and cultural issues used to be, and still are, an important part of Nepalese politics.

The monarchy knew that the Hindu cultural system was interlinked to the Hindu caste system and the Nepalese language, which are somewhat supported by the two most powerful castes, the Brahmin and Chhetri. “High-caste Hindus from the hill region, including the Hindu monarchy, constitute the politically-dominant group in Nepali society” (Hagan, 2007, p. vii). Therefore, Brahmanism is a perception developed by Hindu religious and political leaders to maintain social power. “For many ordinary Nepalis today their local language and traditions

¹² Refer to Countries and Their Cultures. Retrieved from: <http://www.everyculture.com/South-Asia/Nepali-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>

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have no particular value, and are, they often feel, a disadvantage in the highly competitive scramble for employment and survival” (Gellner 1997, p. 20). However, the concept of Hinduism in the state’s constitution of Nepal changes over time as shown in Table 1.5, and the changes were influenced by various ethnic and democratic movements in the country.

Table 1.5

Regime Type, Religion in the Constitution, and Type of State

Time Period	Religion in the Constitution	Type of State
Before 1990, i.e., during the absolute monarchy regime	Prohibited religious conversion; Restriction on campaigns based on religion other than Hindu and Buddhist; No religious freedom for other religions	Hindu state, claimed as the world’s only Hindu state
1990 to 2007; Multiparty democratic system with a constitutional monarchy	Still prohibited religious conversion; No restriction on political-religious campaigning; Islam and Christianity expanded; Population of other religions increased; Religious freedom for all religions	Hindu state, claimed as world’s only Hindu state
After 2007; Republic and federal state with an interim constitution	Equal rights for all religions; Total freedom for all religions	Secular state

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After the fall of the Rana regime in the 1950s, the Nepalese society opened up slightly towards democracy. However, the absolute monarchy system was not changed. After the 1990 Janandolan I, the political and cultural power structures were changed by curtailing many political and cultural powers of the monarchy and putting the country on a path toward a constitutional system. Gellner (1997) observed that:

The years 1989 and 1990 marked a watershed: the new Constitution 1990 changed the previous definition of Nepal as “an independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchical Hindu kingdom” to “a multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom.” (p. 6)

The 1990 Constitution provided official recognition of ethnic diversity for all castes and cultures. Later, because of the impact of the change in the constitution and the peoples’ demands, in 1994, the national radio started broadcasting news in many other local languages; and, *Gorakhapatra* started printing Saturday supplements in as many as six local languages. The democratic awareness-building on the perceptions against the unitary ethnic and religious domination of the Hindu religion continued, and after the Janandolan II in 2006, the interim Constitution of Nepal in 2007 changed the previous unitary, constitutional monarchy to a federal republic. The interim constitution also accepted and incorporated Nepal as a secular state from the Hindu nation it once was.

Territorial Issues related to Caste, Culture, and Language

Caste, culture, language, and indigenous issues are becoming more important in the South Asia region. As in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, the South Asia region has many sensitive concerns related to caste and indigenous conflicts throughout these

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territories. Increased ethnic/minority conflicts in the world surfaced distinctly after the Second World War, especially after the fall of colonial rule. Chaliand (1989) argued:

Since the virtual settlement of the colonial problem, minority questions have precipitated violent conflicts all over the world: Biafra (Nigeria); Eritrea and Tigre (Ethiopia); Baluchis (Pakistan); Kurds (Iraq and Iran); Tibet (China); Karens and Kachens (Burma); Mizos and Nagas (India); South Sudan; Lebanon; the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland; Tamils in Sri Lanka, etc. (p. 5)

Indigenous people are often called tribes, “Adhivasi,” or minorities in Nepal. Adhivasi people are the aboriginal people of the land. Tribal peoples are more concerned about their own way of life and customary practices. In the case of Nepal and its neighbors, aboriginals and Adhivashis are new to the politics of identity and, therefore, they are often politically suppressed and used¹³.

In addition to the Adhivasi and tribes conflicts in India there are other issues, especially related to language and regionalism, which also play important roles in Indian politics. Some of the demands of separate provinces in India are: Telangana recently got separate province status based on language and culture after decades of continuous peoples’ agitations, demand of Darjeeling as separate province based on culture, Bodoland is struggling to get recognition as new province based on tribalism, among many others. Since 2000, India has created as many as six new provinces mostly to address public demands. However, the demand of creating new provinces does not end with the creation of these six new provinces. In the various other areas in

¹³ Gurung (June 2011, p. 75) urged that “The main issue of indigenous nationalities, specially, they have not been able to include in mainstreaming according to their number or population, and their inclusion is extremely limited. They have participation and representation in all state affairs in some way, but that is extremely limited and token, and not in proportion to their population, they claim.”

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India, Adhivasi and minorities are struggling for the creation of new provinces such as Darjeeling and Bodoland. “Demands for new states, many of which date back decades, tend to be strongest in poor, culturally distinctive regions, whose residents feel neglected or exploited by elites from more prosperous areas of their state” (Kazmin 2013, August 4). The demand of new provinces based on language or caste is not limited to the countries’ own boundary. Because of the open borders and deep cultural relationships between Nepal and India, events, especially related to castes, cultures, and religions in one country impact the other country. For example, the demand to create a new province in Nepal based on the Maithili language impacted Indian politics in Bihar and vice-versa. According to Burkert (1997), “Jagannath Mishra, previous Chief Minister in Bihar, has also urged that there be a separate Mithila state within India” (p. 251).

Hagen (2007) argues that “the indigenous nationalities movement aims to increase the social, economic, and political power of these indigenous people, revive their religions, languages, and cultures and end the dominance of the high-caste Hindus” (p. viii). The indigenous movement is also associated with caste issues. The following section explores the conflict related history of Nepal which includes Maoist armed conflict and the Madheshi and Pahadi identity conflict.

CHAPTER 2

CONFLICT HISTORY OF NEPAL

In 2006, a ten-year-long armed insurgency lasting from 1996 to 2006 in Nepal ended and resulted in a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists). The SPA is comprised of the main Democratic party, Nepali Congress, the second largest party in Parliament; the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist); and other small parties, including regional parties. The Maoist party maintained a majority in the countryside during the insurgency and fought 10 years against the monarchy and the ruling parties. Nepal's major political parties and the Maoist rebels agreed to write a new constitution and to transform Nepal's armed conflict into a lasting peace and restructuring of the state to end all types of disparities that prevail on the basis of class, caste, gender, and region (Bhattraï, March 3, 2015, Paragraph 5). One of the major points in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is related to caste inclusiveness and identity rights which states:

In order to end discriminations based on class, ethnicity, language, gender, culture, religion and region and to address the problems of women, Dalit, indigenous people, ethnic minorities (Janajatis), Terai communities (Madheshis), oppressed, neglected and minority communities and the backward areas by deconstructing the current centralized and unitary structure, the state shall be restructured in an inclusive, democratic and forward looking manner. (Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2006)

After the peace agreement, people started believing that a new era of peace may have begun in Nepal. However, after a couple of months, a new conflict, mainly between major political parties and the Maoist Party as well as between regional ethnic groups, emerged and the dream of a

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Comprehensive Peace in Nepal was shattered (R. N. Dhakal, personal communication, 2013). Ethnic languages, cultural and caste identity issues, Madheshi rights issues, the right to self-determination, and the right to natural resources served as sources of contention for different parties. The identity politics, which were aggressively raised after the 2006 peace agreement by Maoist and Madheshi parties, actually first came to the surface in 1990. In the case of Nepal, identity politics focus on caste, culture, ethnicity, indigenesness, language, and regional belongingness. Caste identity politics revolve around a caste-based political system where social, cultural, economic, and political rights and opportunities are offered based on peoples' caste. Hagen (2007) noted that "after the reinstatement of a multiparty system in 1990, identity politics became a major force in Nepali politics" (p. 2), and because of this, major political parties were forced to declare their position on the caste identity issue. The caste identity issue became popular after the first multiparty democratic movement in 1990; for example, the Madheshi-Pahadi identity and indigenous identity rights (elaborated further in the next chapter), went on to become the main issues after the Comprehensive Peace Accord of 2006. Hatlebakk (2007) discussed the caste/ethnic identity conflict in the plains after the peace agreement with the Maoist party. According to him, one of the major demands of the Terai uprising, also called the Madheshi uprising, was "political representation, and not for the socio-economic change" (Hatlebakk, 2007, p. V). Hatlebakk (2007) analyzed the economic conditions and employment of Madheshi and compared it to the "caste/ethnic composition" (p. 12). One of the major demands of the Madheshi uprising was the restructuring of the state based on caste and ethnicity. In this sense, Hatlebakk (2007) suggested that recent Madheshi conflicts in Nepal were associated with the caste/ethnic-identity of the plains' people. Similarly, many caste-identity related conflicts are increasing and growing within the Pahadi community and the indigenous peoples of the hill

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areas. Figure 2.1 shows photos of caste identity-based agitations and peace and harmony rallies in streets of Kathmandu as well as in the Nepalese Parliament. These five exemplary photos of various agitations related to caste identity conflict published in national newspapers demonstrate print media's continuous focus on caste identity issues since 2007 in Nepal.



Torchlight rally during Madhesh uprising
Source: Madheshi.wordpress.com, Feb, 5,
2007



Madheshi leader arrested in Madhesh uprising
Source: Madheshi.wordpress.com, Feb. 6, 2007

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Protests after Vice President Parmanand Jha
takes the oath in Hindi Language
Source: Kantipur, July 23, 2008

Ethnic harmony rally organized by many
professional organizations
Source: Kantipur, May 23, 2012



Fight in the Constituent Assembly among MPs of various parties around the issue of caste-based restructuring of the state on January 22, 2015. Source: EuropeNepal.net

Figure 2.1: Print Media's Focus on Caste-Based Identity Issue in Nepal.

Early on,¹⁴ the caste system in Nepal was mainly horizontal in its power structure. According to Treat (2000), the caste and indigenous issues were eventually sensitized “through missions, commercial connections, and colonial endeavors” (p.4). Further, Treat noted that “indigenous religions were gradually tainted by Christian propagation and, to some extent, by European values” (p. 4). In accordance with Treat’s view, many intellectuals now believe that the vertical power dynamics in the caste system did not originate with Hinduism, but were

¹⁴ During the unification of Nepal (1750-1770), the first king Prithibi Narayan Shah declared every caste in same social status.

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forcefully imposed by the British colonial powers in India to divide and conquer. In addition to colonial rule, other Western missionaries and religious institutions also played roles in increasing caste conflict as a way of expanding Christianity. In late December 2014, Indian print and visual media such as *Hindu*, *Indian Express*, *Reuters*, *Aaj Tak*, *India Today*, and others provided lots of space to the debate religious conversion from Islam to Hindu or Christianity to Hindu as a Home Return Movement.¹⁵

The above argument is equally convincing for the case of Nepal where mission hospitals and religious development projects worked to convert their clientele. According to Baniyan (February 22, 2014) who wrote a detailed report published in *Kantipur*:

The United Mission to Nepal, a European INGO, invested in different profit-oriented projects in Nepal including Himal Hydro and Butwal Power Company. The Mission proposed to invest all their profits in the social sector. However, they used most of their income for Christian religious campaigns. Observing the Mission's religious activities, the government of Nepal cancelled the registration of the United Mission in Nepal and seized the INGO's investments, including shares in various profit making companies, land, and property.¹⁶

Many development agencies such as GTZ, ASIA-Foundation, CECI, CEDA, and SDC have allocated many resources toward awareness programs for indigenous, Dalit, and caste identity issues in Nepal. For example, SNV supported development initiatives to empower

¹⁵ Indian Express: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/conversions-by-hindu-outfits-an-attempt-to-lure-muslims-all-india-muslim-personal-law-board/>, The Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/christian-enclave-in-india-fears-violence-tension-after-religious-conversions/2014/12/17/4a144784-846b-11e4-abcf-5a3d7b3b20b8_story.html

¹⁶ Translation mine

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Chepang, the ESP/DFID supported Janajati empowerment project, the ESP/DFID supported Institutional Strengthening program of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), which was supported by CARE-Nepal and the European Commission on empowerment of six highly disadvantaged indigenous peoples and nationalities, the MS Nepal supported advocacy program to Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC) a Limbu indigenous youth organization, SNV- and Norwegian Embassy-supported Janajati Empowerment and Inclusion Project, the DANIDA/HUGOU-supported Empowerment and Inclusion of Janajati women, and the EU-supported Advocacy for the Rights of Indigenous People (Kirat, Shrestha, and Subba, 2007). Because of the influences of many international institutions on caste identity issues and conflict, most writers and academics, except most of the Maoist writers, argue against caste-based restructuring. International influences take many forms including embassy statements, ambassador interviews, editorials by international diplomats, and lobbying to major political parties' leaderships.¹⁷ Regarding the international pressure, Baral (2014) noted that:

Caste identity based politics, which is far from the scientific ideology of national liberation, is finally engaged with conflict, destruction, and dependency but not national unity. The caste identity based politics is influenced by expansionism and imperialism. (p.7)

¹⁷ For example, a strong debate surfaced based on the views of the British Ambassador around the issue of religious conversion. *Kantipur* and other daily newspapers published a series of news articles. Anil Giri wrote in *Kantipur* that “In a string of controversies over British Ambassador Andrew Sparkes’ recent message to the Constituent Assembly members of Nepal to ensure in the new constitution that the people’s right to change their religion is protected, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday expressed the concerns of the Nepal government to the Charge d’Affaires of the British Embassy” (*ekantipur*, Dec16, 2014).

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Additionally, political parties and community/caste-based organizations have their own agenda on these issues, but the major focus has been on the issues of ethnic languages, caste identity, indigenous issues, customs, and the right to self-determination. Other important issues, such as natural resources distribution, poverty alleviation, and gender discrimination have not been able to gain traction (Pokhrel, 2012, pp. 15-17). Table 2.1 shows the different political parties perceptions on these issues, which were pulled from political party election manifestos.

Table 2.1

Major Political Parties, Their Policies on Caste and Ethnicities, and Their Strength in Parliament

Name of Political Parties	Caste and ethnic policies	Nature of Parties	MPs in Parliament¹⁸
Nepali Congress	Against caste-based politics, common identity	National	196
Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist)	Against caste-based politics, common or multi-identity	National	175
Nepal Communist Party (Maoist)	Caste-based, single caste identity demands; Right of self-determination	National	80
RPP Nepal	Against caste-based politics	National	24

¹⁸ The data are taken from Nepal Election Commission.

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Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum (Loktantrik)	Caste-based; Madheshi identity demands; Right of self-determination	Regional, Terai-based	14
RPP	Against caste-based politics	National	13
Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum Nepal	Caste-based, Madheshi identity demands; Right of self-determination	Regional, Terai-based	10
Tarai Madhes Loktrantir Party	Caste-based; Madheshi identity demands; Right of self-determination	Regional, Terai-based	11
Sadbhabana Party	Caste-based, Madheshi identity demands; Right of self-determination	Regional, Terai-based	6
Rastriya Janamorcha	Against caste-based politics	Some districts	3
Rastriya Janamukti Party	Caste-based- Indigenous identity demands; Right of self-determination	Some districts, Indigenous	2

On the basis of cultural and ethnic segregation, a new phase of violent conflict began to spread like wildfire in the plains of Nepal after the peace agreement in 2006. According to Hachhethu (2007), “the January-February 2007 Madhesh uprising—a 21 day long mass movement participated in by large masses of the Madheshi population (tens of thousands)—was

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an unprecedented event parallel to Janandolan II of the April 2006” (p. 1). Fortunately, however, the different regional and ethnic groups agreed to adopt the federal system, scrapped the old centralized governance system, and replaced it with a new constitution to be written and promulgated by the new Constituent Assembly which was held in 2008. The Constituent Assembly, thus, had some important objectives to fulfil, many of which were demanded by the Madheshi Andolan and Maoist party, for example, converting the unitary state system to a federal structural system, restructuring of the state to ensure inclusiveness of all groups and sections of Nepalese societies, decentralization of the state power to ensure self-governance, addressing the issue of the Madheshi people’s identity, and transformation of the Maoist conflict to the peace process.

Furthermore, the Maoist conflict, also called the “peoples’ war,” was one of the deadliest armed conflicts in the world during which more than 15,000 people were killed and approximately 150,000 people were internally displaced. This armed conflict heavily disrupted and destroyed the majority of development infrastructures and activities (Bhattraï, November 11, 2014, paragraph 10), and because of this, the Nepalese poor were further pushed into deep unemployment problems and poverty. The comprehensive peace accord among all the concerned parties ended the armed conflict although the peace process is still in progress.

Nepalese people have struggled for the last 70 years for democracy; five constitutions (in 1959, 1962, 1990, 1999, and 2006 – Interim) have been promulgated (given either by the rulers or drafted by experts); however, the issues of power transfer have remained incomplete or insufficient. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly has a good opportunity to redefine the social contract between the state and society, to redesign a system of governance, and to transfer power that could ultimately consolidate the much needed peace and democracy in the country. The

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second Constituent Assembly has proposed to finalize the new constitution by January 22, 2015; however, the ongoing caste and ethnic identity debates in the Nepalese Parliament indicate a strong point of contention that is delaying the completion date.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord by the government of Nepal and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) on November 21, 2006, the tripartite agreement (between the Nepal government, Maoists, and UN officials) on the arms and army management on November 29, 2006, the promulgation of the interim constitution in December 2006, the formation of an interim government in April 2007, and incorporating federalism in the interim constitution are all major milestones toward sustainable peace in Nepal since the major demands of the conflicting parties—the Maoist and Madhesis—were addressed by converting the state from a unitary to a federal structure. Moreover, the SPA and the Maoists have been working collectively toward holding elections for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution, which is expected to provide options and create conditions for sustainable peace in Nepal and thereby provide an impetus to the democratization process.

In the Constitution Assembly of 2008,¹⁹ the Nepal Communist Party (i.e., the Maoists) emerged as the biggest political party in parliament acquiring 229 seats out of 601, followed by the Nepali Congress with 115 seats, the Communist Party of Nepal-UML with 108 seats, and some 22 regional Parties getting the remaining 109 seats. The Maoist Party initially focused more on caste and ethnic identity issues in the first election. Hachhethu (2014) noted that “the CPN (Maoist) has made concerted efforts in cashing the post-1990 ethnic upsurge in Nepal” (p.

¹⁹ The constituent assembly election 2008 results were retrieved from the Election Commission Nepal:

<http://www.election.gov.np/reports/CAResults/reportBody.php>

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7). The Maoists wanted to restructure the state on the basis of caste and ethnic identity, giving less priority to the issue of economic viability, concentrating on natural resource potential, focusing on the issue of extreme poverty, and addressing the problem of the Dalits (Pokhrel, 2012, pp. 15-17). The Maoist party utilized this strategy to sensitize and unite the lower classes and castes to strengthen their voting bloc. The parliamentary election held in 2008 showed that the Maoist strategy worked, and they became the largest party in the Nepalese Parliament, leaving the other two major ruling parties far behind.

The first Constituent Assembly, which has the mandate of writing the new republic federal constitution within two years, could not complete its task. According to Lamsal (2014, January 6), the First Constituent Assembly could not decide three main issues: (1) single-caste identity-based or multi-caste-based state restructuring; (2) “One Madhesh, One Province,” with rights to self-determination or multiple provinces in the Madhesh; (3) the Presidential system or Prime Ministerial system. Between May 28, 2008 and May 28, 2012, parliament was engaged in power politics to disintegrate the other political parties, creation of the cabinet, and re-structuring of the state. Because of the political parties’ incompetence, the Constitution Assembly passed an amendment to increase its lifespan from two years to four years to complete the new constitution. After the two additional years, it was still not completed. However, during those four years of the first constitution writing period, some important works related to the comprehensive peace agreement had been reached. For example, on January 5, 2011, the Nepal government took responsibility for monitoring and managing the Maoist combatants after the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) left Nepal on September 1, 2011. Maoists handed over the keys to containers full of arms and ammunition to the special committee on September 9, 2011. Maoists unilaterally decided to return seized property, and on Nov 1, 2011, an agreement on the

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integration of up to one third of the former Maoist rebels into the national army was concluded (Koirala, June 4, 2013, Para. 1 and 2).

At the end of the third extension of the first Constituent Assembly, the government, under Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a Maoist leader, did not agree to the further extension of the first Constituent Assembly and declared a new Constitution Assembly election. Later, to break the political deadlock about who would lead the interim electoral government, political parties agreed to move forward to the second Constituent Assembly election under the leadership of the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

The second Constituent Assembly election, held in 2013, changed the previous power structure in the parliament and had a huge impact on the constitution-writing process. The Maoist party, which was the biggest political party with highest margins in total parliamentary seats, lost its ground and became the third largest party with few parliamentary seats. The Maoists won only 80 seats in the second Constituent Assembly election compared to 229 seats in the first Constituent Assembly.²⁰ Nepali Congress went from second position to first position, acquiring 196 seats, followed by the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), which went into the second position with 175 constituent assembly seats. Kumar (February 21, 2014),²¹ on the defeat of the Maoist party, opined that “one of the major causes of the landslide defeat of the United Maoist Party in the second Constituent Assembly was, as agreed by the Maoist supreme leader, the caste identity issue” (Kantipur, p. 6).

²⁰ The constituent assembly election 2013 results were retrieved from:

<http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/1675/>

²¹ Kumar’s opinion published in the Nepalese language (translation mine).

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The caste and ethnic identity issue, which was the vote-winner in the first Constituent Assembly election for the Maoist party, backfired in the second elections and the Maoist party dropped to the third position. Gurung (2013), an indigenous academic, noted that “the major cause of defeat of the Maoist party in the recent election is not withstanding the common identity of all multi-ethnic Nepalese people” (p. 7). Similarly, in another article in the same newspaper and on the same day, Pariyar (2013), a Dalit writer, critically commented on the results of the second assembly election:

Single-caste identity-based ideology is itself unscientific, irrational, and unsocial. Now caste in itself is not stable, restructuring of the state based on caste identity is illogical and groundless. Because of these, the caste-based state concept is rejected in the recent election. (p. 7, translation mine)

Most of the daily newspapers and visual media highlighted this cause for the Maoist’s defeat in the second assembly election.²² Neupane (2013, December 9) described that “people show their concerns over accountable and responsible government, rapid economic development, and justice with social and cultural transformation of the Nepalese society” (p. 6). With the

²² Nandlal Tiwari wrote in *Gorakhapatra* online that one of the main reasons for the Maoist defeat could be its sole focus on the identity-based federalism. Retrieved on Dec. 2014 from:

<http://trn.gorakhapatraonline.com/index.php/op-ed/5717-reasons-behind-maoist-defeat-nandalal-tiwari.html>

Dipendra Jha wrote an editorial in *The Kathmandu Post* daily on February 20, 2014 that “as of now, the odds are stacked against this party, but it can reclaim its position in national politics provided it corrects its mistakes. Further he wrote that there is a growing sense of confusion among UCPN (Maoist) leaders that they were defeated in the election because of their push for identity-based federalism.” Retrieved on Dec. 2014 from:

http://np.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2014/02/20/related_articles/bouncing-back/259521.html

Narayan N. Khatri wrote in Myrepublica on November 30, 2013 that “People have rejected most champions of the ethnic-identity based federalism, whether they are from UCPN (Maoist) or Madhesh-based parties.”

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experiences of the last four years' activities in the First Constituent Assembly, the Nepalese people realized that the economic development and their daily needs were their prime concerns leaving the caste-identity issues as secondary. However, instead of accepting the defeat in part due to their caste-identity platform, Maoists criticized and blamed the Nepal Election Commission, Nepal's Army, the mass media, and international imperialist policies for their defeat.²³

In conclusion, this chapter explained the various aspects of the Hindu caste system and its shifting realities. The social, economic, and political indicators as well as geographic descriptions of the country of Nepal were provided in some detail so that the total caste-based identity conflict could be considered in its broader context. An overview of the origins of various caste and indigenous peoples of Nepal, their history, and language-based identity issues were also described. Finally, this chapter concluded with a discussion of how the political apparatus of Nepal co-opted Nepalese caste-based identity and how this politicization of identity was portrayed in the media. What is most interesting about the observed caste-based identity phenomenon is how it is played out society-wide through political dialogue, debate, imagery, and conflict, often fed and interpreted by the mass media. The ebb and flow of caste-based conflict in Nepal and how the mass media interprets and interrupts these conflicts is the focus of the remainder of this dissertation.

²³ Shirish B. Pradhan wrote in The Himalayan Times that "The UCPN (M) leaders took no time to conclude that the election was rigged in favor of NC and CPN-UML, the view rejected by other political parties as well as national and international observers. All sections of Nepali media, excluding one specific television channel, supported the allegation of the UCPN (M)." Retrieved on December 14, 2014 from:

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullTodays.php?headline=The+people%27s+verdict%3A+UCPN+%28M%29+must+learn&NewsID=397795>

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY CONFLICTS IN NEPALESE SOCIETY

Specific Identity Issues in Nepal

Many identity issues on caste, culture, language, and regional belonging have been raised in Nepal. Most of the identity conflict issues were accelerated during and after the two peoples' movements in 1990 and 2006. The caste-identity conflicts are overlapped among various caste-identity, language-identity, and regional-identity conflicts. Internal Crisis Group (January 13, 2011) reported that there are significant overlaps between the territorial claims of different ethnic and regional groups (p. 25). For example, within the Madheshi conflict, Tharu claim that they are part of an indigenous group from the plains and therefore, they disagreed with their inclusion in the Madheshi group. In addition, Tharu of the five far-western districts claim separate states in the far-western plains. However, the people of nine far-western districts claim a separate and integrated Suderpashchim state. Similarly, other caste-based identity conflicts also have multiple conflicting relationships among various castes, languages, and regional identities. Table 3.1 shows some of major castes, cultures, and regional identity issues raised by various castes in different geographical regions.

Table 3.1

Castes Involved in Various Identity Issues in Nepal

Caste or cultural identity	Castes involved	Geographical areas
Pahadi identity	Brahmins, Chhetris, and some	Most parts of the mountains

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	Pahadi Dalits	and hills, and some parts of the east and west as well as the far western plains
Madheshi identity	Jha, Yadav, Misra, Sah, Gupta, Thakur, Khatwe,—language based identity issue	Most parts of the plains
Limbuwan identity	Limbu (Pahadi indigenous people)	Some districts in the east part of the hills
Tamuwan identity	Tamang (Pahadi indigenous people)	The hills and the mountains around Kathmandu Valley
Tharuwan identity	Tharu, Chaudary, and Gachhedar (Madheshi indigenous people)	Most parts of the plains
Newa identity	Newar (Pahadi indigenous people), within these castes Newar Brahmins and Newar Dalits also exist—language based identity issue	Mainly in the Kathmandu Valley
Magarat identity	Magar, and Gurung (Pahadi indigenous people)	Many parts of the hills and mountains of the western and mid-western parts of Nepal
Sudurpaschim identity	All castes—geographical areas based on identity issue	Far-western parts of Nepal

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As shown in the above table, this study focuses on six purposely sampled identity issues based on their importance to the Nepalese state. These six caste and regional identity conflicts are explained below.

Madhesi Identity in the Plains

The Madhesi population is found throughout Nepal. However, their density is highest in the mid-plains. Figure 3.1 shows the Madhesi people's settlement patterns in the plains. Since the Madhesi identity conflict took place mainly on these plains, in 2007 they began to demand a separate province there with more associated rights.

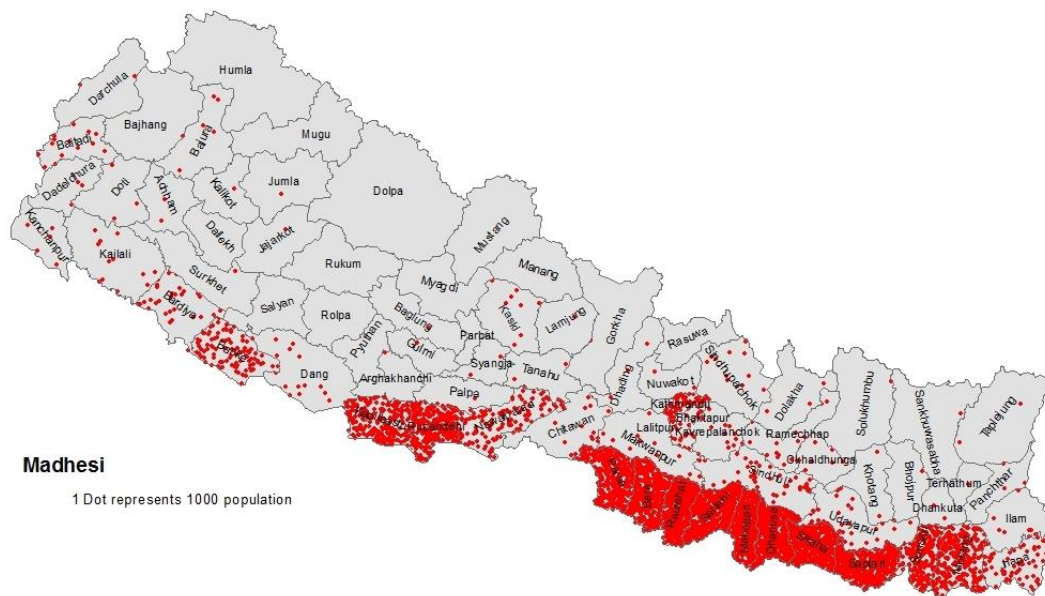


Figure 3.1 Madhesi population settlements in Nepal²⁴

²⁴ All GIS maps were developed based on the Nepal census 2001 and 2011 database. I drew all the maps using the GIS software ARCGIS.

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Madheshi identity is interlinked with cultures, languages, customs, and festivals of the Madheshi people. According to Brijesh C. Lal, a former mayor of one of the major Terai/Madhesh cities, Janakpur, “Terai only defines the physical plain land of Nepal however; Madhesh covers physical as well as culture, customs, and language of people residing in these areas” (2008, March 9). Madheshis are comparatively more caste-sensitive than the Pahadi Hindus. “In contrast to the liberal Hindu hill people, these people of the Terai and border areas are orthodox in their beliefs following Hinduism and caste rules as closely as possible to the classical Hindu pattern” (Bista 1996, p. 130). Madheshis are more tradition-sensitive in relation to their castes within their own community, although they became extremely aggressive against the Pahadi community in the Madhesh during the Madhesh movement in 2007. The Madheshi identity issues therefore, which occasionally flared up in the past, intensified after 2007. The movement ignited the Madheshi peoples to unite and resist historical and psychological suppression by the Pahadi. In January 2007, violence broke out and Nepalese society lost many lives and much property. According to an INSEC Report (2007, April 7) on Madhesh agitation:

The Madhesh agitation was spread in 22 districts however, its intensity was extremely high in six districts: Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, and Parsa. These districts are overwhelmingly populated with Madheshi people. The report was developed after a field level depth inspection and interviews with different concerned individuals such as victims, police personnel, local eyewitness, local human rights activists, and family members of those people who were killed in the agitation. The nine-member team was led by Baburam Bishwakarma, who is a bureau chief of INSEC central developmental region. The report comprised of all events happened between January 16, 2007 and March 9, 2007. In the whole Madhesh agitation, a total of 52 people were killed

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out of which 20 were killed by state, three were killed by Maoist party, and 29 were killed by Madheshi party (Madheshi Janadhikar Forum), and five were missing. In the agitations, 702 people and 87 police personnel were injured. In this duration, a total of 140 million equivalent properties, both from public and private, were destroyed.

(Summary page)

Pahadi Indigenous Peoples' Identity in the Hill Areas (i.e., Newar, Tamang, Limbu, Magar, Sherpa, and Gurung)

There are many indigenous castes such as Newar, Tamang, Limbu, Magar, Sherpa, and Gurung, who densely inhabit the hills and mountains of Nepal. After the 1950s, some of these Pahadi indigenous people migrated to the plains. Some Newars migrated to catering businesses in the small cities and towns all over Nepal. Others, however, in small numbers, also migrated into the Terai for employment opportunities because it is a highly productive agricultural area. Thirty percent of the Newar population now inhabits the Kathmandu Valley. The remaining 70% are spread all over Nepal. Similarly, in the case of Tamangs, more than 50% reside in various adjoining districts around the Kathmandu Valley. Limbus populate 27% of the Panchthar district, the core area of the Limbu caste, and the remaining 73% of the population resides in the other areas of Nepal. Most of the Sherpa population resides in Solukhumbu, though some of them gradually moved to the western mountain region of Nepal in order to secure mountaineering opportunities in that area.

The indigenous people who were not united or not given rights to be united before 1990 have developed professional unions and associations as well as political parties after the reinstatement of the multiparty system. However, the indigenous movements were amplified after the Interim Constitution and its amendments in 2006–2007 when the state was declared a

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secular republic. The indigenous movement was able to pressure the government about their concerns over identity and development. Hagen (2007) noted, “The indigenous nationalities movement has pressured the government to create institutions to address ethnic issues. The state established the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities in 2002, signaling the legitimization of ethnic politics” (p. viii). Since 2002, the state started conducting some inclusion activities in state employment and political representation. However, these activities were not enough to satisfy indigenous people or their leadership.

Further, the indigenous movement was able to pressure the government for the development of inclusive policies and adequate budgets for their development. Hagen (2007) again informed that the movement also categorically demanded an “inclusive political system, representation in all decision-making bodies through appointments, reservations, or a proportional electoral system (to ensure the voice of small political party in parliament), and legalizing ethnic political parties” (p. ix).

These indigenous castes raised their identity issues in the Nepalese parliament as well as various seminars, forums, and meetings at national and regional levels. For example, a national seminar, conducted in New Delhi in the wake of the Madheshi Movement in 2006, clearly drew two main concerns of the Nepalese indigenous people.

On 2–3 May 2007, Asian Indigenous and Tribal People’s Network (AITPN) with the assistance from the European Commission organized the ‘National Seminar on Transition in Nepal and the Role of National Institutions on Indigenous Peoples’ in Kathmandu, Nepal. During the National Consultation, it appeared that indigenous peoples were virtually engrossed over two issues: ‘political representation’ in the government through

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proportionate representation, and participation in the governance through ‘ethnic self-rule.’ (Asian Indigenous and Tribal People’s Network, 2007, p. 1)

The main focus of the seminar was to sensitize the identity issue for the indigenous people of Southeast Asia. Nepal was a main focus of the seminar. Later, in 2007 and after the First Constituent Assembly of 2008, the Interim Government addressed many of the indigenous people’s issues on inclusiveness in political, governmental, and decision-making bodies.

However, soon after, the indigenous politics gradually transformed into the demands about self-rule and rights to self-determination. In the case of the Indian caste movement, Gupta (2005) claimed, “thus, no matter which caste is in question, its involvement in politics is primarily to stake a claim to jobs, educational opportunities, as well as to positions of power in government bodies in direct competition against other castes” (p. 414). However, the Nepalese caste and indigenous movements do not limit themselves to the demands of inclusiveness and proper representation at all levels; caste-identity supporters campaigned for caste- and ethnic-based federalism.

On the issue of caste- and ethnic-based restructuring and self-rule, the political power structure of the First Constituent Assembly was in favor of a single caste identity-based restructuring of Nepal since the Maoist party was the largest party in the parliament; however, their numbers in the parliament were not enough for the two thirds majority to pass their single caste identity platform in the new constitution. Currently, after the Second Constituent Assembly election, the power structure in the Nepalese parliament has shifted from caste/ethnicity identity supporters such as the Maoist party, Madheshi parties, and a couple of indigenous parties, to the common identity supporters (such as Nepali Congress, United Marxist-Leninist, Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal, and Rastriya Prajatantra Party). Therefore, the identity-based politics,

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especially single-caste identity politics, are at a critical juncture in contemporary Nepal. Because of the scattered settlements of all castes and sub-castes throughout Nepal and their coherent attachment to each other, the single-caste identity was not popular. Figure 3.2 shows the settlements of the Pahadi communities in Nepal. The Pahadi peoples' settlement patterns indicate that no single caste or ethnic group has an absolute majority in any region in the country.

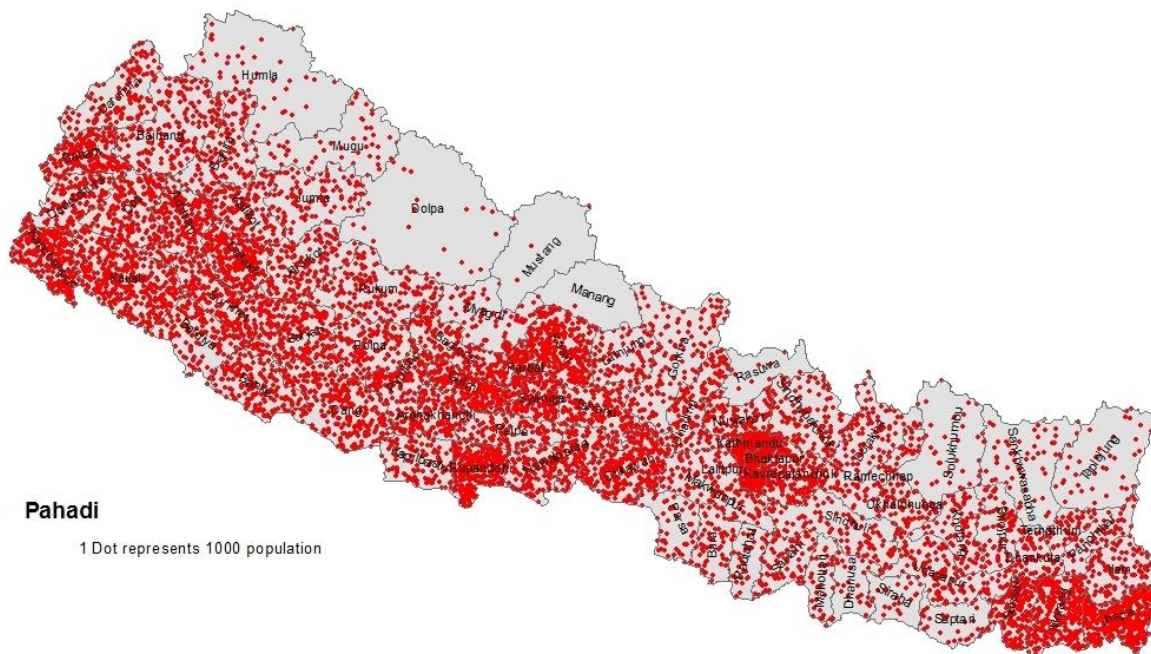


Figure 3.2: Pahadi Population Distribution in Nepal²⁵

Madheshi Indigenous People: Tharus in the Eastern and Western Plains

Tharus are considered the real aboriginal people of Nepal. They inhabit most of the Terai areas; however, their population is densest in eight districts of the Terai regions. In 2006–2007, one of the important issues that linked these Tharu communities was: who they were and what

²⁵ The map was developed by the researcher.

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their identity was. The Madheshi political parties claimed that the Tharu were an integral part of the Madheshi group however, the Tharu claimed their identity as “indigenous,” not Madheshi. Tharus launched a protest against the government placing them on the list of the Madheshis (Ranjitkar, 2009, March 15). General Secretary Lekhi, one of the prominent Tharu leaders, told the reporters that they published and distributed appeals to the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, and other leaders of political parties to correct the mistake of making all ethnic groups tied to the Madheshis (Ranjitkar, 2009, March 15). During 2009–2010, the Tharu people launched a series of protests to correct the government’s decision. Later, the Nepalese government changed their identity from Madheshi to Terai Indigenous. Tharus have very strong links to the land. Most Tharus work in agriculture either as laborers or as landowning peasants. According to a journal article published in the *Republica Daily*, Lam (October 25, 2013,) described the Tharu’s ties to the land:

The Terai had previously suffered from endemic malaria, which made extensive cultivation almost impossible. Therefore, until the 1950s, it was mainly covered by forest with a sparse population consisting mainly of Tharus, who were believed to have strong resistance to malaria. However, recent history shows that the Terai experienced remarkable socio-economic change, including shifts in demography and rising conflicts over the control of land. (p.1)

Tharu, after the 1950s, converted lots of forest to agricultural land, however, most of their lands were captured by either the immigrant Pahadi or local Madheshi Jamindars. Some Tharu who were able to save their land from Pahadi encroachment have not received their land ownership certificates after many decades. A field survey done by McDonough (1997) in Dang district, one of the densely populated Tharu districts, claimed that “around 90 percent of the land

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cultivated by Tharu tenants belonged to Pahadis” (p. 281). The situations of Tharus in other parts of Nepal are similar to the situations in Dang. After the declaration of the republic and secular state, many social, economic, and political changes happened in society, but positive changes in the Tharu communities are slower to develop. The Tharu, who were more concerned about their land rights earlier in 1990 and 2000, are now conscious about Tharu identity. They also demanded a new province based on their ethnic and caste identity named “Tharuwan.” The demand of Tharuwan might be understandable in theory, as it is related to their indigenous caste identity; however, practically, because the Tharu inhabit most of the Terai areas as shown in Figure 3.3—about 34 districts—one province in a particular region would not address their caste identity concerns as they relate to territory. In addition, they are not in the majority in any one single district in the Terai. Therefore, the identity issue of the Tharu is one of the most difficult issues to settle in the parliament during the restructuring of the state and new constitution writing process in Nepal.

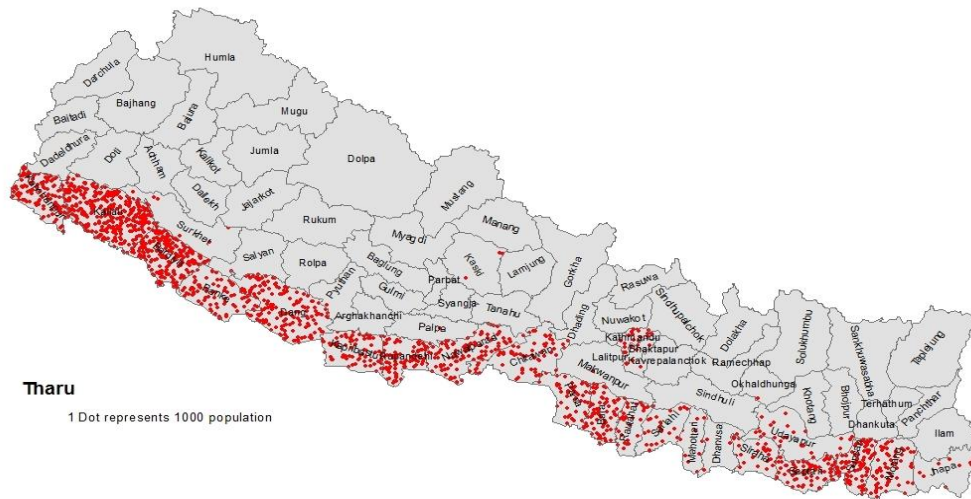


Figure 3.3 Tharu Settlement in all the Plains of all over Nepal²⁶.

Maithili Language Identity

Maithili is a very popular language in and around the city of Janakpur. The Maithili culture and language extend from the eastern plain areas of Nepal into the northern part of Bihar and some parts of Uttar Pradesh of India. Maithili identity is an in-group perception of the Maithili people, whose primary language is Maithili. According to Burkert (1997):

Politeness to guests seems to be a unifying characteristic, and in this it is implied that the culture has grace and generosity. Even people of lower caste will exemplify the culture this way: when you enter the house, you are given water to wash your feet and your hands. You are given a mat or cloth on which to sit. Then, without asking, you are presented food. (p. 252)

²⁶ The map was developed by researcher.

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Maithil culture is not only limited to great politeness and warm welcoming of guests; it also possesses a great deal of conservative values. For example, Maithil have a rigid caste system and use Pardah (veil) for all women should they encounter men. The Maithil people are more concerned about rights of the Maithili language rather than identity of caste. “Maithil activists are more anxious to see the language recognized in the constitution” (Burkert, 1997, p. 253). The Maithili language issue ignited and enlarged after 1990 and continued up through 2015.

There are some language conflicts within the Madheshi people concerning Maithili versus Hindi. People who belongs to the Maithili mother tongue group plead for the Maithili language to be recognized. Conversely, Madheshi politicians, who do not have Maithili as their primary language (since they come from other Madheshi communities to the western Terai area), argue for Hindi language rights instead. Many Madheshi leaders of Maithili-speaking communities, such as Pradeep Giri, Shyam Sundar Yadav, Brijesh Chandra Lal, and Amar Kanta Mishra campaign and launch movements for the addition of the Maithili language to the constitution. Telegraph Daily (2011, April 11) reported the views of various Maithili speaking Madheshi leaders. The following quotes are from some of the Maithili speaking Madheshi leaders:

Addressing a program in Lahan of Siraha District, Pradeep Giri, a prominent Madhesh leader for NC said, “Indeed Hindi is a prosperous language but sorry to say it is not spoken as mother tongue in Nepal’s Terai belt.” “Our objective is to foil conspiracy to forcefully impose alien language upon us,” said Shyamsundar Yadav, and added, “We will take this campaign to each and every village of Terai.” Chairperson Amar Kant Mishra of the Maithili Literature Council-Saptari district chapter said that Maithili language is linked with life and death of the people belonging to this region. “It is our

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pride and culture.” “In the first phase we will carry out awareness campaigns which will follow, if needed, retaliatory actions.” The Maithili Literature Council of Lahan, Sirha district, has daringly come forward and declared a virtual war against those who put pressures to include foreign language as a mother tongue of Terai. (Telegraph Daily, April 11, 2011)

Maithili language identity competes with other Madheshi languages such as Bhojpuri, Abadhi, Tharu, and Hindi. The political pressure of the Hindi language from the regional superpower, India, is one of the main issues for the Maithili supporters, politicians, and intellectuals that the Second Constituent Assembly must face. Figure 3.4 shows the Maithili language-speaking areas in Nepal.

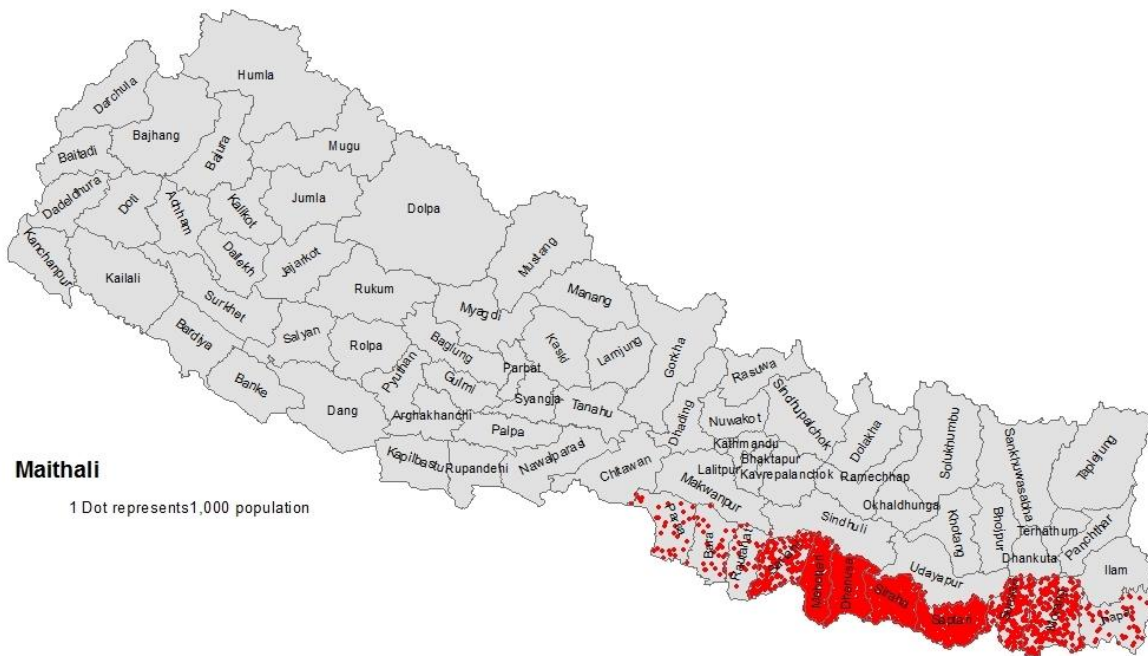


Figure 3.4: Maithili Speaking Peoples' Settlements in Nepal

Pahadi Identity in the Plains

The Pahadi people are the majority ethnic groups who have better access to social, economic, and political opportunities in Nepal. Brahmins are found throughout Nepal and therefore, “Bahuns [Brahmins] are not associated with a specific territory and have no sense of solidarity” (Daryn 2003, P. 163). However, Chhetris are more densely populated in the western and far western hills of Nepal. For many communities, language, culture, and religion are interlinked to each other. As Hachhethu (2003) noted, “Nepali language and Hindu religion are closely associated with hill Bahun-Chhetri identity” (p. 220). The Pahadi people’s identity is linked to their social, economic, and political condition; culture (also sometimes called Pahadi culture by indigenous leaders); language; and religion. Moreover, Bahuns and Chhetris who came from Kumau and Garwal of India after the fifteenth century settled first in the far western part of Nepal, and later, they migrated to all areas of Nepal to acquire social and economic opportunities.

Before the 1950s, internal migration was a regular course and it was associated with the social and economic interests of the Bahuns and Chhetris. However, after 1950, especially during the regime of the late King Mahendra, a nationalist Hindu king, there was a political push to get Pahadi from the hills to migrate to the plain areas. For the acceleration of the migration process, King Mahendra launched a new government institution, named the Housing Development Company, which encouraged Pahadi people to settle in the Madhesh region. The Company did not intend to displace Madheshis by Pahadis, but the purpose was to develop caste diversity throughout Nepalese society. For many Madheshi leaders and intellectuals, this forceful

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migration was a threat to the Madheshi identity. Yadav (2007) explained this internal migration phenomenon:

For quite some time, the state policy has encouraged migration from the hills to the southward, reducing the overall proportion of Madheshis in Terai, a phenomenon that may be termed as Pahadization of Terai. It appears to be the government's strategy of weakening the Madhesis. Since hill Brahmans and Chhetris are relatively well educated and tend to be more aggressive in economic, social, and political matters, they get hold of local leadership partly because they quickly have better access and support of the local administration due to their common cultural background with government officials. (p. 97)

Similarly, Hachhethu (2003) described the internal migration:

The dominant trend of migration in the pre-1950 period was from the west hills to the east hills and later from north Hill to the south plain Terai. The migration of hill people in Terai—a traditional homeland of tribal people and the people of Indian origin—led to changes [in] its demography. At present, nearly one-third of the Terai population is those from hill migrants, mostly Nepali speaking people. (p. 224)

The continuous internal migration of Pahadi people, which was initially politically intentional, converted into the natural need of the hill Pahadi people later for economic development. The Terai, which has the highest potential of agricultural land and has easy access to the Indian border side cities for the expansion of businesses, was the interest of the educated Pahadi. People, including Pahadi and indigenous from the Hills, were willing to settle in the Terai as it was more accessible in terms of transportation and communication, whereas the hills and mountains were not. In the process, the Pahadi population in the Terai grew by almost one

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third. This internal migration process was threatened during and after the Madhesh movement in 2006–2007. Many Pahadi people who had the economic capacity to resettle in the hills or Kathmandu left. Some migrated to the buffer zones of the plains and the hills. The Madhesh movement also impacted the upper class Madheshi people because of the threats from the armed Madheshi groups, which mushroomed during the Madhesh movement and compelled them to leave the mixed ethnic areas such as Kathmandu Valley and the buffer zones. The present challenges of the Pahadi community in the Madhesh are how to protect their culture, customs, rituals, and language, which are heavily influenced by the Indian border cultures and languages. In addition, Pahadi people are also psychologically threatened by the majority Madheshi in the Terai, remembering the Madheshi movement that left 19 people dead and tens of thousands displaced. The Pahadi in the Madhesh, as the majority ethnicity in the national context, are not considered suppressed, and therefore, they are not given proper attention in the national policy discourse. This is another serious concern of the Pahadi people in the Madhesh because their identity then became wrapped up in the already over sensitized issues of Madheshi, Dalit, and indigenous identity in Nepal.

Akhand Sudurpaschim Identity

Sudurpaschim is the far-western region of Nepal. These areas are some of the most underdeveloped parts of Nepal. The east-west highway network, which connects the far-western region, was completed in 1989. Before then, people of the far-western part of Nepal used the Indian transportation system to reach their areas. After the full completion of the east-west highway at the end of the 1990s, the far-western people were integrated into the mainstream development of Nepal. The Nepalese language dialects from there are different compared with the mainstream Nepalese language within the Pahadi people from elsewhere. The population

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structure is different in this region as well. Here, the Pahadi people are in the majority compared to other castes in the region,. The development of the far-western area is behind the rest of Nepal in terms of economic development.. Therefore, people of the far-western region have the conception of being different than those in other areas. People of this region think that they are neglected in all socioeconomic and political opportunities since the inception of the state. This psychological perception was the major cause of uniting the far-western people when Tharuwan, the ethnic- and caste-based restructuring of the state, was demanded by the Tharus of the Terai areas of the far-western region. The Tharuwan movement wanted a single, united Tharu majority area under the Tharuwan province, which would be comprised of three districts from the western region and two districts from the far-western region; the Akhand Sudurpaschim followers wanted the two districts of the far-western region under their own jurisdiction. Therefore, the far-western people, against ethnic- and caste-based federalism, are continuously demanding a united and integrated far-western area called “Akhand Sudurpaschim.”

A conflict ignited when the Tharuwan and the Akhand Sudurpaschim demands contradicted each other. The Tharus, mainly from the western and far-western parts of Nepal, launched many campaigns, strikes, and agitations demanding a separate province named Tharuwan with special indigenous rights. In the beginning of 2006, major political parties agreed to address the demands of the Tharus. Later, when another group of people from part of the same area, the far-west, started demanding the integrated and undivided Sudurpaschim in 2011 and 2012, the politicians and policymakers were faced with a difficult dilemma. The government was confronted with addressing conflicting demands of two groups of people in the same area. Akhand Sudurpaschim supporters carried out the longest strike in Nepalese history. According to Bhusal and Chhantyal (October 28, 2012), “just ahead of the dissolution of the Constituent

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Assembly in May, 2012, this region was brought to a grinding halt as the two agitating sides enforced parallel general strike for 32 consecutive days.” Another report published in the *Nepal News* explained the Sudurpaschim peoples’ demands against the caste- and ethnic-based divisions of the national or regional parties. Gurung reported that “the previously unknown outfit enforced the shutdown strike demanding ‘Akhand Sudurpaschim,’ or a united far-western region, saying that it opposes any moves to divide the region based on ethnicity or language” (Nepal News, 2012, March 16). The impact of the strike compelled all major political parties to rethink their policies on ethnic federalism, especially in the far-western region. After the strike, most politicians from the far-western region became uncomfortable in answering the issue of Tharuwan or Akhand Sudurpaschim. The Second Constituent Assembly election resulted in 21 parliamentary seats from the far-western region, 20 of which, belonging to different political parties mainly from the Nepali Congress and UML, were supporters of the united and undivided Sudurpaschim.

The above identity conflicts concern Madheshi, Pahadi, Dalit, and indigenous peoples from the far-west and throughout Nepal and indicate that there are issues of discrimination associated with peoples’ languages and cultures that are yet to be resolved. A public space is necessary to promote ongoing dialogue regarding these issues. This dissertation suggests that this space may in fact already be present in the form of mass media.

GIS Map Showing the Six Identity Conflict Areas

The six identity conflict areas of Nepal discussed above are presented in Table 3.2 and mapped in Figure 3.5. As discussed earlier, these six identity conflicts were selected based on their importance in the recent Nepalese peace building efforts tied to the changing political system.

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Table 3.2

Details of Provinces Demanded by Various Groups and Districts Covered

Name of Identity Conflict	Issues of Identity	Districts Covered
Limbuwan Province	Demands of a separate province for Limbu with special rights	Taplejung, Panchther, Iilam, Terhathum, Sankhuwasabha, Dhankutta, Jhapa, Sunsari, and Morang
Madheshi Province	Demands of a separate province for Maithili-speaking people centered in Janakpur	Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusa, Mahottari, sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, and Parsa
One Madhesh Province	Demands of a separate province for all Madheshis with special rights such as the right to self-determination	All 34 districts in the plains (i.e., Jhapa in the east and Kanchanpur in the west)
Newa Province	Demands of a separate province for the Newar ethnic group with special rights	Kathmandu Valley
Tharuwan Province	Demands of a separate province for Limbu with special rights	Tharu in Banke, Bardia, Dang, Kailali, and Kanchanpur in the west and far west; Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, and Udaypur in the

		east
Akhand Sudurpaschim (i.e., United far-west Province)	Demands of a separate province for people inhabiting the far-west	Kanchanpur, Kailali, Dadheldhura, Doti, Achham, Baitadi, Darchula, Bhajhang, and Bajura

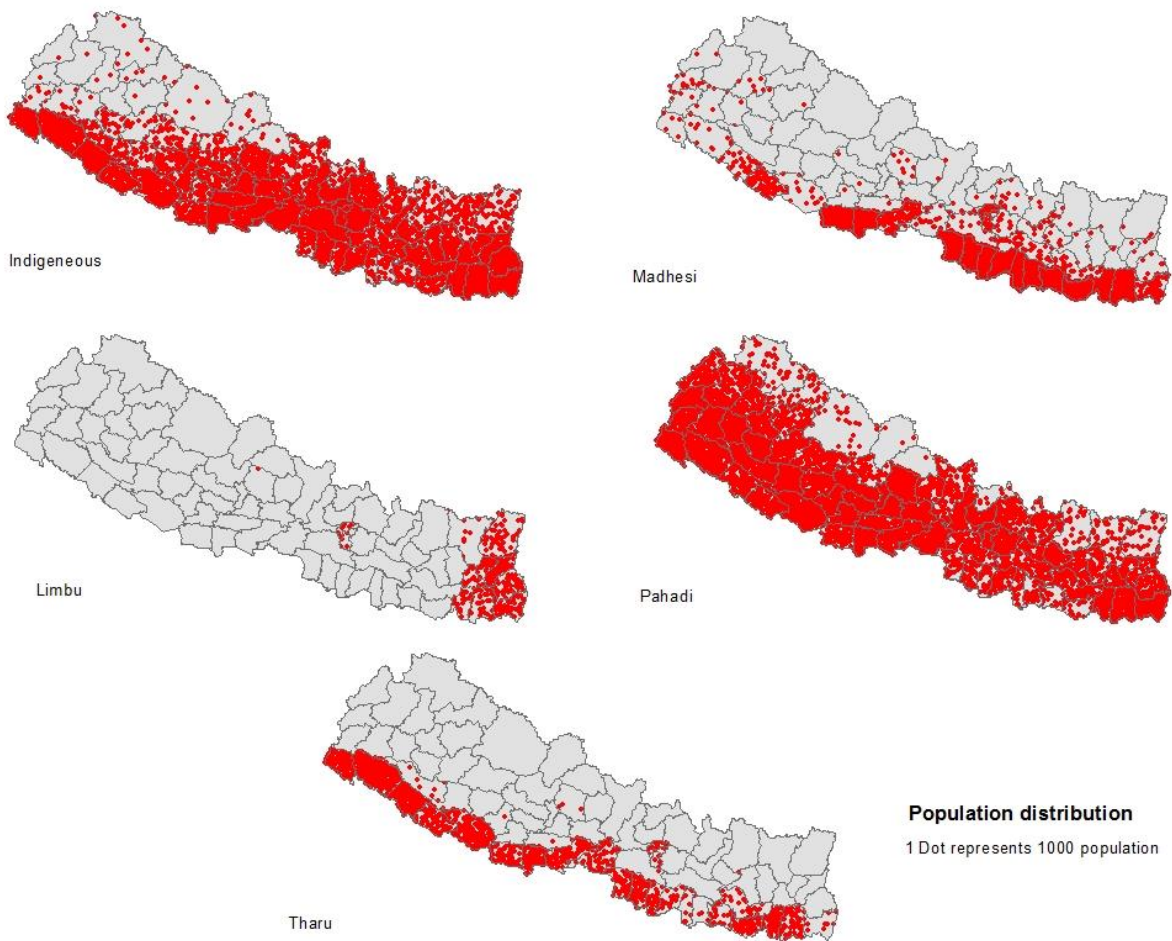


Figure 3.5: Five Maps Showing the Different Castes and Ethnic Groups of Nepal²⁷

²⁷ All maps were developed by researcher.

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Figure 3.5 shows various caste and ethnic group settlements in Nepal. In the maps, less than 1,000 people are not considered to enhance clear visibility. Small numbers (less than 1,000) of people of all castes and ethnic groups reside in almost all districts (except in a few Himali areas such as Manang, Dolpa, and Mustang).

In conclusion, this chapter explains six major identity conflicts in Nepal to enhance the overall context of the research. Understanding of these caste-based identity conflicts are very complex and have multiple conflict relations among various castes, languages, and regional identities. The chapter provides information about major identity conflict landscapes in Nepal including the regional-identity conflict linkages. Further, the chapter reports the geographical location of these identity conflicts. The six GIS maps demonstrate the overlapping of various identity conflict areas. In order to properly analyze and engage with the Pahadi identity conflict issue throughout this thesis, other identity-based conflicts were explored in detail to show how these issues relate to one another politically, nationally, regionally, geographically, culturally, economically, and so on. The category of Pahadi identity is not a stable and monolithic entity as there are multiple intra-Pahadi identity variables overlapping and often conflicting with each other such as Pahadi Dalit, Pahadi indigenous (Limbu, Rai, and other), and regionally-based identities. Similarly, inter-Pahadi-Madheshi identity conflict also interacts in complex ways. Because of the geographical overlap of various castes, languages, and indigenous groups, an amicable solution to the Nepalese caste-based identity conflicts must be reached at an optimum level of consensus. The next chapter provides theoretical perspectives on caste identity conflict and media roles toward achieving this practical end of integration and, eventually, national harmony through the provision of dialogic “safe spaces” to debate ongoing concerns, in other words, the mass media.

CHAPTER 4

MEDIA PERCEPTIONS OF AND IMPACTS ON IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICT
THROUGH FLOWS OF COMMUNICATION

This chapter discusses theoretical insights about identity-based conflict and the role of the media. It provides an overview of various perspectives about the role of mass media in shaping social discourse in the present context. Further, this chapter summarizes ethnic, cultural, social, and caste-based theories of identity as they directly pertain to identity conflict. Before exploring the idea of caste identity-based conflict, it is required in this study to examine the concept of identity in its socio-cultural context. This chapter presents seven ideas that refract the concept of “identity,” leading to an adequate conceptualization of caste-based identity conflict that can be adequately examined in the context of Hindu society in Nepal. In the second half of the chapter, opinion leaders’ roles in mass communication and how the flow of the information from leaders to the larger population is explored to understand how identity-based conflict may in fact be shaped by a select portion of the population. If this thesis holds true, then it can be hypothesized that managing identity conflict could be done through opinion leader intermediaries instead of having to convince the larger society. And, finally, this chapter concludes by stating the roles of print media on caste identity conflict in Hindu society.

Overview of Mass Media

Scholars define mass media differently depending upon the development of technology. I took the definition of Akin (2005 March), who defines mass media as:

“Mass media” is a deceptively simple term encompassing a countless array of institutions and individuals who differ in purpose, scope, method, and cultural context. Mass media

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include all forms of information communicated to large groups of people, from a handmade sign to an international news network.

Mass media have very specific and important roles in reshaping social, economic, and political landscapes. Mass media facilitates the transfer of information from one culture to another culture, which may create influences to the audiences at large. On the one hand, mass media have a strong impact “by framing images of reality” (McQuail, 1994, p. 331), and on the other hand, “media effects are limited by an interaction between mass media and recipients” (Scheufele, 1999, p. 105). In many situations, the effects of media in society are large enough to change the perception against or in favor of an object and/or subject. In Gitlin’s (1980) views, “mass media define the public significance of movement events or, by blanking them out, actively depriving them of larger significance” (p. 3). Some people believe that media, in its truest sense, is simply the mirror of society. Instead, this study assumes, “Newswriters may report facts, but they do so selectively and in a particular way” (Landsman, 1987, pp. 103-104).

Media in the Present Context

Global media is a strong means to spread both good and bad concepts around the world. For example, it is the global media that helped popularize the Islamic State, Taliban, and Bin Laden all over the world. Appadurai (1996) offers a thorough analysis of the global cultural flow. He argues that media and human migration are thinning the nation-state boundaries. Appadurai further provide the concept of *mediascapes* as:

The distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. (p. 35)

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Appadurai's concept of "people image" is an important one in understanding the media's capabilities for influencing society. For every person or institution, public image matters and the media have the capacity to develop or destroy the public image. The combination of these media creates complex images of people/leaders, cultures, nations, and societies. The people's preconceptions about their groups and belongingness based on caste, ethnicity, culture, religion, or language psychologically binds them together into what Anderson (1983) called an "imagined community." Media shapes and reshapes this imagined community. In the case of Nepalese caste identity conflict, print media provides as much as 80% of its coverage to caste-based identity issues, especially at during the end of the First Constituent Assembly. The imagined communities of various castes and cultural groups would see themselves in the coverage, which ultimately influenced their behaviors.

Singh (2010) claims that new media, such as Internet-related information and social networks, has positive and negative cultural dimensions. On the positive side, the media provides information access to the most people, without the typical socio-economic barriers of developed/underdeveloped or caste/class landscapes. On the other hand, some media, which work for the politicians or business houses, may negatively impact individuals and society through divisive ideological messages. In response to the negative effects of media, some journalists have promoted ideas such as "peace journalism."²⁸

Many developing countries have problems from divisions in society based on caste/ethnicity, religion, and regionalism in addition to poverty and other economic and class-based partitions. The global media collects information and views on social, economic, cultural,

²⁸ "Peace journalism advocates the belief that journalists should use the power of the media to help resolve conflict rather than report it from a distance" (Akin, 2005 March).

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political, and religious issues and disseminates it to larger audiences all over the world. After the information revolution (such as huge expansions of internet networks and cell phone connections, social media, and television networks) beginning around 2000, the effects of global media in many of the social movements and democratic uprisings in the various parts of the world have been felt widely, and Nepal is no exception. For example, BBC, Radio China, and All India Radio are providing a minimum of one hour segments that broadcast news and views in the Nepalese language providing global perspective on Nepalese concerns. Further, *Kantipur* prints full page articles by India's prominent scholars and writers every week. Most cable television networks in Nepal broadcast CNN, BBC, and India Today. Media also highlights prominent personalities' views, such as President Carter's views on the current caste identity issues of Nepal, which then affect the contemporary political and social processes in Nepal. Therefore, as this dissertation demonstrates, print media's role in shaping caste-based identity conflict in Nepal is substantial.

Print Media

Print media is paper-based information published by the private or public sector. "Printed media is the term used to refer to books, newspapers, and magazines" (Orbe, 2013, p. 237). Compared to the Internet and other visual media, print media (such a books and newspapers) is the oldest form of mass communication. They provide news, views, analyses, entertainment, and sports. In addition to news and views, the media provides, as Gitlin (1980) argues, "the distribution of ideology," (p. 2) and therefore, media affects all sectors of society. Print media is a part of mass media communication.

In developing countries, where people have limited access to new media such as the Internet or Information and Communication Technology (ICT), print media remains the major

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source of information. Some print media cover all sectors of information whereas others cover specific information such as sports, literature, entertainment, the economy, politics, or special events. While people have direct information about their family, kin networks, and the very limited social circle around their vicinity, they know quite little about their broader social and political arenas. Gitlin (1980) notes that “people find themselves relying on media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even language” (p. 1). In the case of Nepal, because of the low level of television and Internet networks, newspapers are one of the main sources for acquiring information, and they play important roles in shaping society. Therefore, in this study, I selected the print media to analyze its roles in caste-based identity conflict in Nepal as will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Radio and Television

The electronic media like radio and television gather information and views of various peoples and communities of different identities and make it available through broadcast to large audiences. Meyrowitz (1985) suggests “by bringing many different types of people to the same ‘place,’ electric media have fostered a blurring of many formerly distinct social roles” (p. 6).

According to Jankowski (2006), the impact of electronic media in society is mixed. He claims the arguments that television and movies, which are suspected of providing negative impacts on society, deforming young minds, and threatening cultural heritage, is completely one-sided. In support of this monolithic understanding of media affects, many dictator regimes (for example North Korea, Iran, Nepal before 1990 and during the King Gyanendra regime between 2005 and 2007, or Myanmar before 2012) believed that open media threatened their political power and culture. In all these regimes, however, the intention of blocking media was a political

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move to protect their own political power.²⁹ To illustrate, “an official of the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance railed against the satellite dishes beaming down reruns of *Dynasty*, *Donahue*, and *The Simpsons*” (Metzl, 1996, p. 569), viewing these impositions as corrupting Iranian culture by the influences of American and Western culture.

In the same way, during the absolute monarchy before 1990, Nepal had only state-run radio and television broadcasting. These state-run media portrayed politically censored news and views to support the 238-year-long monarchy. After the First Janandolan in 1990, the Nepal government provided full autonomy to the media. Because of the government’s liberalized policy, as many as 300 new radio broadcasting stations and more than five television stations were registered and aired.³⁰ Mainly after the multiparty democracy in 1990 and during Janandolan II, private media such as radio, television, and print newspapers played strong roles in promoting the restoration of democracy and human rights in Nepal. Because of media’s positive role in establishing democracy and people’s rights, the monarchy regime in 2005–2007 arrested “at least 111 journalists around the country, since the people’s movement began” (*Kathmandu Post*, 2006, April 11). Later, after the restoration of democracy and the declaration of the republic in 2007, all media were given full autonomy, praising their positive role in the Janandolan II.

New Media

Singh (2010) defines new media as “new information and communication technologies, mass media/social media and digital mode of delivery of messages” (p. 87). The new media

²⁹ For example, Kendall-Taylor and Frantz (2015) urged that in the case of autocratic regimes “control over media” is one of the tools to prolongate the autocracy regime.

³⁰ The details of Radio and Television licenses are retrieved from the Ministry of Information and Communication’s website: <http://www.moic.gov.np/issued-licenses.php>

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includes, but is not limited to DVDs, CD-ROMs, cable television, computer networks, email, Facebook, LinkedIn, SMS, MMS, Skype, real time chat services, virtual discussion groups, and Internet-based print and visual news. The introduction of Internet technology in the beginning of 2000, and its exponential growth all over the world, created an information revolution. “Internet, with around 200 million people globally being ‘on–line’ seems to speed up the messages across all kinds of boundaries” (Singh, 2010, p. 87). Some claim that the new communication technology facilitates or eradicates the gap between the haves and have-nots, supports education, makes citizens active, and supports economic and commercial activities. Rheingold (2000) pleads for the positive aspects of the Internet. He coined the concept of the “virtual community” created within the Internet world. According to Rheingold (2000):

People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. (p. XVIII)

Similarly, Shrestha (2014, January 7) wrote about the positive impact of social media in the case of Nepal:

We read lots of news describing the positivity of social causes for example, cancer affected poor got support from abroad after the news appeared in Facebook, a daughter returned back after 20 years—thanks to Facebook, or an orphan found her parent through Facebook, etc. It gives lots of information which can be used in education, awareness building, and all sectors of social life. However, social media have drawbacks too. The

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social media such as Internet, Facebook, and mobile phones could give information access to youth on various aspects of violence, unsocial behavior, and crime. Therefore, the use of social networks should be critically utilized for the betterment of mankind. (p. 6)

On the other hand, there are many examples available on the negative effects of the Internet. Kraut et al. (1998) did a social and psychological study on the impact of the Internet with 169 people in 73 households. They claimed that “greater use of the Internet was associated with declines in participants’ communication with family members in the household, declines in the size of their social circle, and increases in their depression and loneliness” (p. 1017).

In overviewing various aspects of mass media such as print, visual, and new media, I came to the conclusion that media has both positive and negative roles in society. It is up to the audience on how to interpret and ultimately use it. Furthermore, it is also clear that democracy and closed-media (as in, state-run) prevents the spread of new ideas and therefore democracy could not get a foothold. Looking at the social and economic conditions of the Nepalese people and the availability of the various media outlets in Nepal, this study focuses on the roles of print media on caste-based identity conflict in contemporary Nepal. Peoples’ identities are linked to their religion, culture, ethnicity, caste, and political economy. This study shows that media, identity, and conflict cannot be easily disarticulated. Therefore, this study evaluates caste-based identity conflict in Nepal through a broad-based, largely qualitative approach to identify relational aspects of these three concepts within the larger Nepalese context.

Identity Theory

Identity is a socially constructed concept of feeling oneself often with reference to another. A person’s identity is formed by his/her interpretation of his/her place in the society.

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“Identity is formed in relation to ‘significant others,’ who mediated to the subject the values, meanings, and symbols —the culture—of the worlds he/she inhabited” (Hall, 1996a, p. 597). On the identity formation process, Hall explains that identity is actually something formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth. To make the concept more clear, Hall (1996b) further describes that “identities are constructed within, not outside” (p.4), which provides meaning to people’s psychological feelings of belongingness. In many cases, external pressures have huge influence in the process of caste and cultural identity construction. People’s identities are not static at birth based on strict kin relationships. Identity can be reshaped with respect to time and it is always in the process of being reformed and “a subject of change under social, political, and economic pressure” (Singh, 2010, p. 88).

Professional identity such as engineer, doctor, or lecturer, can be changed with respect to social and economic conditions. National and regional identity also can be changed based on shifting political conditions. However, changes to ethnic, cultural, or caste-based identity are extremely difficult, and are much more contextually and individually based.

In the view of Wynter (2003), the identity issue is one of the major issues and should not be understood separately. It should be analyzed in combination with colonialism, gender, race/caste/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. In accordance with the above concepts, the Hindu caste identity communicates a language, shares the same cultural values, and acts according to a historical legacy provided by previous generations and religious caste concepts, but with significant changes in regional formulations and practices that have been used to divide Nepalese society and promote conflict, as was discussed earlier.

Ethnic Identity

The components of ethnic identity are “self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to the group, attitudes about one’s group membership, and ethnic involvement (social participation, cultural practices, and attitudes)” (Phinney, 1990, p. 503). Similarly, according to Tajfel (1981), ethnic identity is “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 225). Likewise, Turner (1982) defines social identification “as the process of locating oneself, or another person, to any social categorization used by a person to define him- or herself and others” (p. 17–18). In some instances, according to Regmi (2003), “physical attributes—pigmentation of the skin or body shape—provide the foundation of ethnic identity; and to consolidate such an identity the members of an ethnic group must also share ideas, behavior patterns, feelings, and meaning” (p. 3). Ethnic identity issues are more sensitive to ethnic minorities who share the same language, culture, tradition, ritual, and kin networks. The ethnic minority groups often suffer from psychological threats of assimilation into the other majority groups. According to Willemsen and Oudenhoven (1989):

The term ‘ethnic minority’ defines social groups that differ from the majority of the people in the country or society in which they live. Differences may refer to language, race or religion or a combination of these characteristics. However, conflicts between ethnic groups may have little to do with these differences; they may instead be related to, for instance, differences in power or a conflict of interests. (p. 11)

In all the definitions of “ethnic identity,” one thing emerges: Ethnic identity is a people’s perception and self-conception of in-group membership based on culture, language, tradition,

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and social participation. Ethnic identity, mainly when it relates to race and caste, has discriminative social and economic relationships. These discriminations lead to the denial of rights and access to the natural resources in rural areas and very few professional opportunities in addition to the psychological fear of persecution from the other major ethnic groups. The result of these denials of access and representation, as well as fear from out-groups, create and enlarge the gap between the haves and have-nots, and develop and/or enlarge conflicts often leading to violence. In the case of caste-identity conflict in Nepal as discussed in Chapter 2, Madheshi and Pahadi people both perceive themselves within their own ethnic groups. Madheshi perceive that they are continuously discriminated by the Pahadi majority state as well as Pahadi community, and therefore, Madheshi leaders united Madheshi people based on language and ethnic identity for their ethnic identity rights. On the other hand, Pahadi people in Madhesh suffered from out-group perception within the Madhesh. This concept led both Madheshi and Pahadi ethnic groups into the latent conflict stage. This situation continuously existed and triggered the Madheshi movement outbreak in 2007.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity, as described by Phinney (1990), is more connected with cultural belonging such as language; religious affiliation and practice; customary music, songs, dances, and dress; traditional celebrations, traditional family roles, values, and names; and knowledge of a particular culture and history.

Huntington (1990) suggests that the result of social-economic modernization at the individual level creates the need for more meaningful identities. Huntington further argues that the pattern of conflict after the Cold War changed towards “new identities rooted in culture” (p. 130). His cultural identity framework of understanding the present world politics is not absolute

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in defining all the relations among countries; however, there is extensive evidence that cultural and religious relationships play a strong role in developing the economic, diplomatic, and social relations within and between countries. Although Huntington looks mainly to the cultural and ethnic dimensions of conflicts, there are many other issues such as resource scarcity and uneven distribution of wealth, international political dynamics, and changes in the regional power structure; these issues are continuously influencing the conflict dynamics. West (1993) explains the shifting political priorities toward cultural diversity in every aspect of social and political life:

Distinctive features of the new cultural politics of difference are to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity; to reject the abstract, general and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular; and to historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing. (p. 577)

In the present context of Nepal, cultural issues, which are related to the Hindu caste system in some ways, have significant importance in resolving the caste identity crisis through the restructuring of the state. Cultural identity conflict in Nepal, such as the language identity-based demands to create a new province is one of the most contentious unresolved conflicts related to the Madheshi movement. As mentioned earlier, surrounding the Maithili language speaking areas, Madheshi and other political parties are using language as political leverage. There is a conflict within the Madheshi people on whether the Maithili-speaking peoples should be treated separately from the Terai, or, if the Maithili are a part of the Terai. As indicated above, the Terai is inhabited by the Madheshi and Pahadi peoples of many religions, castes, cultures, and dialects. Therefore, the Maithili language identity-based demands are related to cultural identity whereas the “one united Terai (Madhesh)” movement is politically motivated.

Social Identity

Social Identity Theory deals with ethnic/cultural issues in society. This theory was first discussed in 1970 by Henri Tajfel and later built upon by many scholars including Turner (1979), Hogg (1988), Phinney (1990), and Stets and Burke (2000). According to Tajfel and Turner (cited in Phinney, 1990), “simply being a member of a group provides individuals with a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive self-concept” (p. 501). Hogg (2006) added:

Social identity theory is a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations. It embraces a number of interrelated concepts and sub-theories that focus on social-cognitive, motivational, social-interactive and macro-social facets of group life. (p. 111)

Social identity theory, then, captures many characteristics of the Hindu caste system that is influencing conflict in contemporary Nepal. The people who believe in castes have the self-conception of the same-caste membership. The people in this group act as socially cognitive, motivational, socially and culturally bounded, and psychologically secure within the caste-group. The Madheshi and Pahadi represent all castes, cultures, and religions. Both Madheshi and Pahadi people have self-conception of pride at being members of their groups. This pride of being a member of a group often hinders national cohesion. One such example is the continued discrimination against inter-caste marriages in Nepalese society.

Caste Identity

Caste identity, which shares overlapping characteristics with ethnicity, can be the starting point for many conflicts in Nepal. Caste identity is not a finite thing, but it is the perception of self within the same caste in society. It is the shared ideas about self and others based on kinship. According to Wendt (1992), “the human structures are determined mainly by shared ideas rather

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than material forces, and the identities and interests of human beings are constructed or are the product of these shared ideas rather than being products of nature” (p. 1). These shared ideas are developed and shaped in the process of inter-subjective relationships among people in a long, historical process. In this process, people engage and interact with each other and develop a perception of self and others. This identity is a part of kinship and community networks of support which operate in times of need, cultural and customary necessity, and united efforts against positive or negative causes. Caste identity, with its historical roots, affects increasing/decreasing conflict in society.

The caste and/or group identity often shows internal group cohesion against other groups in many social and cultural events and issues, and it may be the starting point of many conflicts among different caste groups. In Nepal, the caste system has deep historical roots in Hinduism and the Civil Code of 1854, which ranked the people according to caste (Haug and Aasland, 2009, p. 15). This Civil Code was amended in 1963 based on the principle of equality. However, rural people in Nepal are still practicing many components of the Hindu caste system as they relate to personal and group identity. Caste-identity based demands in Nepal are influenced by the caste-identity movement in India because of the cultural inter-linkage in the open border with India.

In India, caste-identity politics gained strength in the 1950s through “the growth of middleclass spread of education, and massive affirmative action policies by the state” (Srinivas, 2003, p. 459). With the breakdown of the closed village economy and the rise of democratic politics, the competitive elements embedded in caste have come to the fore, and this has resulted in the collapse of the caste system, but also in the rise of caste-based identities (Gupta, 2005, p. 409). According to Srinivas (2003), caste politics started early in the 1920s, but accelerated after

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the Indian independence in 1949 during the process of writing the constitution. The Constitution of Independent India not only abolished untouchability, but also made provisions to reserve jobs and seats in government and educational institutions, respectively, for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Gupta, 2005, p. 417).³¹ Currently in Nepal, the caste-identity politics of the Maoist and many regional parties are experiencing a similar situation to that of India in the 1950s.

Appadurai (1996) discussed the peoples' perceptions of an in-group membership, which is virtual in nature and psychologically binding based on caste, culture, ethnicity, and language or the same dialects. Anderson (1983) and Appadurai (1996) give a name—"imagined community"—for the virtual in-group concept. These imagined communities compete with each other in different social, economic, and political sectors for economic and power interests. Appadurai (1996) commented on the psychological perception of the imagined community and argues, "One man's imagined community is another man's political prison" (p. 32). This psychological perception has often played a role in the emergence of conflict among different caste/ethnic groups to compete for the limited resources in their communities.

For this study, the Madheshi and Pahadi communities can be viewed within the theoretical perspectives of Tajfel (1981), Hall (1996), and Hogg (2006) where both Madheshi and Pahadi communities perceive themselves as the in-group with all associated memberships and belongingness. In the same way, the indigenous groups in Nepal distinguish themselves from other indigenous castes and language groups. Pahadi and Madheshi people share languages,

³¹ Scheduled Castes are the lower castes (e.g., Dalits and Chhudra in the Hindu caste system). Scheduled tribes are the aboriginal ethnic people who have their separate and unique religious and cultural practices.

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cultures, and festivals in the Terai. For example, Pahadi in Terai speak Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Abhadi languages and celebrate *Chhat*, *Holi*, and *Maghi*. Similarly, Madheshi speak the Nepali language, and celebrate Dashahara and Deepawali. Therefore, the Madheshi-Pahadi conflicts in the Terai have their roots in in-group conceptions of belongingness and security to access social, economic, and political opportunities in Nepal although they share same festivals and language.

The present scenario in Nepal, which is in the process of writing a new constitution and working toward the stability of democratic institutions, is in many ways similar to the situation of India in the 1950s. The caste and group identity issues in Nepal are, therefore, being negotiated as a way to grasp economic opportunities (such as jobs, seats in educational institutions, and natural resource access) and political power. Thus, the traditional Hindu caste system in Nepal is transforming into caste- and ethnic-group identity, which is political rather than hereditary or religious. In accordance with the above, Gupta (2004) argues that the exposure to urbanization and the increased level of freedom in towns and cities results in the rise of caste identity politics in society. This dissertation tries to explore how this transformation is affecting contemporary Nepalese society and what role mass media plays in these caste and group identity politics.

Communication Theory

Mass Communication Theory

Newspaper, radio, television, and the Internet are the most common mediums of mass communication. The information reported in the media comes from many sources such as company press releases, stakeholders, individuals who write opinions to the editor, government agencies, and media workers/reporters/columnists (Deephouse, 2000). According to the dominant paradigm, the media have certain functions in society, and their effects on audiences

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are direct and linear (MaQuail, 2010 p. 4). It is difficult to prove direct cause-and-effect whether media creates changes in society, vice versa, or neither. The relationship between information and changes in societies is directly observable, however, and to some extent, empirically notable. This dissertation uses the media-society or functionalist theory under the dominant paradigm of mass media, which specifies the social functions of media as “providing information about events and conditions in society and the world, indicating relations of power, and campaigning for societal objectives in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work and sometimes religion” (MaQuail, 2010 pp. 98–99). The caste identity conflict events and issues in contemporary Nepal are covered in all mass media in Nepal including print media. The caste identity issues are crucial in the aftermath of the Nepalese civil war, which ended in 2007, and the conflicting party or the rebel group, the Maoist party, is the main proponent of caste identity-based politics.³² The Maoist party, during the insurgency and after the peace agreement, promised all major castes and indigenous groups such as Tamang, Magar, Guring, Limbu, Dalits, and Madheshi a separate province for each by restructuring the country. The Maoist’s and regional parties’ campaign of caste-based restructuring of Nepal worked in the First Constituent Assembly election, but failed in the Second. This research explores the mass media’s effects on the caste identity conflict, especially focusing on Pahadi identity in the Madheshi majority areas.

Roles of “Opinion Leaders” in Information Landscapes and Two-Step Theory

In any campaign or political cause, mass media is used as an important medium. Most of the time, mass media either directly affects audiences, or it first influences the leaders or policy makers of concerned sectors and later influences the larger public. According to McQuail (1994),

³² The Maoist party, on their election Manifesto of 2008 proposed 14 provinces based on the caste-identity and named them Limbuwan, Tamsaling, Newa, Bhojपुरa, Tharuwan and others.

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the history of research on media effects is divided into four stages: (1) strategic propaganda and strong media effects during and before World War I; (2) media influence on attitude change between World War I and 1970; (3) cognitive effects of mass media between 1970 and 1980; and (4) combined effects, both strong and limited, by mass media on audiences after the 1980s. The present stage of mass media scholarship accepts, as a strong medium for change in society, the influence of opinion creators. “Since as early as the 1940s, scholars have understood the general importance of opinion leaders in shaping public preferences, informing fellow citizens, and altering behavior” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 329). Political leaders, policy makers, NGO activists, civil society leaders, human rights activists, development workers, trade unionists, bureaucrats, schoolteachers, professors and academics, and professionals are all opinion creators in most social and political matters in Nepal. Lazarsfeld (1944) and Katz (1957) named these opinion creators “opinion leaders.” Most of the political parties engage in organizing trade unions, professional associations, civil society organizations, and mid- and local-level political branches/groups for the dissemination of their institutions’ plans, programs, thoughts, and ideologies to the masses.

In the case of developing countries such as Nepal, trade unions and associations are being created by all major political parties. For example, in Nepal there are five political groups that are active in the engineering sector, three political groups in advocate bar associations, three political groups among university professors, six political groups in the employee sectors, and five trade unions interconnected with political parties in industrial labor.

These unions and associations work according to their parent political parties. Generally, political decisions made at the union level or at the association level are directly influenced by

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high-level opinion leaders.³³ The flow of information, directly or through mass media, is achieved in different steps. When opinions are developed among high-level leadership, it flows to the middle level and finally to the grassroots level.

The opinions flowing in different steps are summarized in “Two-Step Flow of Communication” theory described by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944, p. 151) and Katz (1957). The hypothesis of this theory is that “ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to the less active sections of the population” (Katz, 1957, p. 61; Lazarsfeld cited in MaQuail, 2010, p. 473). This two-step flow theory suggests that all ideas and information first flow to the “opinion leaders” and from them to the general population. In the case of Nepal, sub-urban and rural people do not have easy access to information, news, views, and analysis of the current social, economic, and political events. This is then compounded by high illiteracy rates among the rural poor. Active locals connected to broader information networks then become “opinion leaders” or channels for disseminating the information to and influencing their constituents. “In this two step-flow of information, opinion leaders did not necessarily hold formal positions of power or prestige in communities but rather served as the connective communication tissue that alerted their peers to what mattered among political events, social issues, and consumer choices” (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009, p. 329).

In the case of Nepal, the political leaders, indigenous leaders, and caste rights-based motivators are acting as influential “opinion leaders” steering, enlarging, shaping, and motivating caste-identity issues and their subsequent outcomes to the larger populace. This theory

³³ I discussed this idea with many politicians during my research in Nepal and I found that every political party deposes their central committee members to guide and influence their trade unions and professional association in their decision-making process; the union and association leadership disseminate their decisions to the regional and local levels.

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influenced my sampling strategy. Therefore, during the field research, political leaders, trade union leaders, NGO activists, professional leaders, and caste-based civil society leaders (identified as opinion leaders), were selected for focus group discussions and subsequently interviewed. Using this two-step flow of communication theory, I captured much information about how the opinion leaders are habitual about reading newspapers, listening to radio programs, or watching television, and how they use this information in their further activities. Figure 4.1 shows how the Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory can be applied to the Nepalese case.

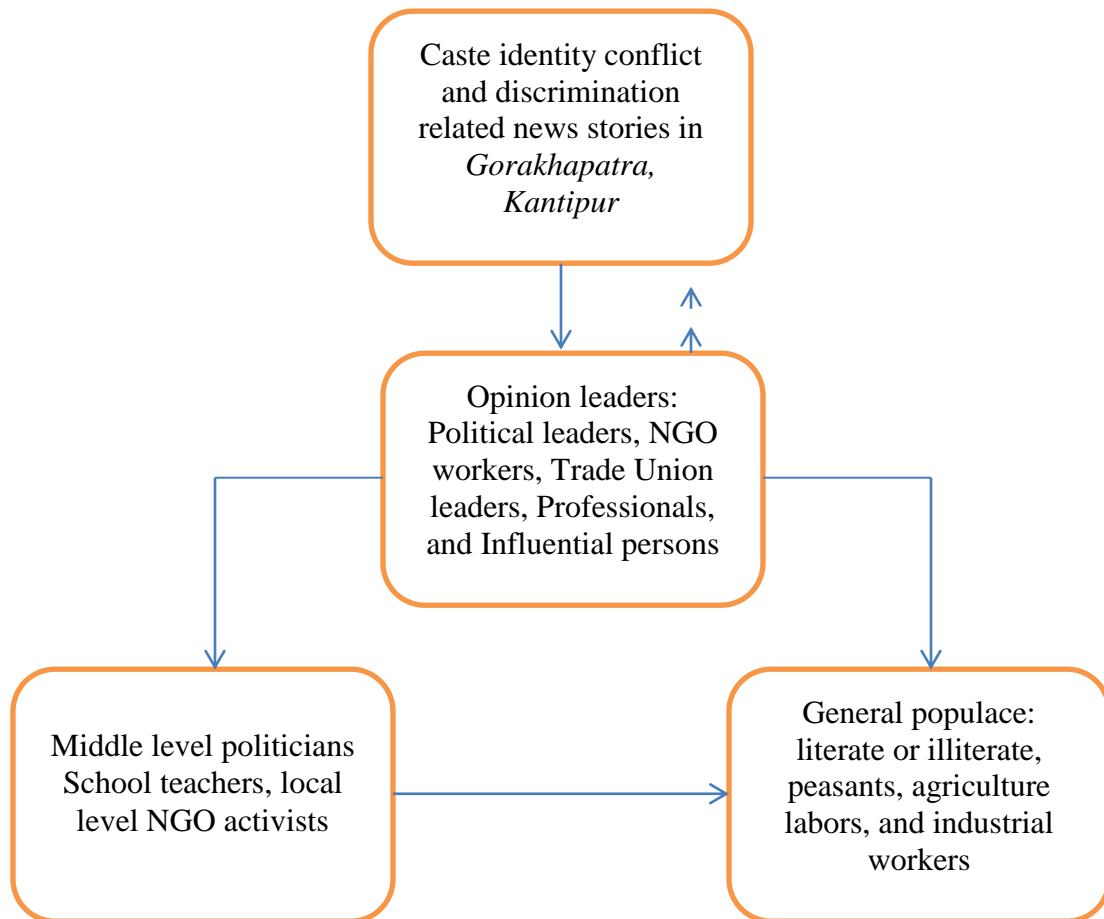


Figure 4.1: Information flow diagram: Flow of information from newspapers to people through opinion leaders

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In Figure 4.1, the caste-based identity conflict and discrimination stories published in *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur* influence opinion leaders' perspectives on caste-based identity conflict events and stories; later, opinion leaders share their perspectives with middle level influential persons and NGO activists in meetings, discussions, and small gatherings. Opinion leaders often share their perspectives directly to the larger audiences via public speeches in mass gatherings and through interviews in media as well. The general audiences also receive information directly or indirectly from middle level opinion leaders such as school teachers, local NGO activists, village chiefs, and local politicians. Similarly, many opinion leaders regularly write caste identity-related news stories in newspapers and offer interviews on radio and television. Therefore, the media influence opinion leaders as well as opinion leaders influencing the media. In this way, information flows from opinion leaders to the general populace where newspapers play vital roles in influencing society at large.

Caste-Based Identity Conflict and Print Media: Theoretical Perspectives

Caste, culture, and language are the components of ethnic identity where people feel in-group membership and a sense of belongingness (Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1996; Hogg, 2006; Phinney, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982; Wynter 2003) with respect to other groups. This sense of belongingness is developed in the process of ethnic involvement in social participation and cultural practices, and creates emotional attachment to the in-group membership. "Ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge" (Blagojevic, 2009, p. 1). One of the factors of conflict is the access and ownership over scarce resources. People may have claims and counterclaims to resources, as a result, in-group and out-group conflict is created among people of the same society. Another factor of conflict is the security threat. In a society where the state mechanisms are fragile, people tend to seek support from their in-group

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members. In Nepal, the problems of scarcity of resources and security threats became more acute during the Maoist insurgency. In this context, the Madheshi groups claimed to be discriminated against by the majority Pahadi people. This perception of “us” versus “them” increased the conflict between the Madheshi and Pahadi groups. During the time of resource scarcities and security threats, this belongingness may turn into identity conflict where people link the current problems to the discrimination and inappropriate distribution of resources in the past. In the view of Stroh (2011, p. 171), “The origins of the perceived threat lie in a history of oppression experienced by each side, which leads both sides to perceive themselves as victims.” As urged by Hachhethu (2007, p. 8), Madheshi people were discriminated for disproportionate distribution of land and forest resources in favor of the hill people. Further, Hachhethu (2007) noted that the “Nepali state encouraged migration from south of the border in the past and from hill to the Madhesh since the 1950s which served the interest of small hill elites” (p. 8). However, the history of the oppression in the case of Pahadi and Madheshi remains contentious.

Similarly, Blagojevic (2009) urged that one of the causes of ethnic conflict is manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment, and hate toward the “other.” This manipulation can be done in several ways. For example, in the case of the Rwandan genocide, a popular radio station encouraged violence against the Tutsi minority population (Drott, 2014). On the other hand, Arcan (2013) urged that “the media can play an effective, positive role to prevent or reconcile ethnic conflicts and to contribute to the post-conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peace building” (p.1). Arcan (2013) studied violent ethnic conflicts between Turkey and the Kurdish Armed Organization (PKK) and reached the conclusion that although media played negative roles in Rwanda and Serbia, the Turkish media played positive and constructive roles in settling down the Turkish violent ethnic

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conflict. Similarly, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, in the case of Nepal, the private FM radio and private newspapers played positive roles in minimizing caste-based identity conflicts.

The New York University Center for War, Peace, and the News Media has developed a 22-point typology about the roles that the media could potentially play in conflict and its management (Manoff, 1996). One role is to “frame the issues involved in conflict in such a way that they become more susceptible to management” (Manoff, 1996, p. 2). In other words, “Conflict is a part of reality and the media has the task of portraying reality. In fact, the provision of information about conflict in the media is a step towards resolution” (Salawu, 2009, p. 76). This study approaches the positive aspects of media portraying ethnic and caste identity conflicts towards peaceful settlement through opinion leaders. “In every communal or ethnic conflict, the positions of the media can significantly impact the outcome” (Olorunyomi, 2000, p. 5).

Thus, this chapter, as part of the theoretical framework, concludes that the concept of identity is a much-contested issue as it (as stated earlier) functions in complex ways. In order to analyze the caste-based identity conflict in Hindu society in Nepal and the role of print media, the socio-cultural nuances behind the identity construction have to be explored. Therefore, the chapter looked into ethnic, cultural, social, and caste-based theories of identity as they directly pertain to identity conflict.

In Nepalese caste-based identity conflict, especially during the Madheshi-Pahadi identity conflict in 2007, the violence against the Pahadi people created psychological threats and forced displacement of Pahadi people from the Terai back to the hills. During the Madheshi movement, many Pahadi people suffered communal violence. The Nepalese private print media, *Kantipur*, played a role in outing the nature of this movement and provided adequate information to opinion leaders to help influence and ultimately manage the conflict. The media’s effective and

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positive role in managing caste-based identity conflict is used as the theoretical frame for this study. The next chapter outlines the methodology employed in this dissertation research.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the roles of media in the current debates over caste identity conflict in Nepal. After the peace agreement with the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists), the new constitution writing process began. The restructuring of the state based on the federal political structure in the new constitution was one of the major agreements signed among the government, Maoists, and seven other major political parties in 2007. During the entire period from 2007 to today, the media continuously play strong roles in influencing the populace, particularly around issues of caste identity and conflict in this Hindu society. In order to understand the media's role in either exacerbating or mitigating caste-based identity conflict in Nepal, I used a mixed methods approach to capture both immediate connections as well as the broader context for the research. This mixed methodology comprised focus group discussions, content analysis of print media, and semi-structured interviews of opinion leaders around the issues of the media's influence on caste identity conflict in Nepal. This chapter focuses on the research questions, hypotheses, and methods used in the study to collect and analyze data.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The main research question for this dissertation is: How do various print media outlets (i.e., public versus private) depict Pahadi identity-based conflict in contemporary Nepal? The two sub-questions are: (Q1) Do print media outlets aggravate or help manage caste-based identity conflict? (Q2) To what end do opinion leaders receive and deploy caste/Pahadi identity-based conflict information as reported in the print media? These sub-questions then led to the formation of three hypotheses: (H1) Private print media correlates with reported events-based data on caste-based identity conflict to a higher degree than public print media. (H2) Print media

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outlets seem to help manage caste-based identity conflicts more than aggravate them, although variability between media outlets is expected. (H3) The print media's identity-based conflict coverage affects opinion leaders and ultimately public opinion in complex and shifting ways regarding caste-based identity conflict in Nepal.

Sample

Selection of the Research Topic and the Nepalese Case

Nepal suffered from a ten-year Maoist civil war between 1996 and 2006. After the restoration of a multiparty system, a declaration of the formation of a republic from the old monarchy system, and the 12-points Peace Agreement among seven parties and the Maoist rebel group with a major agenda of restructuring the state, Nepal entered a new phase of political transformation. In the process of writing a new constitution, state restructuring was, and still is, a contentious issue among political parties. Some political parties such as the Maoists and regional Madheshi and indigenous parties plead for a caste identity-based restructuring; whereas some other political parties such as the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist (UML) party advocate for a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural identity-based restructuring of Nepal rejecting the single-caste identity-based federal structure. Because of the four-month long Madheshi movement in 2007, the Pahadi (who are the majority in Nepal, but minority in Madhesh) encountered identity-based rifts and forceful social and cultural segregation. During the Madheshi movement, Hachhethu (2007) reported:

“Pahadis out of Madhesh” and “down with hill administration” were the main slogans chanted in the rally. Some shops and a hotel run by Pahadi people were destroyed and

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burnt. None of the Pahadis were seen on the street (though they constitute one-fifth of the Janakpur city population) throughout the days of Madhesh *bandh*.³⁴ (p. 3)

During the Madhesh movement and after, the media highlighted the caste-based identity conflicts daily in visual, radio, and print outlets. Political leaders, intellectuals, and concerned individuals participated in caste-based identity debates at every level. All the Nepalese political parties were compelled to speak on those issues. Caste identity issues, particularly caste-based identity conflict, and the role of the media as potentially both a positive and negative influence on the caste identity discourse in Nepal, are important because the media can provide information on various aspects of caste identity conflicts, can report and clarify the caste conflict events, and can play a role in shaping perceptions of opinion leaders regarding caste-based identity conflict so that concerned politicians and intellectuals can reach an agreement about the necessary restructuring of the country.

Similarly, ethnic and cultural identity-based conflicts are a major threat to global security today. In the half century after 1945, there were 103 intrastate wars around the world, compared to only 22 interstate wars (Levy, 2007, p. 18–19). The intrastate wars are often more severe and affected or are still affecting “73 percent of the bottom billion people in the world” (Collier, 2007, p. 17). Many contemporary intrastate wars pit ethnic or religious groups against each other and are referred to as “ethnic wars” or “identity wars” (Levy, 2007, p. 19). According to Horowitz (1985):

The recurrent hostilities in Northern Ireland, Chad, and Lebanon; secessionist warfare in Burma, Bangladesh, the Sudan, Nigeria, Iraq, and the Philippines; the Somali invasion of

³⁴ *Bandh* means total strike where all industries, shops, private institutions, schools, colleges, and transportation are forcefully closed by agitators.

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Ethiopia and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus; the army killings in Uganda and Syria and the mass civilian killings in India-Pakistan, Burundi, and Indonesia; Sikh terrorism, Basque terrorism, Corsican terrorism, Palestinian terrorism; the expulsion of Chinese from Vietnam, of Arakanese Muslims from Burma, of Asians from Uganda, of Beninese from the Ivory Coast and Gabon; ethnic riots in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Zaire, Guyana, and a score of other countries—these comprise only the most violent evidence of ethnic hostility. (p. 3)

Therefore, concentrating research on these internally driven identity-based conflicts and their drivers including the media are critical to achieving peace in the 21st century. Horowitz shows that identity-based conflicts are one of the major issues destabilizing states around the world. The caste identity conflicts of Nepal are comparable to many of these other outbreaks of violence around the world.

Nepal is also a good case study regarding caste-based identity conflict since it builds off an already extensive literature on Hindu caste discrimination, Dalit issues, Hindu culture and customs, and Hindu caste hierarchy and structure as the country with the greatest proportion of Hindus in the world at over 80%. Some of the Hindu-related scholarship that has contributed to the understanding of caste identity issues in Nepal are Regmi (2003), Gurung (2003), Bennett et al. (2008), Gupta (2005), and Hagen (2007, 2010). These studies, however, have failed to capture the role of the media in the changing dynamics of the Hindu caste identity and how it influences caste-based identity conflicts.

The changing social landscapes of caste identity within Hindu communities and how the media is helping to shape this landscape is important to understand since identity-based conflict is one of the major potential sources of tension and violence in the modern era (The Carter

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Center Report, 2013; Castells 2011; Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka, and Whelpton, 2012; Gibler, Hutchison, and Miller, 2012; Hachhethu 2007, 2014; Jandt, 2012; Kumar, 2005; Lawoti, 2007, 2014; Lawoti and Hangen, 2013; McDonald and Vaughn, 2013; Pherali and Garratt, 2014; Rasaratnam and Malagodi, 2012).

This research was conducted in Nepal. The selection of Nepal was made for three main reasons. First, this research project revolves around the caste-identity conflict of Pahadi and Madheshi in the Terai, which is a unique case where both Pahadi and Madheshi people share many cultural practices, speak the same languages, have faith in the Hindu religion, and participate in the same festivals, however, they differ in their caste identities. Second, caste-based identity conflict links to the caste system of the Hindu culture and Nepal has a historical legacy of the caste system as well as the largest percentage of Hindus in the world. According to the NPHC report (2011), 81.3% of people practice the Hindu religion in Nepal. This percentage is the highest in the world compared with other countries as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Percentage of Hindus in Various Countries

Country	Hindu Practitioners (% of Population)
Nepal	81.3
India	80.5
Mauritius	54.0
Guyana	28.0
Fiji	27.9
Bhutan	25.0

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Therefore, there will be a high probability of getting accurate data related to the different aspects of the Hindu caste system. And third, after the second democratic movement in 2006–2007, caste-based identity conflicts in Nepal increased in all sectors of Nepalese society from the local level to parliament, civil society, and professional institutions. For example, the High Level State Restructuring Commission could not reach a unanimous agreement to address the identities of all people in the restructuring of the state. Similarly, all major INGOs and international development cooperation funded projects related to mitigating identity issues in Nepal such as taking on untouchability, indigeneity, and national restructuring. In addition, caste identity issues related to the state restructuring both in the first and Second Constituent Assembly remains a contentious subject, and all mass media are continuously providing high priority coverage of the caste identity crises. In this regard, Mishra (2014) wrote a detailed explanation about how the first Constituent Assembly could not reach a consensus on restructuring of the Nepalese state, and it is still a contentious issue in the Second Constituent Assembly:

Caste-based identity supporters such as the Maoists, caste-based political parties and institutions, the UN, and the EU among others, had suggested caste-based geographic divisions of Nepal, which they proposed based on the false racial identity (Madheshi-Pahadi identity) among the Nepalese people. They tried to disintegrate society based on caste rather than promote social integration.³⁵ (p. 6, translation mine)

Therefore, in sum, the reasons Nepal was selected as an appropriate research site included its proliferation of ethnic, cultural, and caste-based identity conflict issues and how the print media is influencing these conflict situations, the changing dynamics of Hindu caste-based politics, and the role of caste-based identity conflict and politics as well as the impact of the mass media on

³⁵ Originally published in the Nepalese language in *Kantipur*

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the contemporary peace process. This study focused on the print media in analyzing the influence of media on caste identity conflicts. The next section briefly overviews the selection parameters for the public and private media in Nepal and provides rationales for the selection of these two daily newspapers for the content analysis.

Public and Private Print Media

According to the Ministry of Communication and Information in Nepal, 360 FM radio stations were given permission to broadcast on April 5, 2014.³⁶ Therefore, Nepal is often cited as one of the most densely populated FM radio countries in the world. “Radio Nepal,” which is fully government-owned, has FM as well as AM broadcasting capacity and airs programming 24 hours per day. Similarly, the Nepal government has provided broadcasting licenses to 57 television stations including the government-owned, “Nepal Television.” In the case of print media, Press Council Nepal maintains registration information. According to Press Council Nepal,³⁷ 795 daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, and literary papers are published in Nepal. Table 5.2 provides details about the radio, television, and print newspaper aired, broadcasted, and published in Nepal respectively.

³⁶ The registration information of radio and television has been retrieved from the Ministry of Communication and Information. <http://www.moic.gov.np/pdf/fm-regular-2069-10-25.pdf> and <http://www.moic.gov.np/pdf/tv-list-2070-08-28.pdf>

³⁷ The information regarding the registration of print media was retrieved from the Press Council website, <http://www.presscouncilnepal.org/abcresult1.php>

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Table 5.2

Details about various media operating in Nepal, 2015

Types of Media		Numbers	Type	Reference
Newspapers	Public	2	1-English and 1-Nepali Daily	Nepal Press Council
	Private	795	Daily, Weekly, Bi-weekly, Monthly, and Literary	Nepal Press Council
Radio		1-AM and 360 FM Radio stations	1-FM and 1-AM Public; Rest-Private	Nepal Government
Television		57 licenses issued	2-Public; Rest-Private; Only 13 TV channels are broadcast at present.	Nepal Government
Telephone		20 million cellphones and 600,000 land lines	2G, 2.5G, 3G cellphones; Six operators are providing services	Data on February 28, 2015 from NTA
Internet		150,000 ADSL and more than 1.5 million cellphone	Public company provides landlines	Data on February 28, 2015 from NTA

The major and most highly-circulated print newspapers are published in Kathmandu. According to the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, 96 daily newspapers are regularly published and distributed throughout Nepal and the number of journalists registered is 8,013 (FNJ, 2011, p.

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34). The Nepal government also publishes a daily newspaper called *Gorakhapatra*, which is the oldest newspaper still in print. The government fully funds Radio Nepal, Nepal Television, and *Gorakhapatra*, and all three government media outlets have separate management teams; however, because of the appointments to the board of directors and management chiefs in all three outlets, most of the news and views in these outlets are indirectly and directly influenced and shared. They are also all under the control of the communication minister as well as the minister's political party.

Generally, the government of Nepal does not provide licenses to radio, television, and print media under a single corporation or single ownership to prevent monopolies over the news. Nevertheless, the Nepal government did give licenses of all three media outlets to the Kantipur Publications, a business group, which owns *Radio Kantipur*, *Kantipur* (a broadsheet daily), and *Kantipur Television*. Therefore, the Kantipur media house is the most powerful media and news conglomerate in Nepal. The Kantipur media house has the largest print circulation of 200,000 plus newspapers, the largest radio audience, and the second highest TRP (Target Rating Points) for their *Kantipur Television* in Nepal. Much of the news content is shared between their three media outlets. Because of the shared news and views in all three media outlets, this study selected the *Kantipur* newspaper for the content analysis to make comparisons with the public newspaper the *Gorakhapatra*.

The following are the reasons for which I selected two broadsheet dailies, *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur*, the former is the state-owned newspaper, and the latter is from the private sector:

- I. According to the 2011 national census, 3.33% of households have access to the Internet and 36.44% of households have televisions. The television access to national channels in rural areas is very low. The Internet and television access is mostly

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- available in urban and suburban areas. Since this research will analyze the media content over the past 11 years, and the television and Internet access in the past years remains low, the print media is more appealing due to accessibility.
- II. I selected the past 11-year period from 2002 through 2013, because during these years, Nepalese people had undergone three politically crucial phases. The first was the constitutional monarchy up to 2005; the second was the absolute monarchy from 2005 to 2006; and the third phase started in 2006 when rebel groups joined the parliamentary democracy after the state was declared a republic.
 - III. 50.82% of households have a minimum of one radio. Radio stations do not archive past programs while the print media does. Therefore, longitudinal research of past records of radio broadcast is not available.
 - IV. According to the Nepal Population and Housing Census (2011, p. 16), the literacy rate of Nepal is 65.9 %. Even though that is comparatively low, the readers I selected are the opinion leaders who are educated persons transferring and disseminating opinions to the general populace.
 - V. Subsequently, government print media “Gorakhapatra” and private print media “Kantipur” have radio as well as television channels under the same umbrella/ownership. Therefore, there is a high likelihood of overlap and similarity in their news and content in all three outlets.

In addition, the print media are still popular among opinion leaders who are the main disseminators and propagators of the information created in the mass media. Therefore, this dissertation mainly focuses on the impact of print media conveyed through opinion-leaders on Pahadi identity politics and conflicts in Nepal.

Selection Criteria for Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are “guided small group-discussions” (Babbie, 2008, p. 97) through qualitative interviewing and observation. The role and influence of the Nepalese media in caste-based identity conflict is a subjective matter rather than mathematically calculative. People have their own perspectives related to caste identity issues. There is not always a Yes or No answer to the caste-based identity questions, which have multifaceted relationships to culture, language, ethnicity, religion, shared festivals, and in-group or out-group conceptions. For the purposes of research, the understanding of caste identity in Nepalese society is complex, having various meanings for people in the different areas of Nepal with varied levels of understanding and sensitivities toward caste-based identity conflict. Therefore, focus group discussions within the major caste groups as well as with mixed-caste groups provided insights on the meaning and sensitivities toward identity in Nepal, their ways of understanding caste identity, their expectations regarding caste identity demands, and the ways they receive caste identity information.

The focus group discussions also helped to reorganize the questionnaire guide for the follow-up, semi-structured interviews. The focus group discussions gave me opportunities to develop relationships with the participants, which allowed for the subsequent selection of interviewees for semi-structured interviews. It also helped me analyze newspaper content on caste identity conflict as focus group discussion provided more clarity on the meaning of caste identity conflict. I selected nine districts to conduct focus group discussions for the following reasons: Panchthar—center of Limbu identity conflict; Morang—Pahadi and Madheshi people in equal proportion; Sankuwasabha—mountainous district with high potential of natural resource conflict; Dhanusa—center of Maithili language identity; Parsa—center of Madheshi identity;

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Kathmandu—inhabited by the majority of all castes and ethnicities; Jumla—extremely remote mountainous district; and Kailali—center of Tharu identity. Hence, I conducted nine focus group discussions in eight areas during my research even though I only planned six in the beginning.

Two focus group discussions were conducted in Kathmandu, one on February 14, 2013 and the other on September 28, 2013. All other focus group discussions were done between these two dates. Table 5.3 shows the dates and places of the focus group meetings.

Table 5.3

Date and Places of Focus Group Discussion Describing Types of Participants and Their Numbers

SN	Dates	Location District	Number of Participants	Remarks
1.	Feb. 14, 2013	Kathmandu	17	Intellectuals, political party leaders, mid-level development activists, trade unionists
2.	June 1, 2013	Sankhuwasabha	45	Political party leaders, government employees, a district judge, representatives of the local business community, caste-based organization members
3.	June 29, 2013	Morang	18	Trade unionists – Madheshi and Pahadi, political leaders, intellectuals

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4.	June 15, 2013	Parsa	16	Local Pahadi intellectuals, Madheshi leaders, union leaders, teachers
5.	July 13, 2013	Kailali	14	Tharu leaders, local political leaders
6.	August 3, 2013	Jumla	12	Local political leaders, NGO leaders, lawyers, student leaders
7.	July 6, 2013	Panchthar	24	Limbu leaders, a district judge and lawyers, political leaders, school teachers, local intellectuals
8.	Sep. 15, 2013	Janakpur	15	Maithili speaking leaders mostly Madheshi, local politicians
9.	Oct. 28, 2013	Kathmandu	16	Mostly Pahadi intellectuals of Madhesh

Area and Participant Selection for the Focus Group Discussions

This dissertation focused on major identity areas including caste, indigenous people, culture, language, and region as it related to conflict and the role of media. The focus group discussion areas were selected in those districts where the caste identity-based agitations occurred most frequently in the last decade; for example, Panchthar is the center of the Limbuwan activists, Janakpur is the center of the Madheshi and Mathili language activists, and Kailali is the center of the Tharuwan activists. Some districts were selected to represent the Terai, hills, and mountains, as well as the far-east and far-west. Therefore, nine focus group discussions were conducted in these eight areas shown in Figure 5.1: Panchthar in the Panchthar

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district, Biratnagar in the Morang district, Khandbari in the Sankhuwasabha district, Janakpur in the Dhanusha district, Kathmandu in the Kathmandu district, Bhairahawa in the Rupendehi district, Jumla in the Jumla district, and Dhangadhi in the Kailali district.

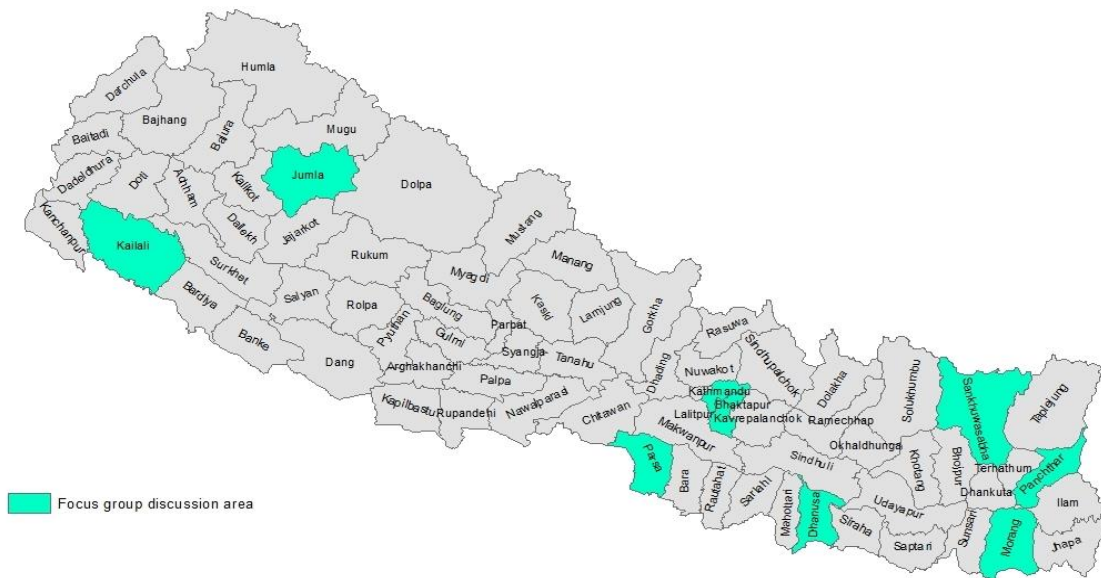


Figure 5.1: Districts Where Focus Group Discussions Were Conducted

The participants in focus group discussions were selected purposefully based on the suggestions of political leaders, “Madheshi” and “Pahadi” leaders, indigenous leaders, and concerned intellectuals (i.e., opinion leaders). The selections were based on their areas of specific political and caste membership. For example, in the Limbu majority area Panchthar, where the new Limbuwan province was being demanded by the Limbu indigenous people, Limbu political leaders and Limbu intellectuals were selected to participate in the focus group discussion. Similarly, in the Tharu majority area of Kailali, Tharu leaders and intellectuals were selected for the focus group. The selections were done using chain referral sampling. In this

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selection process, I spoke first with a few opinion leaders from the community in question at which time I explained the research project. For example, in the case of the focus group discussion in Kailali, I selected two Tharu leaders from the Tharuhat political party and I approached a Tharu NGO, Tharu Kalyankari Sabha.³⁸ These two institutions have historical significance to the Tharu community and have both participated in demanding a separate Tharu province. From their suggestions, I further contacted other people, most of whom were opinion leaders from that community. These referrals led to focus group discussions with between 12 and 45 participant as shown in Table 5.3.

Generally, each focus group had between six and 15 participants and a moderator. However, in two of the focus group discussions, there were a large number of participants, 45 and 24. In particular, in these two districts, Sankhuwasabha and Panchthar respectively, local leaders who had been approached to participate in the discussions had, on their own, debated the research topic in their institutions before attending. This led to a dramatic increase in the number of interested study participants in these two cases. The perceived importance of the topic encouraged a high, and largely unanticipated, turnout in these two instances. The Panchthar district is a very sensitive area of the Limbu indigenous people who have been demanding their identity-based province since 1964. They are the first in Nepal to demand an identity-based province. As described earlier, the Limbu have been mostly working in the security sector since the First World War and are still found in the British Army, Indian Army, and Nepalese Army. These people are more aggressive in their demands and knew a focus group discussion program on caste identity issues would be a good forum to get their message out and, because of this,

³⁸ The Tharuhat political party has more than 100,000 members mostly from the Tharu indigenous people. One of their major demands is the creation of Tharuwan province with special rights to Tharu in the new constitution.

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many leaders voluntarily and forcefully joined the discussion. Because of the large number of participants, the focus group discussion lasted more than three hours. Moreover, the large number of participations provided many options when selecting interviewees for the semi-structured interviews.

Normally, I tried to select focus group participants from a mix of male and female, politicians and intellectuals, NGO-leaders and development workers, and trade-unionists and school teachers. In all focus group discussions, these combinations were managed except in the case of Jumla. In Jumla, all participants were male. Because very few female activists and politicians were involved in the political parties of that district, it was not possible to attract female participants to the discussion. Figure 5.2 shows the focus group discussion in Jumla.



Figure 5.2: Focus group discussion meeting in Jumla district on August 3, 2013

Selection of Opinion Leaders for Interviews

As discussed earlier, opinion leaders are idea-disseminators and respected leaders within society, often propaganda creators, and are influential persons in the community. In the Nepalese context, I selected political leaders, NGO-activists, trade-unionists, teachers, professionals, indigenous leaders, and local influential persons such as media personalities, elders, religious leaders, teachers, and the wealthy as opinion leaders. The opinion leaders were also selected for interviews on the basis of chain referral sampling. The focus group discussions were very helpful in the selection of interviewees. Many participants who attended the focus group discussions were selected for further follow-up, semi-structured interviewing. Table 5.4 shows the categories of opinion leaders based on their ethnicity, caste, and language.

Table 5.4

The Caste and Ethnicity of Interviewees

Caste/Ethnicity of Interviewees	No. of Numbers	Region/District	Remarks
Brahmin/Chhetri	45	All regions, mainly from Madhesh areas and Kathmandu	Located throughout Nepal
Dalit/Bishwakarma, Nepali, Sharki, Damai	7	Kathmandu, Janakpur	Located throughout Nepal
Madheshi/Yadav, Jha, Giri, Thakur, Gupta, Mishra, Karn	28	Saptari, Siraha, Mahottra, Dhanusha, Parsa, Nawalparasi, Rupendehi,	Concentrated in the Terai areas

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		Kathmandu	
Tharu/Chaudhari, Gachhedar	12	Kailali, Dang, Banke, Saptari, Morang, Kathmandu	Concentrated in the east, mid-, and far-west areas
Indigenous/Limbu, Gurung, Newar, Rai	14	Panchthar, Ilam, Morang, Kathmandu	Eastern, mid-, and western hills, mountains, and the Kathmandu Valley
People of Sudurpaschim (Far- western region)	15	Jumla, Kailali, Kathmandu	Western and far- western areas

I initially intended to interview more than 150 people, but I was able to complete 121 interviews. Opinion leaders are busy and therefore, their appointments proved difficult to schedule. Multiple approaches were used to gain access to these hard-to-reach opinion leaders, for example, I attempted four times to get an appointment with high-level political figures.

Figure 5.3 shows the ethnic-cultural identity of all 121 interviewees. I tried to capture almost all significant groups for the semi-structured interviews. Seven interviewees did not mention their caste and ethnicity in the guided interview. The highest numbers of interview participants were from the Dalit caste followed by Madheshi.

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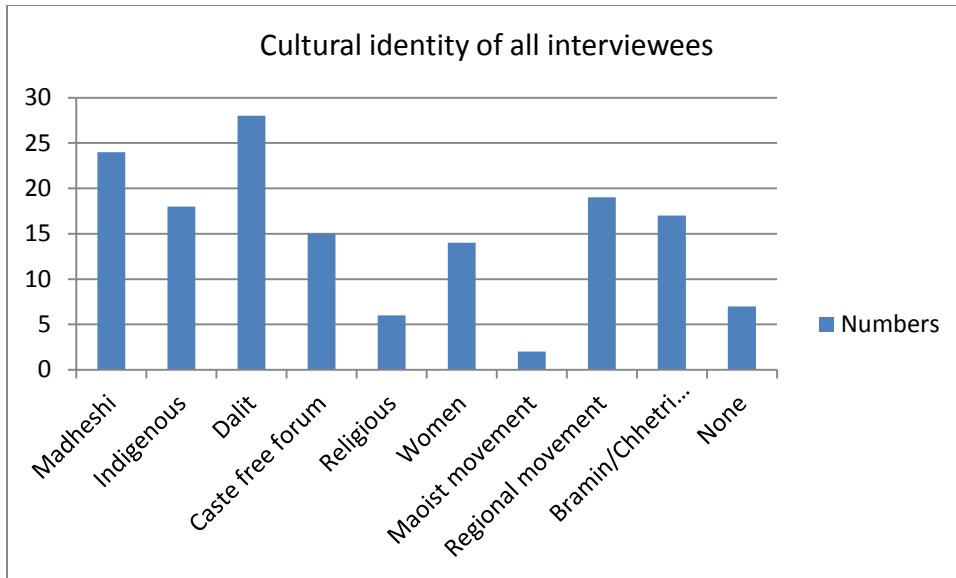


Figure 5.3: Caste, Cultural, Religious, Indigenous, and Regional Identity of Interviewees

Similarly, Figure 5.4 shows interviewees' involvement in different political and social institutions. Six interviewees did not mention their involvement in any of the political parties or institutions. The highest numbers of interviewees were from the political parties followed by the caste and ethnic identity-based organizations.

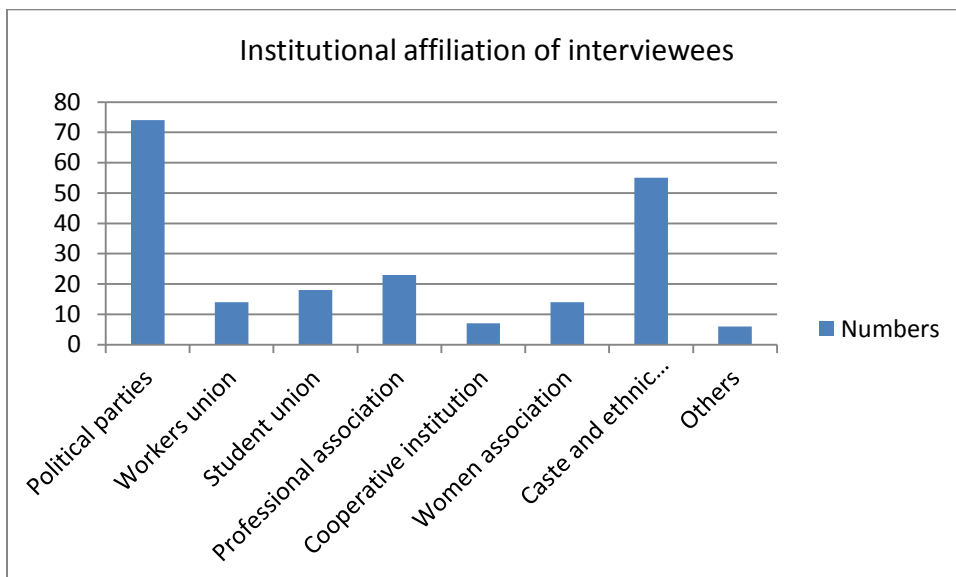


Figure 5.4: Political and Institutional Affiliations of Interviewees

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Figure 5.5 shows the interviewees' involvement in various social and political activities. All the interviewees had one or more involvements in the different political and social activities. Between 30 and 45 interviewees in this research project were involved in agitation, mass rally, and political campaign or rights movements.

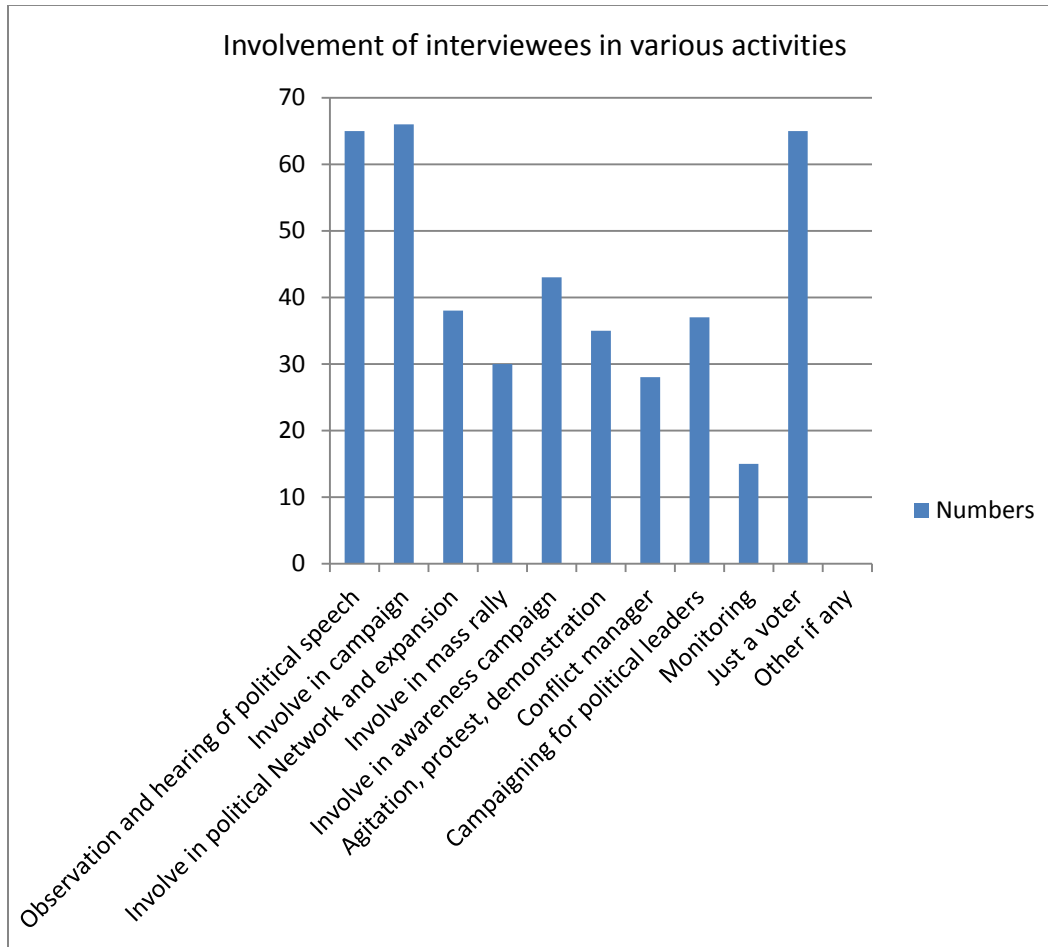


Figure 5.5: Interviewees' Participation in Various Activities

Likewise, sixty interviewees expressed that they were involved in mainstream socio-economic and political activities in Nepalese society. Forty-one participants denied that they were left out of the mainstream socio-economic development of the society. Among the opinion

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leaders interviewed were chairpersons or spokespersons from major political parties. Some were former cabinet ministers such as the Education Minister Dinanath Sharma, the Industry Minister Anil Jha, the Labor Minister Ms. Sarita Giri, and the Communication Minister Sankar Pokhrel. One interviewee was appointed as Cabinet Minister in the present cabinet. They represented all the major political parties as well as the Madheshi parties. Among high-ranking political leaders, one was female and all the others were male. A district judge was the top high-ranking official who was interviewed in Panchthar. Figure 5.6 shows the geographic location of the majority of the interviewees.

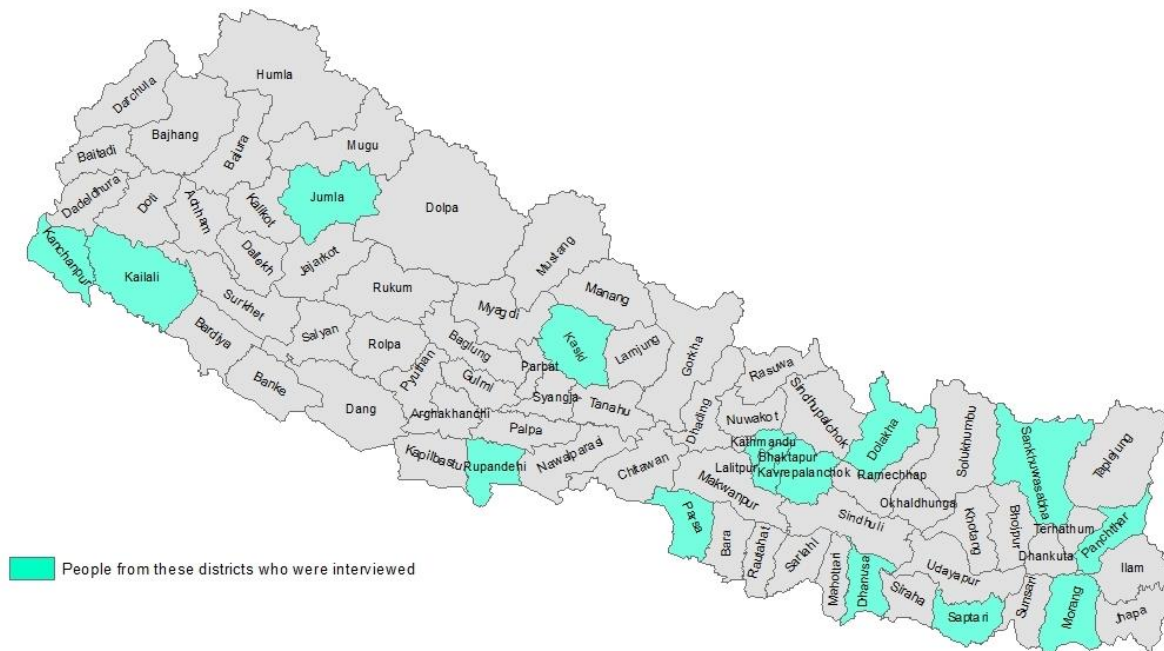


Figure 5.6: Districts Where Semi-Structured Interviews Were Conducted

Use of INSEC Dataset

The Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) dataset between 2007 and 2013 was used in this research. I selected the last seven years because the caste-based identity conflicts were accelerated in these years. INSEC maintains a tremendous amount of data in the form of the *Human Rights Yearbook*. Recent data after 2010 are available in soft digital format while prior to this date only hardcopies exist. I selected data related to Dalit issues, caste discrimination issues, the Madheshi movement, and forced displacement during and after the Madheshi movement. These data are important in describing the situation and analyzing the caste- and ethnicity-related events over the last seven years. I selected the last seven years of caste-related events in Nepal to better understand recent and changing trends in caste discrimination. According to the INSEC Chairman, Subodh Pyakurel, the INSEC data are based on the reports received from INSEC's representatives who are working in all district headquarters and six regional offices. The district representatives, one in each district except in INSEC's regional center, are part-time reporters. In the regional offices, these reporters are full-time employees, whereas in the remaining 69 district headquarters, reporters are part-time employees. Most of these part-time employees are the district representatives of public or private newspapers. According to Chairman Pyakurel, the representatives are selected from newspaper reporters due to their reliability and professional experience in reporting on significant events. The representatives have to send firsthand information of human rights events to the INSEC headquarters. The reports are reorganized and recorded in the computer for further analysis. Every year, the report is published on July 31, which holds one year's worth (between April 15 and April 14 of the following year) of human rights violation events. I purposefully selected seven representative cases from the INSEC database to analyze, which were related to caste and ethnic issues, for a detailed content analysis.

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I then searched these events in the national daily newspapers of that date for further examination of how these events were treated in the newspapers, allowing for a measurement of importance and accuracy.

Similarly, specific reports related to caste identity conflict events, notes, and annual reports were also examined in this study. Event specific reports such as the Madheshi movement, the Maoist massacre of Madheshi people in Rautahat district, social exclusion of Dalits from upper castes in Siraha district around the issue of the forceful responsibility of dead animals of the community, forced internal displacement during the Maoist movement, and media seizure reports during King Gyanendra's regime were all analyzed as events related to caste identity conflict. I then held several meetings and discussions with the reporters, program officers, information receivers, and information analyzers of the INSEC dataset. These meetings provided context and elaboration of important concepts related to the handling and organization of collected events, information, and reports as well as their approaches to data processing.

Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

Eight focus group discussions were conducted within mixed caste and cultural groups and one focus group discussion was conducted with Pahadi opinion leaders of the Terai only. Opinion leaders were highly enthusiastic to attend and discuss caste-related issues. In the Limbuwan areas, the focus group discussion turned into a mass meeting instead. Some people from the Limbu community aggressively participated and even threatened me and the higher caste leaders during the meeting. The district judge and the chief district officer who were also participants in the discussion neutralized the situation. In all focus group discussions, priority questions included: What is the meaning of caste identity to your community? How did the caste identity issue emerge in Nepalese society? What are the major demands related to caste identity

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in the region? What are the effects of caste identity conflict on your community and Nepal as a whole? How do you learn about caste identity issues in Nepal? How do you personally engage in caste identity movements? What are your main sources of information related to caste-based identity conflict? What do you think about the future of caste identity conflict in the various regions of Nepal?

In the mixed-culture focus group discussions, participants were more guarded and careful about their responses except in the Limbuwan focus group meeting. In one focus group discussion, where only Pahadi opinion leaders participated, participants were more concerned about the suppression they suffered during the Madheshi movement by Madheshi people. In this discussion, Pahadi participants were unanimous in their opinions. It provided them an opportunity to discuss their shared experiences related to suppression, psychological threats, forced migration, and property loss during the Madheshi movement. During the discussion, I felt that the focus groups were used as a forum for discussing the challenges the Pahadi people faced during the Madheshi movement. As the facilitator, it was difficult for me to mediate the discussion process and redirect back to the questions outlined above. From the focus group discussion which was carried out within the Pahadi community, I learned that in any discussion, if it is carried out on the conflict topic and if the participants are from the conflict community, the planned discussion questions might not be important to the participants; nevertheless, the participants' routed the discussions in the direction of the various conflict stories they experienced in the past. In the process, I learned much from the many untold past conflict events and was better able to understand the deeper concepts and concerns related to the conflict issues.

Participants were provided tea and tiffin after the discussions. In Jumla, participants were provided lunch because of the discussion timing which was in the morning. All focus group

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discussions were voluntary and participants were provided informed written consent in the Nepali language. Issues raised in the discussions were both noted and digitally recorded for later transcription. In conclusion, all focus group discussions provided me insights on the various aspects of caste-identity, how the Pahadi and Madheshi think about caste identity rights, quota rights, and political rights. Many of them shared caste discrimination stories, which were influential in their lives. This helped me to revise my semi-structured interview guide, organize interviews, and develop networks to select interviewees.

Approach to Analysis

I analyzed the contents published in one public and one private print media between 2002 and 2013. The selection of one weeks' worth of news stories per year was selected at random. Both contents were analyzed according to areas covered, number of stories, content—positive or negative toward caste identity such as caste-based restructuring of the state—and the priority of news (where it appeared in the paper; how much space was dedicated to the story). Table 5.5 gives the total number of pages of both *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur* dailies as well as other newspapers' contents that were analyzed.

Table 5.5

Number of newspapers and pages which were analyzed

Newspapers	Number of issue	Pages
<i>Gorakhapatra</i>	77 (One week each year over 11 years) 30 (15 days before and after the First CA dissolved) 9 (After the seizure of Kantipur FM Radio during the Royal coup)	3248
<i>Kantipur</i>	77 (One week each year over 11 years)	1856

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30 (15 days before and after the First CA dissolved)

9 (After the seizure of Kantipur FM Radio during the Royal coup)

Other newspapers 42 480

during the

Madhesh uprising

Content Analysis of Public Media

The Nepal government runs all three types of media outlets: print, radio, and television. The Government established a corporation named Gorakhpatra Sansthan in 1901 as their mass media umbrella organization. Gorakhpatra Sansthan publishes two daily newspapers, one in English and the other Nepali. They also publish three other newspapers on a weekly and monthly basis. The weekly and monthly newspapers are published in three different categories: Madhupark (literary), Muna (children interests), and Yubamanch (young generation focused). *Gorakhpatra* as a daily newspaper has been published in Nepali since 1960. The chief editors, board of directors, and general manager are appointed by the government. These appointees are usually politically affiliated with the minister who makes the appointments. In this sense, the public media is more or less influenced by the information and communication minister and the political party which he or she is affiliated. *Gorakhpatra* has 75 district-networks connected to an electronic medium as well. They publish 60,000 hardcopies of their newspaper daily. All government departments and government-run corporations publish their notices, information, advertisements, and legal directives in *Gorakhpatra*. Therefore, people have to rely on *Gorakhpatra* for all government-related official notices. To capture trends in the caste-related news, I analyzed news released between 2002 and 2013. I chose the Nepalese version of the

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publication *Gorakhapatra* because of its wide range of circulation in Nepal. For the content analysis over the 11-year period, I selected at random one week in each year and investigated all caste-based identity conflict related news stories and editorials. Table 5.6 shows years and dates of the newspapers that I analyzed.

Table 5.6

Content Analysis of Gorakhapatra Publication with Dates Selected

Year of <i>Gorakhapatra</i>	News reviewed dates
2002	April 16–22
2003	April 25–May 1
2004	July 24–30
2005	June 3–9
2006	September 24–30
2007	June 7–13
2008	December 7–13
2009	September 2–8
2011	February 23 to March 1
2011	May 7–13
2013	February 12–18

Over these dates, the numbers of caste-based identity conflicts were counted, what page the stories appeared on were noted, the thematic areas covered were coded, and the impact factor was recorded (i.e., whether the story was negative and had the potential to increase caste conflict

or if it was a positive news story related to the cessation of conflict or other positive stories).

Appendix A shows the code book for the content analysis of the newspaper reports.

Content Analysis of Private Media

Kantipur is published by the Kantipur Publications House Private Limited, which was established in 1993 in Kathmandu, Nepal. *Kantipur* is published in Nepali whereas Additionally, The *Kathmandu Post* is published as a broadsheet daily in English. Kantipur FM Radio and Kantipur Television are aired and broadcast under the same Kantipur Media Group. Many of the district representatives and news reporters work for these three media outlets. More than 200,000 hardcopies of *Kantipur* and 35,000 copies of *Kathmandu Post* are circulated daily. They also produce an e-paper, *ekantipur* that can be electronically accessed since 2009. The Kantipur group is privately owned and it is run by private sector professionals. It is believed that the Kantipur Media Group is pro-democratic and anti-Maoist; however, officially, they claim that they are neutral, unbiased, and professional. The editorials and priority of the news and views used to be highly critical of the Maoists and communal violence and in favor of democracy in Nepal. Because of this stance, the Kantipur publication house was attacked and vandalized by the Maoist cadets and trade unions several times.³⁹

³⁹ For example, (i) a group of Madheshi students burned copies of “*The Kathmandu Post*” on July 21, 2006.

Retrieved from: http://www.ifex.org/nepal/2006/07/24/members_of_student_organisation/

(ii) Madheshi activists intercepted “*Kantipur*” publication vehicles and set them on fire on August 23, 2009.

Retrieved from: http://www.ifex.org/nepal/2009/08/25/papers_burned/

(iii) *Kantipur* and *Annapurna Post* newspapers were torched on May 12, 2012 by Madheshi activists. Retrieved from: <http://www.ekantipur.com/2012/05/24/top-story/madheshi-front-torches-kantipur-daily-annapurna-post-in-siraha/354447.html>

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To capture the trends of caste-based identity conflict related news, I analyzed the news from *Kantipur* based on its content between 2002 and 2013—the same period as *Gorakhapatra*. Because of the high circulation of *Kantipur* compared to the *Kathmandu Post* as well as its accessibility for most of the Nepalese readership, I chose to analyze the Nepalese version. I randomly selected one week per year over 11 years to analyze the contents. Table 5.7 shows years and specific days selected at random for content analysis. I randomly selected separate one-week dates for *Kantipur* and *Gorakhapatra* to get diversified caste identity conflict stories.

Table 5.7

Years and Randomly Selected Dates for the Content Analysis of the Kantipur Daily

Year of <i>Kantipur</i>	News reviewed dates
2002	Nov. 18–24
2003	June 19–25
2005	October 24–30
2006	March 5–11
2007	April 26–May1
2008	February 15–21
2008	December 8–14
2009	September 21–October 1
2011	January 21–27
2011	September 4–10
2013	September 20–26

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Over these dates, the numbers of caste-based identity conflicts were counted, on what pages the stories appeared were noted, the thematic areas covered were coded, and the impact factor was recorded (i.e., whether the story was negative and had the potential to increase caste conflict or if it was a positive news story related to the cessation of conflict or other positive stories). These codes are the same (see Appendix A) as those used for the state-run *Gorakhpatra* discussed above. These consistencies are important for comparative purposes in order to demonstrate similarities and differences between the mass print media's coverage of caste-based identity conflict from public and private outlets.

The coverage from both the public and private media during the three month (55 day) Madheshi movement between January 16 and March 9, 2007 were additionally selected and analyzed in detail. During this period, all the main daily newspapers and two of the highly popular bi-weekly magazines were analyzed for content. Similarly, a detailed content analysis of public and private newspapers was also carried out for two weeks just before and after the declaration of the end of the First Constituent Assembly. In this four-week period, the effects and coverage of the termination of the First Constituent Assembly on caste-based identity conflict was coded. In both these cases, the unit of analysis was the same as those used for the state-run *Gorakhpatra* discussed above.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The first focus group discussion, which was conducted in Kathmandu on February 14, 2013, was critical in assisting me to revise my semi-structured interview guide. This focus group discussion was done prior to the dissertation proposal defense as a pilot and helped strengthen the core concepts that were most important to contemporary Nepal. Initially, I developed a 14-page interview guide with five open-ended questions. In the first focus group meeting,

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participants suggested that more than a 30-minute voluntary interview was too long and therefore, interviewees would not agree to sit for so many questions. So, I reduced the interview guide to 10.5 pages and revised the open-ended questions as well. The five open-ended questions were reduced to four. In this period of revision, the focus was shifted to concentrate on caste-based issues, particularly conflict, and the role of mass print media on these caste-based identity conflicts. Some extra information related to physical and geographical issues were deleted without losing track of the core question. Similarly, the four open-ended questions were revised and finalized.⁴⁰ They directly related to caste identity conflict and the media.

I conducted most of the semi-structured interviews in the areas where I organized the focus group meetings. The first focus group meeting was conducted in order to obtain perceptions on the caste identity concept and feedback on caste and media issues. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted during and after the second focus group meeting. In the second focus group meeting, which was carried out in Kathmandu, opinion leaders were the residents of either Kathmandu or outside districts (see Table 5.1). The final focus group meeting was conducted among the Pahadi opinion leaders, most of whom had migrated during the Madheshi movement. A total 121 opinion leaders were interviewed which is 19% less than the proposed plan (see Table 5.4). As I did interviews with the first 40 to 50 people, various perspectives on caste identity issues appeared. Further, continuing with interviews and beginning

⁴⁰ The four open-ended questions were: (1) What do you think about the influence of print media in reshaping your knowledge on the caste system? (2) How do you use the information received from print media for the cause of caste identity rights? (3) How do you connect with your group/people? (4) Does the media influence your thoughts regarding caste-based identity conflict issues? If yes, how?

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my analysis of the open-ended answers, a pattern started emerging. When I completed 110 interviews, I realized I had hit a saturation point with no new responses emerging. Once I realized that I would not get any new information or perceptions on caste-identity conflict, I concluded the interview process.

Research Ethics

The measurement of the opinion leaders' perceptions in this research is linked to many cultural questions as well as past events related to caste-based identity conflicts in Nepal. The caste/"Pahadi" issue is culturally sensitive because of its interconnection with socio-historical discrimination. Therefore, I took special precautions about the cultural and conflict sensitivity in the process of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews by facilitating caste-provocative questions indirectly. First, I conveyed details about my study to the participants before the start of focus group discussions and interviews. In this research, I also clearly mentioned the purpose statement in the local language through the informed consent process.

In the process of focus group discussions, I controlled the process so that each participant had an opportunity to express their views equally. Moreover, as Creswell (2003) mentioned, participants would not be purposefully "put at risk" (p. 64) and Babbie (2008) urged "social research should never injure the people being studied" (p. 68); I carefully refrained from any activities that put participants at risk during the entire process of fieldwork. More importantly, in caste-sensitive issues, "right to privacy" (Babbie, 2008, p. 74) was also maintained. I informed all participants about the data collection devices and activities such as hard paper notes or softcopy equipment, a recorder, and digital camera. All data provided was kept confidential throughout and made anonymous in written reports.

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No names were included on the interview forms however, with the permission of the interviewees, I did put some of the participants' names in my dissertation, but only those of public officials. I stored the hard copy data in a locked location, and the digital copy under a secured password. Finally, the research was fully conducted under the IRB ethical guidelines. A consent form in both English and the Nepalese languages were provided to each interviewee before conducting interviews.

The next chapter focuses on the role of print media and opinion leaders' views about caste-based identity conflict in Nepal. I also compare how both the public and private media depict caste identity conflict. Finally, I analyze how the media influences opinion leaders.

CHAPTER 6

NEPALESE CASTE IDENTITY CONFLICT REPRESENTED IN NEWSPAPER CONTENT

General Findings of Caste Identity Conflict in Print Media

This chapter presents the findings related to the role of print media in caste identity conflict in Nepal. The chapter explores how caste identity conflict is reported in the public and private media. The number of caste-related news stories were counted and compared with other news outlets. In addition, two major cases, one related to the Kantipur FM Radio seizure, and the second, related to the termination of the first Constituent Assembly, are analyzed in both public and private print media. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how caste identity conflict is portrayed in the public versus private print media.

Content Related to Caste Identity Conflict Found in Public Print Media

(Gorakhapatra)

As mentioned earlier, *Gorakhapatra* is owned by the government. Therefore, in general, *Gorakhapatra* covers mostly government-related news, and it provides views and analysis on the political direction and interests of the communication minister and her related party. I chose to examine 11 years' worth of content from this newspaper, 2002 to 2013. Over this period, Nepal experienced a number of political institutions including a constitutional monarchy with multi-party democracy from 2002 to 2005, an absolute monarchy from February 2005 to April 2006, a transitional government from a constitutional monarchy to a republic from 2006 to 2008, and a republic from 2008 to 2013. During 2002 to 2005, very little news on caste discrimination and caste identity conflict—the central focus of my overall argument related to caste-based identity conflict—was found in the newspapers. During this time, based on my analysis, there was little to no caste identity conflict news being published by the government. This suggests that perhaps

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there were few caste-based identity conflict events happening in Nepalese society leaving no news to report, or that these types of stories were being purposefully censored or given low priority. During the absolute monarchy from 2005 to 2006, violent conflict-related news with Maoists and political disturbances served as a reoccurring theme such as agitations and strikes called for by political parties such as the Nepali Congress or United Marxist-Leninist (UML). These violent clashes received the majority of the coverage. During this absolute monarchy period, *Gorakhapatra* pleaded for a “New Democracy” as argued by the king which is nothing but another type of autocracy. Under the New Democracy, the followers of the king argued that without a monarchy, the existence of the Nepal state would not be possible because of the two powerful neighboring countries, India and China, intervening in domestic politics. Only a king was able to balance the neighboring powers to safeguard the nation. Caste-based identity conflict coverage in the paper was almost nil during the absolute monarchy regime.

After the fall of the absolute monarchy and during the transition from the constitutional monarchy to the republican state, the caste identity issues and caste identity conflict slowly emerged based on the amount of newspaper coverage found. Later, the numbers and areas covered relating to caste-based identity conflict increased, reaching its highest level in the last month of the first Constituent Assembly. Once the first Constituent Assembly dissolved, the caste-based identity conflict news coverage drastically reduced in the newspaper. Appendix B, Table B.1 shows the details of the randomly selected news from *Gorakhapatra* from 2002 to 2013, especially the frequency trends just mentioned. I provide counts of the total number of news stories about caste identity conflict, Dalits, indigenous, quotas, state restructuring, and the overall percentage related to caste identity conflict issues covered in *Gorakhapatra* from each selected week in Table 6.1. The yearly trends are represented in Figure 6.1. It shows that the

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number of caste-based identity and indigenous-based identity conflict news stories started to increase in mid-2006 and reached their height in 2009. After 2009, the numbers and coverage areas reduced substantially, but it has remained a topic of interest covered by *Gorakhapatra* since its height. The Maoist party seems to be the main propagator of caste-based identity politics based on these news stories as well as some other regional Madheshi political parties and some local indigenous political parties.

After the fall of the absolute monarchy on April 25, 2006, a joint interim government of all major political parties, including the Maoist party, was formed. The Maoists, who campaigned under caste-based identity issues, were extensively covered by all the media outlets including the daily newspapers, especially after the Maoists were brought into the peace process. The public media outlets, which were often headed by Maoist leaders in the Information and Communication Ministry in 2006 during the interim government, gave priority to caste-based identity news and views, mostly in favor of a caste-based identity restructuring, quota rights, and special political rights for castes throughout the various proposed provinces such as Limbuwan, Tamsaling, Magarat, Newa, One-Madhesh-One-Province, and Tharuwan. On the other hand, the private media, Kantipur, published news and views critical of caste-based identity issues, mostly against the Maoist's views about caste-based identity restructuring and special caste rights in political representation. Table 6.1 provides the number of caste-based identity conflict news items covered by *Gorakhapatra* from a randomly selected week each year between 2002 and 2013.

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Table 6.1

Number of Caste-Based Identity Conflict News Stories in Gorakhpatra between 2002 and 2013

(based on one week of coverage per year)

Weeks Selected per Year	Number of News Stories on Caste Conflict	Total Number of News Stories (Gorakhpatra)	Average Percentage of Caste-Based Identity Conflict Coverage
2002, April 16-22	1	210	0.1
2003, April 25-May 1	3	242	1
2004, July 24-30	5	299	1
2005, June 3-9	2	280	1
2006, Sep. 24-30	9	354	12
2007, June 7-13	23	339	18
2008, Dec. 7-13	20	208	25
2009, Sep. 2-8	44	280	50
2011, Feb. 23-March 1	16	283	22
2011, May 7-13	22	236	30
2013, Feb. 12-18	15	314	20

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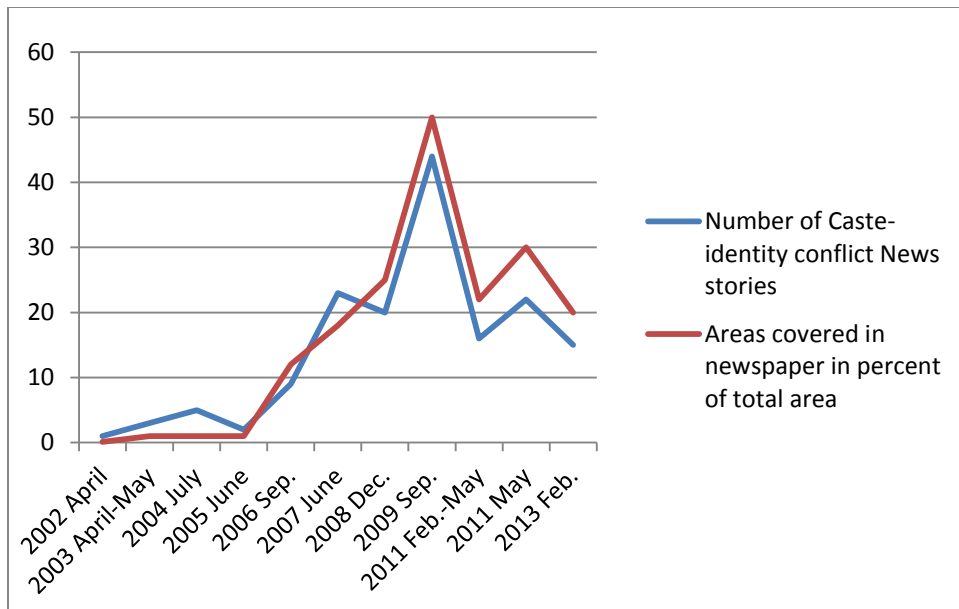


Figure 6.1: Number of Caste-Based Identity Conflict News Stories and Average Percentage of Coverage in *Gorakhpatra*

Content Related to Caste-Based Identity Conflict Found in the Private Print

Media (*Kantipur*)

I examined one randomly selected week per year of news coverage over a 12-year period from the privately-owned *Kantipur* between 2002 and 2013. In this duration, four different political changes are covered: the constitutional monarchy with multi-party democracy from 2002 to 2005, the absolute monarchy from February 2005 to April 2006, the transition from the constitutional monarchy to the republic from 2006 to 2008, and the republic in 2008 to 2012. During 2002 to 2005 periods, very little news related to caste-based identity conflict or Dalit discrimination was found. Sporadically, there was some coverage related to Madheshi and indigenous issues. During the absolute monarchy from 2005 to 2006, violent conflict-related news on the underground Maoist party and political disturbances such as agitations and strikes called for by legitimate political parties constituted the majority of news items found in print

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media. *Kantipur* supported the democratic movements organized by democratic parties. Because of the *Kantipur*'s strong negative coverage against the absolute monarchy, the king's government harassed the *Kantipur* media house. The government seized the *Kantipur* FM Radio station, cut off the paper subsidies, stopped the advertisement support, and created indirect security threats against *Kantipur* reporters (e.g., unknown telephone threats, suing them for their coverage). After the fall of the absolute monarchy and during the transition from the constitutional monarchy to the republican state, coverage of caste-based identity conflict issues rapidly increased in the newspaper. Subsequently, the numbers and areas covered as well as the importance placed on these stories increased reaching their highest levels in the last month of the First Constituent Assembly. Once the First Constituent Assembly dissolved, the caste-based identity conflict news was drastically reduced in the newspaper. Appendix 2 shows the details of the news coverage in *Kantipur* from 2002 to 2012, including the frequency trends and how long they lasted. Table 6.2 shows the total number of news stories from one randomly selected week each year from 2002 to 2012. Figure 6.2 shows the emergent trends mentioned above.

Table 6.2

Number of Caste-Based Identity Conflict News Stories in Kantipur between 2002 and 2012

(based on one week of coverage per year)

Weeks Selected per Year	Number of News Stories on Caste Conflict	Total Number of News Stories (<i>Kantipur</i>)	Average Percentage of Caste-Based Identity Conflict Coverage
2002, Nov. 18-24	0	339	0

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2003, June 19-25	3	276	1
2005, Oct. 24-30	5	281	2
2006, March 5-11	2	278	1
2007, April 26-May1	10	240	15
2008, Feb 15-21	61	262	80
2008, Dec. 8-14	43	223	55
2009, Sep. 21-26 & Oct. 1	57	312	70
2011, Jan. 21-27	17	213	30
2011, Sep. 4-10	34	291	40
2012, Sep. 20-26	20	292	28

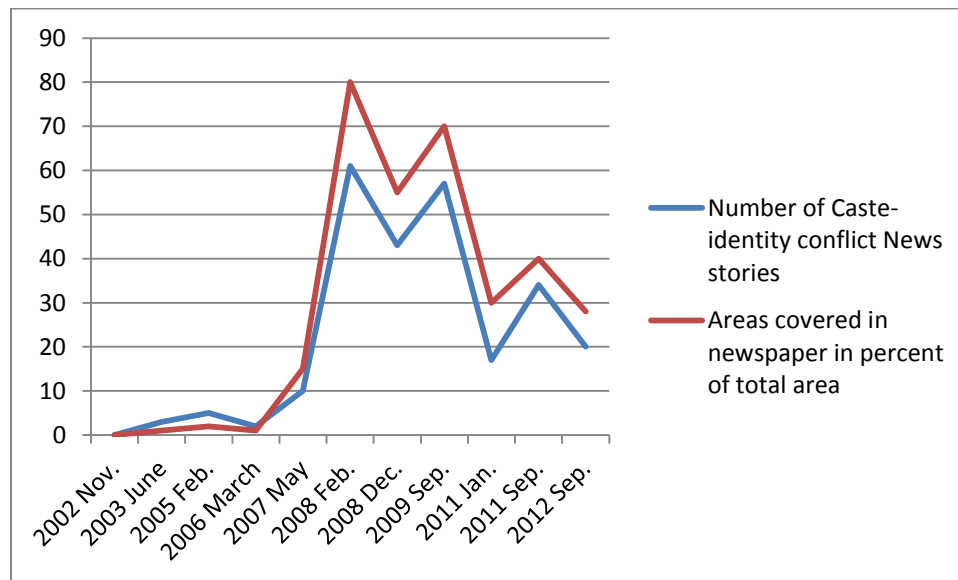


Figure 6.2: Numbers of Caste-Based Identity Conflict News Stories and Average Percentage of Coverage in *Kantipur*

Public versus Private Media: After the Kantipur FM Radio Seizure

After King Gyanendra seized political power in February 2005, he further strengthened his grip on the legislature, government, and the media. The private media, especially *Kantipur*, was the prime target because of the pro-democratic leaning of the Kantipur publishing house. Because of the influence of Kantipur media on Nepalese society (CPJ Report, 2005, Para. 8), the King's government seized Kantipur FM as a threat to other private media companies in Nepal. Table 6.3 shows a nine-day content analysis of *Kantipur* after the Nepal military seized the radio on October 21, 2005. The Kantipur media house had begun a deliberate campaign in favor of the restoration of democracy and human rights. All three outlets of the Kantipur media house including the FM radio, television, and print newspaper drove a huge integrated campaign against the political establishment to overtake King Gyanendra.

The military's seizure of Kantipur Radio backfired for the monarchy's political establishment by creating huge international pressure on the king. *Kantipur* as well as all the national and international media and institutions such as the UN, EU, and International Federation of Journalists vigorously campaigned worldwide against this media seizure. For instance, stories circulated in the United States (Oct 25, 2005);⁴¹ *BBC* highlighted the seizure news on Oct 27, 2005;⁴² and CPJ condemned the raid on Radio Sagarmatha on November 28, 2005.⁴³ Later, the government was forced to withdraw their move against Kantipur and it ultimately returned all their equipment that had been commandeered during the raid.

⁴¹ For details please refer to (retrieved on March 14, 2015): <http://web.international.ucla.edu/asia/article/32279>

⁴² For details please refer to (retrieved on March 14, 2015): http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4380854.stm

⁴³ For details please refer to (retrieved on March 14, 2015): <https://cpj.org/2005/11/cpj-condemns-raid-on-radio-sagarmatha.php>

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Table 6.3

Content Analysis of Kantipur Daily after the Seizure of Kantipur FM Radio

Dates	Total	Number of News	Media	Coverage about the seizure
(Oct. 2005)	Number	Stories about	Seizure	news stories
	of News	Caste, Dalit, or	Related	
	Stories	Indigenous Issues	News	
22	39	0	16	Front page ³ / ₄ covered by the news, 2 nd page 100% covered, and 3rd page 90% covered; 8 photos related to the seizure activities; 1 cartoon
23	58	0	23	Front page editorial, front page with 5 news stories and 95% covered, 6 photos, 2 cartoons
24	53	1	15	Front page news, 4 stories; 6 photos; 2 cartoons
25	58	0	20	Front page news, 6 stories; 5 photos; 1 cartoon
26	48	0	17	Front page news, 5 stories, 6 photos
27	59	2	19	Front page news, 7 stories; 8 photos; 1 cartoon

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28	44	0	22	Front page news, 8 stories; 7 photos, 1 cartoon
29	50	1	11	Front page news. 3 stories; 4 photos
30	69	1	13	Front page news, 3 stories; 5 photos

It can be observed that the seizure news was given high importance, dedicating more than 70% of the front-page space every day to its coverage during this period. In addition, the whole newspaper (more than 80%) was blanketed with media seizure news. Other private newspapers had also given priority to the seizure news. All types of news covered in the *Kantipur* after the seizure of Radio Kantipur FM by the Nepalese military were analyzed on the basis of covered areas and percentage of coverage (Table 6.3). Figure 6.3 and Table 6.4 show the percentage of three different categories of news covered in *Kantipur* over this period.

Table 6.4

Total Areas Covered by the News Related to the Seizure of Kantipur FM Radio

Dates	Caste	Media Seizure	Other	Remarks
(Oct. 2005)	Related News (%)	Related News (%)	News (%)	
22	0	80	20	The newspaper areas covered included news, cartoons, and photos.
23	0	85	15	

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24	4	70	26
25	0	75	25
26	0	60	40
27	7	65	28
28	0	85	15
29	4	45	51
30	4	35	61

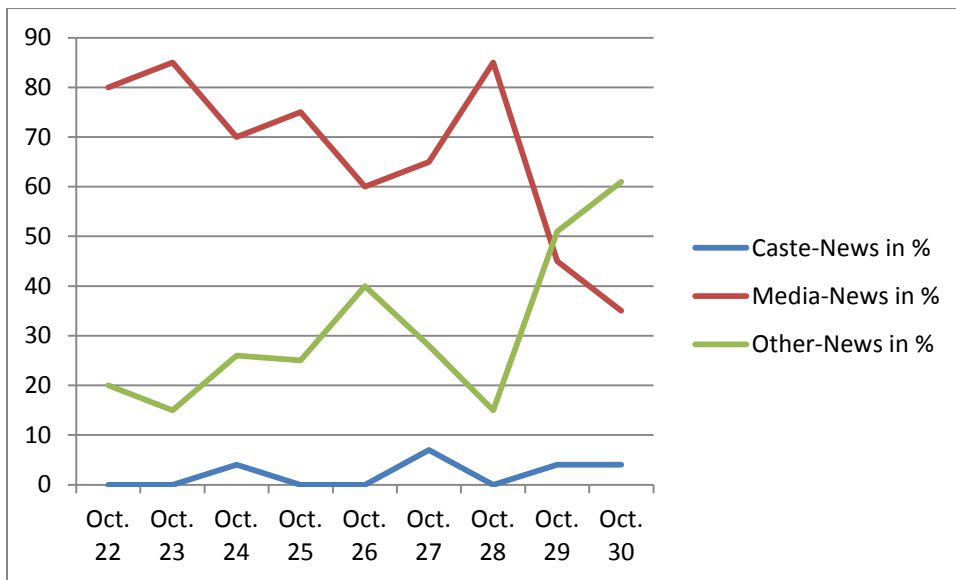


Figure 6.3: Percentage of Caste News, Media News, and other News in *Kantipur* after the FM Radio Seizure

Similarly, a nine-day content analysis of *Gorakhpatra* after the Kantipur FM seizure is shown in Table 6.5. In this table, the total number of stories, number of caste related news, and media related news is provided. In addition, how the media gave importance to the media news stories was also analyzed. Table 6.6 gives the percentage of areas covered by media news and

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caste related stories against the total number of news stories. Figure 6.4 provides the percentage of news, which was covered in *Gorakhapatra* after the Kantipur FM seizure.

Table 6.5

Content Analysis of Gorakhapatra after the Seizure of the Kantipur FM Radio

Dates	Number of News Stories	Number of News Stories about Caste, Dalit, or Indigenous Issues	Media Seizure Related News	Coverage about seizure news stories
22	67	1	4	Front page 30% covered by the news, 3rd page 5% covered
23	51	1	5	Front page 3 news stories and 50% covered, other pages had 2 news stories
24	60	3	4	Front page 2 news stories, Other page had 2 news stores, Editorial
25	61	0	4	Front page 1 news story, Other page had 3 news stories
26	58	0	4	Front page 1 news stories (3%), Other pages had 3 news stories
27	62	2	2	Front page 1 news stories (10%), Other pages had 1 news story
28	59	0	3	Front page 1 news stories, Other

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				page had 1 news story, 1 news analysis
29	65	1	4	Front page 1 news stories, Other page had 2 news stories, 1 article
30	45	1	3	No front page news, Other pages had 2 news stories, 1 article

Table 6.6

Total Areas Covered by the News Related to the Kantipur Seizure in Gorakhpatra

Dates	Caste	Media Seizure	Other	Remarks
(Oct. 2005)	Related News (%)	Related News (%)	News (%)	
22	1	18	81	The newspaper areas coverage included news, cartoons, and photos.
23	1	24	75	
24	3	12	85	
25	0	10	90	
26	2	8	90	
27	3	9	88	
28	1	18	81	
29	5	16	79	
30	1	7	92	

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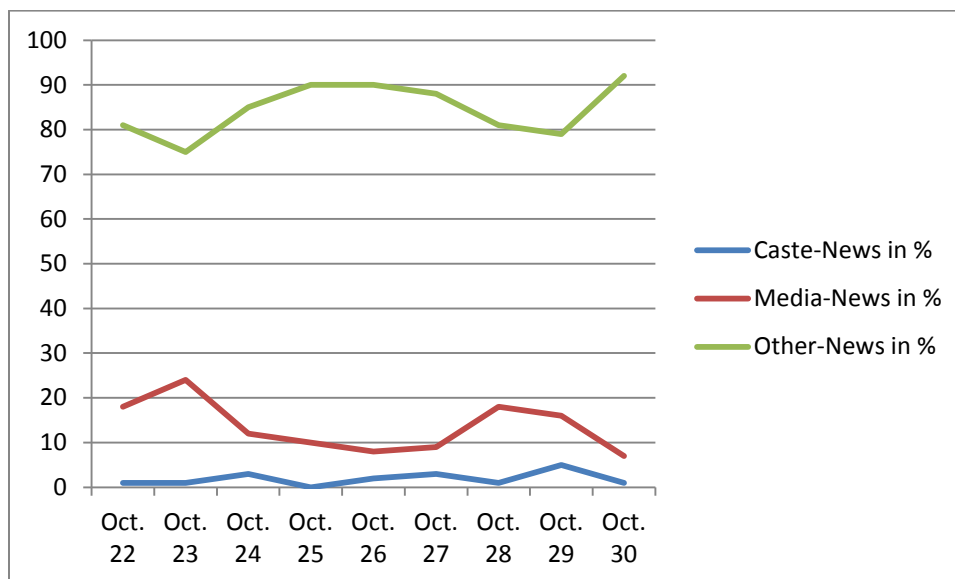


Figure 6.4: Percentage of Caste Identity News Stories, Media News Stories, and Other News Stories in *Gorakhpatra* after the FM Radio Seizure

The above four Tables (6.3 to 6.6) and two Figures (6.3 and 6.4) provide a nine-day content analysis of *Kantipur* and *Gorakhpatra*. The content analysis shows that *Kantipur* was almost full of seizure news and protest photos for more than one week. Fifty to 85% of the total news and almost two thirds of the areas of the newspaper were covered by the seizure issue. All news stories were against the government's action. Every day, many activities related to the protest against the government's act were captured and produced in the newspaper. Front page news, cartoons, protest photos, and full-page articles appeared in most private newspapers. However, in the public media *Gorakhpatra*, only 7 to 24% of the news stories related to the Kantipur seizure. Further, this news directly supported the government's move against the free press. *Gorakhpatra* pleaded that the move against Kantipur was correct for their national interests. The analysis of both media in Figures 6.3 and 6.4 showed that the private media was

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providing a higher degree of importance to the event; public media, not surprisingly, was influenced by the government leadership. The approach of *Kantipur* and *Gorakhapatra* to the coverage of the Kantipur FM seizure indicates that the state-owned media is influenced by the leadership in the government, whereas private media reports the conflict events as they unfolded. This example also clearly demonstrates the media effect in which the media worked to and did influence public opinion and ultimately, behavior. This supports the argument of this research.

The Kantipur FM radio attack provides a lesson to all political leadership, whether democratic or autocratic, that media attacks can backfire on the establishment. In the case of Nepal, all private media played a role in ending the King's rule leading to democratic movements. The monarch's suppression of the private media to stop the information flow so that his regime could be safeguarded against negative coverage indicated that the private media was an important player in social change.

Caste Related News Analysis during the Termination of the First Constituent Assembly

There were lots of caste-related activities happening during the end of the First Constituent Assembly. Agitations, mass demonstrations, mass meetings, 24-hour group fasting, group sit-outs in front of the Assembly, mass processions, general strikes, transportation blockages, and rallies were daily events. Therefore, a detailed content analysis of this four-week period, two weeks before and two weeks after the termination date of the First Constituent Assembly of May 28, 2012, was investigated. This analysis was done with both *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur*. Tables 6.7, 6.8, and 6.9 show how the media privileged the caste-based identity conflict coverage when the termination dates of the First Constituent Assembly came closer. Similarly, Figures 6.5 and 6.6 provide the caste-based identity conflict news trends, ups and

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downs, to give further clarity. Table 6.7 shows the content analysis of 15 days before and 15 days after the termination of the First Constituent Assembly in *Gorakhpatra*.

Table 6.7

One Month Content Analysis in Gorakhpatra during the First Constituent Assembly Termination

Dates before and after the first CA termination on May 28, 2012	No. of Caste-Related News Stories	Caste-News (%)
May 14	12	55
May 15	10	35
May 16	9	30
May 17	10	45
May 18	20	60
May 19	19	70
May 20	25	65
May 21	19	55
May 22	23	50
May 23	24	50
May 24	17	60
May 25	12	45
May 25	17	40
May 27	19	45

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May 28	7	18
May 29	7	18
May 30	3	8
May 31	4	10
Jun 1	5	12
Jun 2	2	5
Jun 3	5	12
Jun 4	2	5
Jun 5	3	8
Jun 6	1	2
Jun 7	2	5
Jun 7	4	10
Jun 9	2	5
Jun 10	1	2
Jun 11	1	2
Jun 12	3	8

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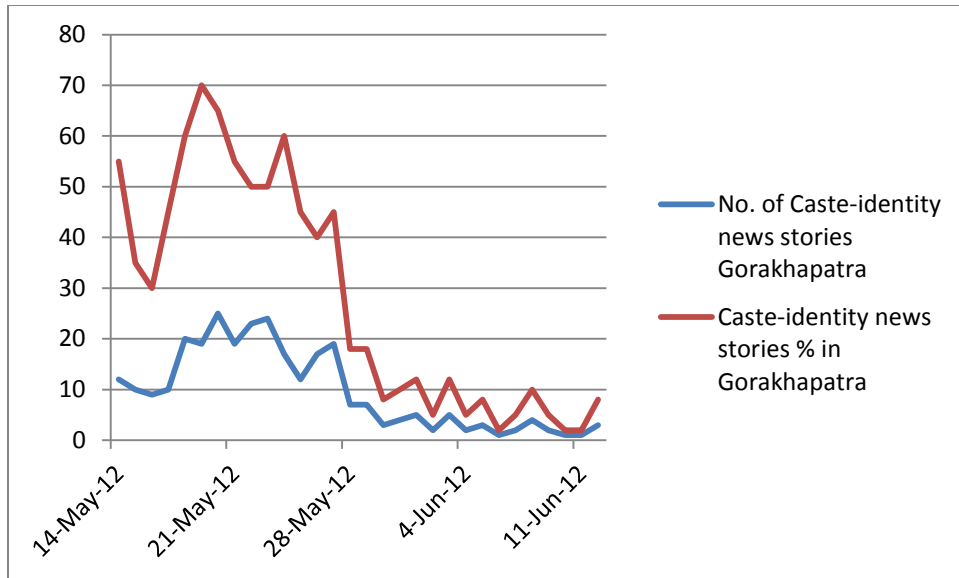


Figure 6.5: Number and Percentage of Caste-Based Identity Conflict News Stories during the First Constituent Assembly

Similarly, the trends of the caste-based identity conflict news stories were captured in the private newspaper, *Kantipur*. Table 6.8 shows the content analysis of 15 days before the termination date of the First Constituent Assembly in *Kantipur*. The second part of the 15-day content analysis is provided in a separate table 6.9 because of its lengthy descriptions. *Kantipur* focused heavily on the caste-based identity conflict-related news during this period.

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Table-6.8

Number and Areas Covered by the Caste-related News during the End of the First Constituent Assembly in Kantipur (May 14 to May 28, 2012)

Dates	News Types:	Description of Content between May 14 and May 28, 2012 in
(May	Total News –	<i>Kantipur</i>
2012)	Caste-Based	
	Identity	
	Conflict	
	News	
14	51-22	Four main news stories on the first page covered 3/4th of the area; editorial against caste based restructuring; two inside articles; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; demand of province capital; strikes news; photo; 85% of the news stories were positive.
15	41-21	One main news story on first page covered 1/4th of the area; two inside articles on page 7; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; demand of province capital; debate on the Maoist supreme leader “Prachand” provocative speech encouraging caste identity supporters for aggression on demand for caste-based provinces; all-caste friendship rally
16	39-19	Two main news stories on first page covered 1/2 of the area;

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- one full page inside article on page 6; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; all-caste friendship rally; three photos of rallies and protests
- 17 49-17 Two main news stories on first page covered 1/2 of the area; three inside articles on pages 6 and 7; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; Tharuhat and Limbuwan issues; Prachand's effigy fire over the protest of his caste-provocative speech; two photos on the protests
- 18 42-21 Three main news stories on first page covered 3/4th of the area; one inside half page articles on page 6 and two articles on page 7; demand of caste-based province; demand of language-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; demand of province capital; four photos of protest and friendship rallies; provocation to Madheshi by the Indian envoy; protest news
- 19 31-10 Five main news stories on the first page covering 1/2 of the area; all-major-political-parties-protest the Indian envoy's provocation; two inside articles on page 6 and one article on page 7; one article on ethnic violence in Haiti with comparison to caste issues in Nepal by retired Colonel Ratindra Chhetri who served in Haiti under the UN peace keeping mission; demand of caste-based province

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- 20 53-33 One main news story on the first page and a cartoon; two inside articles on pages 6 and 7; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; demand of province capital; friendship rally; 50% quota for women demanded; three photos; protest rally; Karnali province demand; Tharu and United Sudurpaschim clash; protest against the Indian envoy
- 21 46-29 Three main news stories on the first page; one editorial; a protest photo; 20 photos on page 2 about procession and agitation on caste issues; page 3, 100% news on caste and Muslim identities; page 5, Raute identity demanded; three inside articles on pages 6 and 7 covered 80%; page 14, conflicting demand of Tharu and united Sudurpaschim; demand of caste-based province; demand of indigenous-based province; demand of united Sudurpaschim; demand of province capital
- 22 36-31 Front page, four news stories, one photo, 100% covered; page 2, 21 photos about caste identity-related procession and protest; page 3, three news stories, one photo, 100% covered; page 6 and 7, three articles, two against caste-based provinces and an editorial for caste friendship needs; page 6 and 10, twelve news stories against caste-based demands
- 23 35-21 Front page, one news story, one photo; page 2, one photo about

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- indigenous people procession; pages 6 and 7, three articles, two against caste-based province and an editorial against caste-based provinces, one article against the demand of Mithila province based on language and one article in favor of Maithili language-based province; page 6, comments against caste-based demand; page 12, six photos about caste and indigenous conflict
- 24 44-22 Front page, one news story, one photo of caste friendship; page 2, one photo, one news story on support of caste-based province, two news stories against the Maoist suppression of the press; page 6, one article critically commented on the demand of caste-based province, seven news stories against caste-based demands; page 7, two articles against the caste province and one article in favor of the caste province, 100% covered
- 25 41-21 Page 2, one news story; page 4, three photos on caste-related identity processions and protests; page 5, one photo on caste friendship, four photos on caste-related protests; pages 6 and 7, one article against caste-based provinces, six comments on caste identity issues, page 7 was 75% covered
- 26 35-17 Front page, all news about Constituent Assembly time extension, 100% covered; page 2, seven comments on caste issue; page 3, demand of Mithila province, article on demand

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		of Tharu and united Sudurpaschim contradict each other—the understanding could not be fulfilled by Abdullah Miyan; page 5, rally against strikes, four photos; page 6, article on how the caste issue creates an environment which plays a lead role in weakening new constitution writing process
27	49-35	Front page news about CA time extension, 60% covered; page 2, six protest photos; page 6, article on caste-based federalism should be taken to people’s mandate, Sudurpaschim strikes reached 29 th day
28	34-19	Front page full of dissolution of the First CA, editorial on the dissolve of the CA; page 13, thirteen photos of procession on the dissolution of CA

Table 6.9 provides news analysis of the 15 days after the First Constituent Assembly termination on May 28, 2012 in *Kantipur*. After the termination of the First Constituent Assembly on May 28, 2012, the number of caste-related news is drastically reduced in all newspapers. The focus of all news was on political responsibility, the issue of “what next,” and the causes of the termination of the First Constituent Assembly.

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Table 6.9

News Analysis of the 15 days after the First Constituent Assembly Termination on May 28, 2012

Dates	News Types:	Description of content between May 29 and June 12, 2012
(May- June 2012)	Total News – Caste-Based Identity Conflict News	2012 Kantipur
29	45-7	16 news stories about the dissolution of CA; United Sudurpaschim strike withdrawal because of the end of the first CA; three articles on pages 6 and 7
30	35-5	
31	44-4	
June 1	54-5	
2	30-2	Fraction within main political parties on caste-based identity issues; UML is on the edge of a party break
3	43-5	Protest inside UML party on caste-based identity issues
4	39-3	
5	46-6	
6	48-3	
7	52-4	
8	50-3	
9	46-4	
10	53-3	

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11 48-5

12 42-2

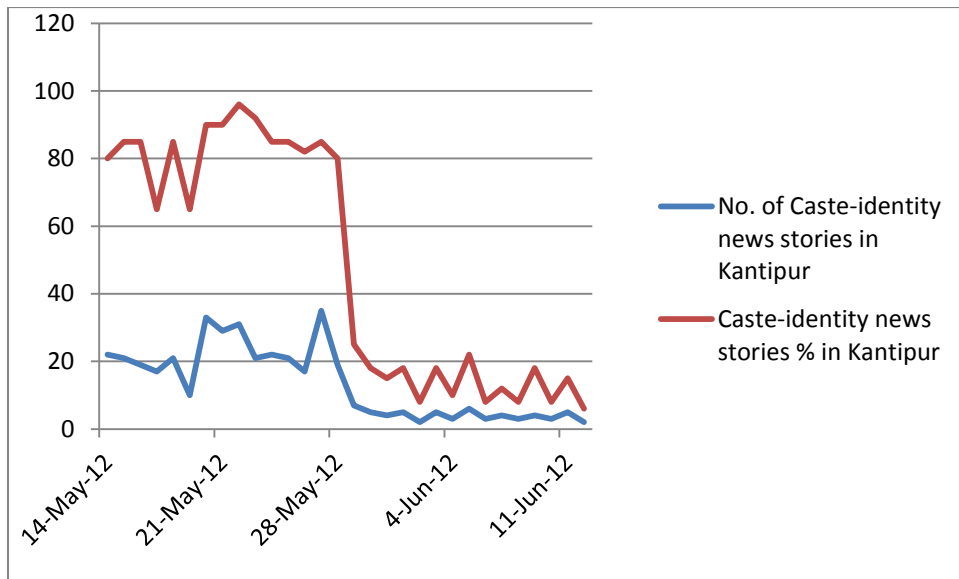


Figure 6.6: Caste-Related News Before and After the Termination of the First CA

Figures 6.5 and 6.6 show that the flows of caste-based identity conflict news in both *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur* decreased drastically after the dissolution of the First Constituent Assembly on May 28, 2012. Just before the end of the First CA, all major newspapers gave high importance to caste-based identity conflict issues and provided priority space on their front pages for news, cartoons, and photos. Finally, the content analysis of both *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur* related to caste identity conflict can be concluded in these four points:

- Both newspapers provided higher priority to caste identity conflict news stories.
- Sensitivity to caste-based identity conflicts can be observed in news stories of both newspapers in similar trends (Figure 6.6). However, *Kantipur* had given more space on front page as well as in overall newspapers than *Gorakhapatra*.

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- *Kantipur* focused more on anti-caste identity-based restructuring of Nepal; *Gorakhatra* was influenced by the ministry's political leadership. However, in the case of caste-based communal violence such as Madhesh movement, both newsprints were anti-communal and gave much of space to caste and cultural harmony and peace rally-related news stories, cartoons, and photos.
- Both newspapers have given proper spaces and follow up news stories on anti-caste discrimination and pro-cross-cultural marriage.

CHAPTER 7

CASTE-BASED IDENTITY CONFLICT CASES

Content in Public versus Private Print Media

The frequencies of news stories and areas related to caste-based identity conflicts are numerically and topically unequal when it comes to the public and private print media coverage between 2002 and 2012. *Kantipur* gave higher priority to caste-related conflict issues compared to *Gorakhapatra*. Figure 6.6 in the previous chapter demonstrates this trend. Similarly, *Kantipur* often provided front-page space for these news stories whereas *Gorakhapatra* gave them less prominence. On some dates such as May 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, and 28 of 2006, more than half the coverage on the front page was related to caste-based identity conflict news stories in *Kantipur*. Some dates such as May 26 to 28 got full coverage on the front page. *Kantipur* also provided cartoons related to caste-based conflict issues and photos of caste-based identity issues such as processions, strikes, transportation shut downs, rallies, and speeches.

On the other hand, in the case of *Gorakhapatra*, their orientation was indirectly guided by the leadership in the information and communication ministry (MOIC). For example, when the Maoist leader was in MOIC, *Gorakhapatra* stories were in favor of caste-based identity demands whereas, when the MOIC leadership changed and was run by the UML or the NC parties, most of the *Gorakhapatra* writings were against caste-based identity demands. The majority of news stories in *Kantipur* were related to the anti-caste identity-based restructuring of the state, however, it seems that *Kantipur* had provided limited space to the news stories that supported caste identity-based divisions of the state in the restructuring. Table 7.1 shows the number of caste-based identity conflict news stories and the percentage of coverage in *Gorakhapatra* and *Kantipur* to clarify the comparison. Similarly, Figure 7.1 shows the comparison graphically.

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From these comparisons, it can be observed that *Kantipur* provides higher importance to the caste-based identity conflict news stories compared to *Gorakhapatra*. This supports the first hypothesis that states, “Private print media correlates with reported events-based data on caste-based identity conflict to a higher degree than public print media.”

Table 7.1

Comparison of Numbers of Caste-Based Identity Conflict Related News in Kantipur versus Gorakhapatra

Dates Before and After the First CA	No. of Caste-Based News in <i>Kantipur</i>	Caste-Based News in <i>Kantipur</i> (%)	No. of Caste-Based News	
			in <i>Gorakhapatra</i>	in <i>Gorakhapatra</i> (%)
14-May-12	22	80	12	55
15-May-12	21	85	10	35
16-May-12	19	85	9	30
17-May-12	17	65	10	45
18-May-12	21	85	20	60
19-May-12	10	65	19	70
20-May-12	33	90	25	65
21-May-12	29	90	19	55
22-May-12	31	96	23	50
23-May-12	21	92	24	50
24-May-12	22	85	17	60
25-May-12	21	85	12	45

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26-May-12	17	82	17	40
27-May-12	35	85	19	45
28-May-12	19	80	7	18
29-May-12	7	25	7	18
30-May-12	5	18	3	8
31-May-12	4	15	4	10
1-Jun	5	18	5	12
2-Jun-12	2	8	2	5
3-Jun-12	5	18	5	12
4-Jun-12	3	10	2	5
5-Jun-12	6	22	3	8
6-Jun-12	3	8	1	2
7-Jun-12	4	12	2	5
8-Jun-12	3	8	4	10
9-Jun-12	4	18	2	5
10-Jun-12	3	8	1	2
11-Jun-12	5	15	1	2
12-Jun-12	2	6	3	8

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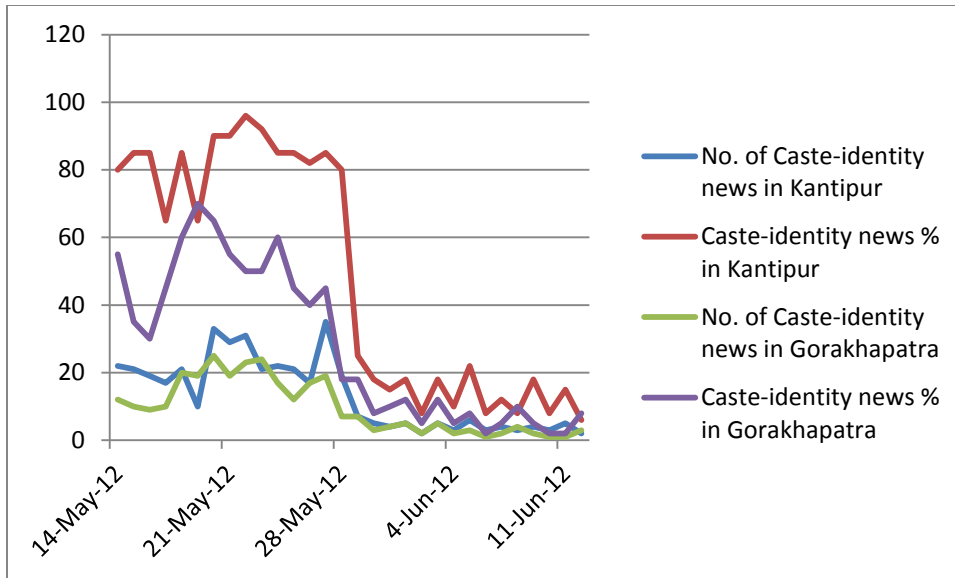


Figure 7.1: Number of Caste-related News in *Kantipur* versus *Gorakhpatra*

Kantipur news and views were both in favor of and against the caste-based identity issues, however, a tilt against the caste-based identity restructuring demands was observed. Approximately 75% of the news coverage was against the caste-based identity demands. Further, I observed that *Kantipur* gave more space to those news stories that supported unification and integration rather than division of the state based on caste, ethnicity, and languages. *Kantipur*'s inner pages were filled with articles of Dhrub Kumar, Chandrakishor, Srikrishna Anirudra Gautam, Dilli Ram Dahal, Krishna Pokhrel, Sunil Kumar Pokhrel, Shiva Hari Dahal, Pariyar, M., Krishna Khanal, P, P, Neupane, Chaitanya Mishra, and Ganesh Man Gurung. Many of these writers are working as professors in Tribhuvan University and are highly influential intellectuals. Their writings tended to advocate for managing caste identity conflict rather than aggravating it. However, *Gorakhpatra* news and views were sometimes supportive to caste identity-based demands when the ministry's leadership was led by the Maoist or Madheshi leader and sometimes it tended to be neutral or anti-caste identity news stories. This supports the second

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hypothesis which states that “Print media outlets seem to help manage caste-based identity conflicts more than aggravate them, although variability between media outlets is expected.”

Opinion Leaders’ Roles

As mentioned previously, opinion leaders are influential politicians, NGO and social activists, development workers, trade unionists, school teachers, and members of professional associations. In Nepal, opinion leaders are key players in all major social and political events including those that took place in 1950, 1989–1990, 2006–2007, and in the present state restructuring and peace transformation process. For example, many intellectuals such as Drub Kumar, Krishna Khanal, Subhod Pyakurel, and Kanak M. Dishchhit, who supported the people’s verdict in the Second CA results and who viewed the election results as a mandate against caste-based identity politics, were given important space in the media during the time of the Second CA election. After the first CA election, when the Maoist party and other regional parties entered into the parliament as the comfortable majority favoring caste identity-based restructuring of the nation, *Kantipur* started providing significant space and emphasis against the caste-based identity politics. This is one of the events that may have triggered the defeat of the caste-identity based political parties such as the Maoist Party, Sadbhawana Party, Terai Madhesh Loktrantik Party, and Madheshi Janadhikar Forum in the second CA election.

On the other hand, Hachhethu’s (2014)⁴⁴ argument that “identity and rights are important subjects which go for a long time; however, the people’s verdict decided through election is a short term decision” (p. 6) was given space when most of the media coverage was in support of the peoples’ verdict against the caste-identity based restructuring in the Second CA results.

⁴⁴ Hachhethu is a prominent intellectual and caste identity supporter in Nepal. His views are popular among the political parties and individuals who support the caste-based identity restructuring of the state.

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According to Hachhethu, “the defeat of Maoist and other caste-based regional parties such as Madheshi and indigenous was not because the caste identity issue was itself weak, but it was the parties’ weakness for not clarifying the issue to the Nepalese people” (2014, p.6). Hachhethu’s arguments were supporting the Maoist’s and other Madheshi regional parties’ stance, which pleaded for the caste-identity based restructuring of the state even though their defeat in the Second CA signaled the opposite story.

Opinion leaders have the power to influence people’s thoughts and behaviors using various means. The media is one of them. In the above example, the private media, the *Kantipur*, gave space for contrasting views; however, the coverage and the numbers of news stories against caste-based identity conflict issues were given higher importance in the print media. During all critical events, opinion leaders’ roles are important. Therefore, in the semi-structured interviews, the selection of participants was done based on his or her social position and the capacity to influence people as opinion leaders. Interviewees’ categories, their perceptions on caste-based identity conflicts, and their familiarity with media are discussed next in this chapter.

Most of the interviewees recognized the roles of information and its dissemination in social change events and movements. Participants thought that all positive changes happened due to the creativity of the people’s efforts to mobilize the resources for infrastructural development. These creativities were developed out of readily available information, which they often encountered in the mass media. Interviewees gave the lowest priority to the government initiatives because of the political instability and corruption in Nepal. When asked about which media outlet had the most influence in Nepalese society, 97 out of 121 interviewees felt that radio information was the most effective means for political and social awareness-building

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followed by newspapers (82) and television (81). Figure 7.2 shows the interviewees' access to different media outlets.

The perceptions of interviewees about the higher use of three media (i.e., radio, print, and television) supports the validity of my media selection for this study where I used the two major print media, *Kantipur* and *Gorakhapatra*, which each own all three types of media outlets.

Similarly, interviewees also agreed that they were heavily dependent on the radio, print, and television for political and social information. For example many interviewees expressed their views on the use of various media as:

- I have a routine of hearing news on the radio at 6:30 am and at 7:00 am. I go through major newspapers with morning tea. The news makes me confident in all my political meetings and gatherings. (June 3, 2013)
- I am a trade union leader. I get most of the news on caste identity based conflict stories from newspapers and radio as well as from the professional gatherings. (June 9, 2013)

This supports my third hypothesis that media coverage affects the opinion leaders in shaping their opinions.

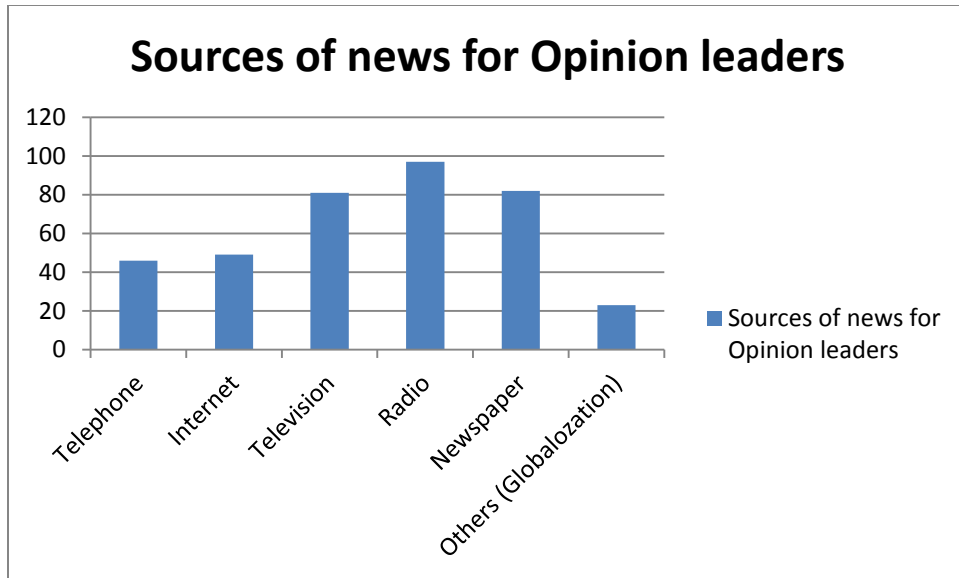


Figure 7.2: Use of Various Media Outlets by Opinion Leaders (Opinion leaders can choose more than one media outlet)

Most of the interviewees used many media outlets such as radio, television, cell phones, and newspapers extensively. Internet became available on their cell phones as well. The interviewees were mostly from the leadership of different social and political institutions. Therefore, many of them had internet and telephone access on a regular basis except during the royal coup of 2005. Interviewees expressed that they had various ways of getting information on social and political issues other than the media—school, college, community meetings, and political and social debates—however, most of the interviewees (more than 80 interviewees out of 121) agreed that the higher priority information came from the radio and newsprint, especially for political news stories. When asked about their interests related to newspaper content, the highest number (59 interviewees) selected political contents, followed by news and analysis, and then social and cultural issues third as reasons why they read the papers. This provided validity

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to my research topic that media plays an important role in the social and political information landscapes in Nepal.

The interviewees expressed that community meetings also fostered their awareness on different social, cultural, and political issues in society. Almost 40% of the interviewees participated in community meetings on a regular basis. In the community meetings, the issues discussed were political followed by social and cultural problems. Figure 7.3 shows the priority of the issues discussed and debated in these community meetings.

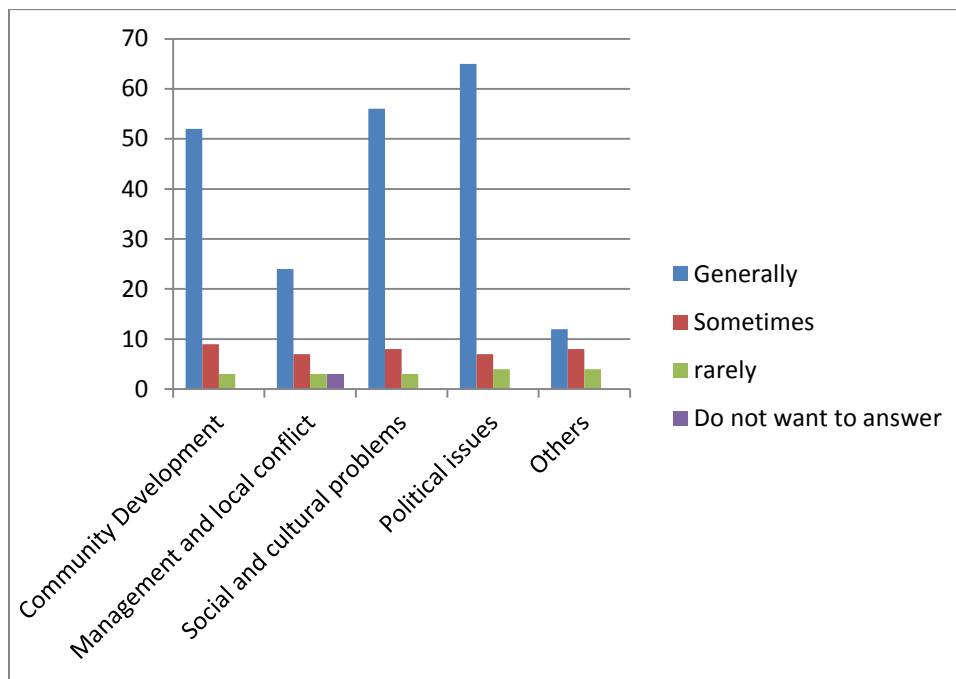


Figure 7.3: Priority of Issues Discussed in the Community Meeting

In all 121 interviewees' conceptions related to media and its influence on society, one clear pattern emerged, that the radio is the major and popular means of all types of information communication. The print media was the second highest information outlet for all opinion leaders. The community meetings or political party meetings were major information dissemination platforms. In the focus group discussions as well as semi-structured interviews, all

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participants informed me that they had developed regular habits regarding reading or listening to the news. As discussed earlier, the news networks overlapped considerably in Nepal. Therefore, the influence of news and views broadcast on the radio and printed in the newspapers were quite similar. Because of the continuous proximity to the news and views disseminated through the mass media, opinion leaders consciously or subconsciously shaped or reshaped their mindsets about different social and political events. Then they shared those values with their own constituents in ways similar to those proposed in the information flow diagram in Figure 4.1. More than 80 interviewees (shown in Figure 7.2) told me that they regularly read and hear news stories and the media extensively focused on the caste identity conflict stories (shown in Figure 7.1). During the most crucial time (i.e. at the end of the first CA), the influence of media on opinion leaders was inevitable. The key point of the two-step theory described in chapter 4 can be applied to understand the flow of caste identity news stories from the opinion leaders to the Nepalese constituents.

According to Gupta (2005), based on Hindu's multiple hierarchies, each caste always overvalues itself and privileges its opinions above all others (p. 412). The socio-political environment within society also influences caste, culture, and ethnic concepts. The media plays a strong role in reshaping cultural norms and values through these opinion leaders. In this regard, Narroll (1964) noted:

Culture patterns however are not fixed and immutable; on the contrary they are constantly changing, sometimes very slowly, sometimes very quickly. These changes presumably occur when opinion leaders deliberately or unconsciously change the rules or the texts in repeating them and when furthermore these changes are accepted by their associates, whether deliberately or tacitly. (p. 8)

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Agreeing with Narroll's view, in the case of Nepal, it is the opinion leaders who shape their views through various means such as media, community meetings, and social gatherings, and they spread into society through community and political meetings. Caste-based identity conflict issues are linked to the Hindu culture, and reshaping the perceptions on cultural patterns and caste-based identity is very difficult. The media outlets, through the opinion leaders, must play a role as important mediums for change. The opinion leaders that I interviewed were highly informed, and they informed me that they regularly listened to the radio and read the newspaper to develop their perceptions on the current contentious caste-based identity conflict issue in Nepal. Later, these opinion leaders disseminated their perceptions to the larger population through community meetings, political party meetings, speeches to audiences, participating in debates, and by writing for and being interviewed by those very same media outlets thus creating a circular feedback pattern. For example, more than 80 interviewees claimed that they are a regular reader of *Kantipur*, mainly, and as many as 33 interviewees admitted that they follow the caste identity news stories for their references in their future activities. An interviewee said, "News stories provide me confidence in all my political and cultural activities."

The next section deals with the patterns of print media coverage on caste discrimination events happening in different parts of Nepal. Opinion leaders are influenced by the news on caste discrimination stories covered in the newspapers. An interviewee informed me that he "visited to the victim's house after hearing the news stories on caste discrimination cases in the morning Radio news to involve him in the management of the conflict." In the case of Sankhuwasabha district, in many caste discrimination cases, a local FM Radio provides notice to civil society persons (i.e. opinion leaders) to attain a discussion meeting to resolve the issue. For example, my own focus group meeting was noticed from the FM Radio in this district. These types of stories,

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in turn, play significantly in developing caste identity-based in-group/out-group perceptions. To clarify these connections, the INSEC dataset was used because INSEC has its information network in all districts related to human rights issues. Five representative caste discrimination events were selected and each case was analyzed to explain how these cases were presented in the print media. In this study, I have attempted to analyze the role of print media in caste discrimination cases to show the observable link between caste-based tensions and how they are portrayed in the various media outlets. In order to test my hypothesis that private print media correlates with reported events-based data on caste-based identity conflict to a higher degree than public print media, I used mix method.

Five Cases from the INSEC Dataset and Newspaper Coverage

In Nepal, inter-caste conflicts occur mainly within the Hindu culture and are exacerbated by restrictions on entering Hindu temples, restrictions on touching food or water by some lower castes, restriction on offering houses for lease, restrictions on physical contact between castes, and restrictions on inter-caste marriage. After the first focus group meeting and my own personal experiences related to caste conflict in Hindu society, I selected five types of caste-based conflict stories to help illustrate the relationships between caste-based identity conflicts and the news media. These conflicts were selected due to their high frequency throughout the country. Therefore, five different representative caste-based identity conflict cases were chosen from *The Human Rights Yearbook—Nepal* for further analysis.⁴⁵ Since, the *Human Rights Yearbook* records all caste discrimination news stories separately, it was easy to select from the

⁴⁵ These five cases were taken from the *Human Rights Yearbook* (2012, 2013, 2014) annually published by Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC).

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compilation. These cases were then retrieved from the newspapers in order to assess news coverage accuracy.

Case one: A Dalit woman was beaten by Brahmin people in a Hindu temple, Kalika Temple, in Gulmi district in the mid-western part of Nepal. The vice chairperson of the temple management committee, Mr. Om Prasad Bhandari, accused a Dalit woman of touching him when he entered the temple. In this temple, Dalit are prohibited from entering the inner sanctuary. Dalit can worship from the door boundary. The Dalit woman, who was worshipping standing in the temple's door boundary, did not notice the Brahmin enter. Later, the Dalit woman was taken to the nearby hospital. After the incident, many Dalit activists and organizations raised the issue and registered a case in the district administrative office. The chief district officer called all parties and all caste-based organization representatives to resolve the issue. The INSEC representative was also present in the negotiation. Finally, the temple management committee publicly acknowledged their guilt and formally announced that all people including Dalit and untouchables could worship similar to the Brahmin without any obstructions.

This issue was reported in *The Human Rights Yearbook—2012*. I searched the incident in national newspapers and I found that three national newspapers had reported the issue including *Kantipur* (2011, April 14–15), *Samacharpatra* (2011, April 15), and *Nagrik* (2011, April 14–15). The coverage of the conflict event itself in the newspapers was given higher importance than its actual resolution suggesting the exacerbation of caste-based identity conflict.

Case two: A Dalit woman was beaten by many upper-caste people in Tanahu district. The upper-caste people alleged that the Dalit woman touched a water pot when it was in the public water tap. The Dalit woman was seriously injured and taken to the hospital where she was given stitches in her hands, neck, and head. The upper-caste people who beat the woman were

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high school and university graduates. Later, when the issue came out in the newspapers, the upper-caste people threatened the Dalit to not go to the police and settle the issue at the local level. However, with the support of Dalit and Human Rights organizations, the case was registered. After the case was filed, both parties were called to the district administration office for conflict settlement.

The issue was covered in two local and more than three national newspapers including *Kantipur*, *Nagarik*, and *Rajdhani* on December 28, 2011. Because of these types of incidents, Dalits in many parts of Nepal demanded separate water taps for Dalits to use. Therefore, this coverage seemed to support caste-based segregation and subsequently, political separation. I discussed this issue with the INSEC representative, Mr. Bijaya Upadhyay. Bijaya expressed that the caste conflict in the rural areas of Nepal are linked to rural economic, cultural, and political power structures. According to him, most of the upper castes such as Brahmins and Chhetris in rural areas are politically networked, economically capable, and culturally powerful compared to Dalits. Because of the combination of all these powers and the weak administrative controls in the rural areas, upper-caste monopolies and suppression are still commonplace in Nepal. Therefore, these findings suggest that even if caste-based territories were provided, intra-group social divisions and caste-based conflict would remain.

Case three: A group of social activists from upper-castes, Bramin and Chhetry, appointed Dalit people for the preparation of food for a personal party invitation in a village in Gulmi district. As many as 50 chairpersons from different village-level political party committees attended and ate the food. This program was a part of the anti-untouchable campaign launched by the political party Nepali Congress. In the all-caste food-eating program, the

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organizer claimed that the movement against untouchability should not be limited to speech, but should also be exercised in day-to-day actions.

This issue was covered in local newspapers and the *Gorakhpatra* in January 13, 2012. *Gorakhpatra* is known for covering these types of positive news stories. Settlements or positive news stories related to caste identity get minimum importance and coverage in the private media, are often printed in the inner pages, are small in size, and are few in number. Because of readers' preferences, the private newspapers seem to give priority to conflict news. Public media are less confrontational and propagandist except in relation to some political causes, and they also do not have the added problem of financial sustainability; therefore, the public newspapers give equal importance to positive news stories such as inclusive food-eating programs, caste conflict settlements, and inter-caste marriage stories. This result seems to contradict the hypothesis since the private media tends to sensationalize conflict in order to maintain readership.

Case four: Generally people believe that the untouchability issue is a problem between the upper castes and the Dalit. However, there is much evidence that shows how untouchability exists within the Dalit community as well. In a case in Bajura district, a far-western, isolated, and poverty-stricken district of Nepal, two lower-caste Dalits were seriously beaten by other upper-caste Dalits in a marriage function of the upper-caste Dalit's family alleging the lower-caste Dalits touched their kitchen. Within the Dalit community, blacksmiths and leather workers claim that they are superior to other Dalits who work in cloth-making, toilet-cleaning, and the disposal works of dead animals. Both people were taken to the nearby health post for treatment. Later the issue was taken to the area police station. Once the issue came out in the newspapers, human rights and Dalit activists raised the issue in the National Dalit commission.

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This event, which happened on January 16, 2012, was covered in *Kantipur* on January 18, 2012. This case indicates that caste conflicts are not only occurring between the upper and lower castes but, it has deeper roots within the various layers of the same castes as well.

Case five: In another case in Parasi district, the district court responded quickly to a Dalit woman who was beaten by an upper-caste woman alleging that the Dalit woman touched her water pot. The court ordered the accuser to pay 25,000 Rupee, in fines (equivalent to US\$250.00) as compensation to the Dalit. Local human rights activists and NGO workers helped the Dalit woman and encouraged her family to file the case in the local administration and court.

The issue was highlighted in *Kantipur* on July 25, 2013 and many other newspapers. Generally, most of the conflict cases do not reach the court system. These disputes are negotiated and managed at the local level. Court hearings in Nepal are very lengthy and costly. Expedient decisions on caste discrimination issues are quite rare. Annually, very few caste discrimination cases (For example, in 2013 two cases were decided in the court in the favor of caste discrimination victims.) are decided in the official courts. However, after the Second Janandolan, which had one major focus, the elimination of caste-based discrimination and the re-establishment of caste-based identity, the government administration and the judicial system gave proper attention to discrimination case registration in their administrative offices, case files in the courts, and timely decisions on discrimination cases. The court's quick verdict and the huge amount of fines against accusers indicated that the caste-based identity conflict issues were being taken seriously in all sectors and public institutions. This policy shift was welcomed from various rights-based organizations.

The above five cases represent caste discrimination events that are similar to other cases happening in Nepal every day. By and large, attempts to settle or manage these caste

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discrimination and caste conflict cases are first tried at the village level if the intensity of discrimination is low. If the intensity is high and serious then the local opinion leaders encourage or support the victims to register the case in the administration or file the case in the court. In an interview, an opinion leader said that every month he has to involve himself in resolving or managing two or three cases of caste discrimination and inter-caste marriage. Generally, in villages opinion leaders are the most important people in the management of local conflicts. In conclusion, all five cases described above had some similarities in that all discrimination had been perpetrated against lower castes; untouchability in various sectors remains a major issue that conflates caste-based identity conflict. Untouchability issues occurred in rural and remote areas of Nepal, and lower-caste women were targeted most often. Untouchability within the same caste indicates that caste-based identity conflict is deeply rooted in the Nepalese Hindu society. In all caste discrimination cases, the Dalit organizations and the Human Rights institutions were actively involved in resolving these caste-based identity conflicts. In other words, there was direct involvement by various opinion leaders to help resolve these conflicts in a meaningful way that promotes structural changes in Nepalese society. Representatives from these organizations as well as school teachers and political activists as opinion leaders showed strong roles in informing on the issues through their coverage in the newspapers and other media outlets, by pressuring the local administration offices to take proper actions, and by disseminating the caste-identity based conflict issues to the larger masses to encourage popular support. Caste-based identity conflict news stories published in the newspapers informed and influenced the opinion leaders who developed certain perceptions on the issues and ultimately affecting the larger masses in society. For instance, after the failed negotiations between four major political parties on the basic points of the new constitution in the first CA meeting at the

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Hattiban Resort on April 14–17, 2012, the Maoist supreme leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal appealed to indigenous and Madheshi leaders to go street protest, demanding caste identity-based restructuring of the country with special rights. The next day, there were many street processions and agitations in Kathmandu Valley. The Maoist leader, on his actions, was heavily criticized by many civil society leaders and intellectuals. In most of the caste-based identity conflict and discrimination cases I observed through their news coverage, opinion leaders such as NGO workers, local school teachers, human rights activists, and local politicians were engaged in the process of negotiation and reconciliation. This indicates that the caste identity conflict stories appearing in the print media seemed to play significant roles in influencing opinion leaders which, in the end, helped to manage caste identity conflict. In the next section, I will discuss another caste discrimination issue such as inter-caste marriage. I took two representative cases from the INSEC database, searched for news stories in various national newspapers, and analyzed them. Later, I will review the inter-caste marriage issue and the perception of opinion leaders.

Social Conflict such as Inter-caste Marriage

Marriage is a social and cultural bond in Nepal mostly initiated by the bride and groom's guardians within a specific set of social, cultural, and religious norms and values. In most cases in Hindu society, marriage is a social system where individual choices in the selection process of a bride and groom are given less importance. However, in the urban areas, some exceptions can be found. Historically, castes and sub-castes are major determinants of marriageability. Marriage within the same surname and same "Gotra"⁴⁶ are socially prohibited. Similarly, inter-caste

⁴⁶ Gotra means clan, especially in Hindu society. It refers to people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor.

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marriages are taboo. In urban environments these social norms are beginning to breakdown, while in rural and remote areas of Nepal, inter-caste marriages are still an arena of social conflict.

Every year numerous cases are registered in the administration of most districts about inter-caste marriage recognition and social acceptance. Inter-caste marriages create much tension within families, however. Because of inter-caste marriage, strict caste identity boundaries can be broken, which eventually could minimize caste-based identity conflict. Similarly, inter-caste marriages are creating new sets of people who do not believe in the merits of the caste system. Further, the next generation born from inter-caste couples does not have a particular ascribed caste. Therefore, it is important to discuss some of the representative news stories about inter-caste marriage conflict and how it affects the caste-based identity issues in Nepal. Two examples related to inter-caste marriages, retrieved from various newspapers, are provided below.

Case one: Dalit family “expelled” from Baitadi village

A Dalit family from Rudreshwor in the district had been expelled from the village after one of the male members married a woman from an “upper-caste” Dalit family. Mandodari Damai and eight other family members fled to the district headquarters after they were chased away by other Dalit villagers belonging to Wada and Pal castes. The dispute erupted after Mandodari’s son Naresh married a woman of the Wada community. The villagers had earlier driven away Naresh and his wife from the village and thereafter persecuted the entire family. Mandodari said people from both Wada and Pal communities started mistreating her and forced her family to leave the village immediately. She and her family members arrived at the district headquarters to seek justice from the authorities. Naresh’s wife Baragrathi said her relatives not only disowned her, but also tried to attack her and her husband’s family because she married a

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man from a “lower-caste family.” Deputy Superintendent of Police Kamal Kharel said their effort to reconcile the warring families was in vain as the two sides did not show up at the required meetings.

Khadendra Awasthi⁴⁷ (2012) reported this incident in *Kantipur* about an inter-caste marriage conflict in the remote district of Baitadi. This inter-caste marriage conflict is not unique. In this case, both castes were from the Dalit community. However, because of the caste hierarchy within the Dalit community, the inter-caste marriage was not socially accepted by the Dalits. This type of conflict is linked to the cultural practices within the Dalit communities rather than based on caste identity perceptions.

Case two: Bride is forced to return back to her mother’s home after social refusal and dishonor by society for their inter-caste marriage

A bride from an upper-caste family was forced to return back to her mothers’ home after five months of marriage to a Dalit person. The Dalit family was continuously threatened by the bride’s family and psychologically harassed for five months after the marriage. The bride and groom registered a case with the district administrative office and local police station for state support for reestablishment and resettlement in the village. However, the Dalit family and local administration could not fight against the so-called social and cultural values of the caste system. Finally, the Dalit family and the bride agreed to sign divorce papers and they are now legally separated.

This news story was reported by Amrita Anmol⁴⁸, a Madheshi Dalit writer, on August 20, 2013 in *Kantipur*. The case was continuously reported in *Kantipur* and other national newspapers

⁴⁷ For detail please see *Kantipur* February 20, 2012

⁴⁸ For detail please see *Kantipur* August 20, 2013

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for several days. The Dalit and Human Rights Commission also tried to resolve the case, but did not succeed.

I pulled these two inter-caste marriage cases of conflict from the hundreds that occur in Nepal every year. In many inter-caste marriage cases, conflicts lead to the severing of the couple from their family and community. The in-group membership (Hall, 1996; Phinney, 1990; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982) perceptions and feelings of caste superiority within the upper-castes are the causes of many inter-caste conflicts. On the other hand, lower-caste peoples also united under various Dalit organizations, NGOs, or civil society groups to struggle against caste-based discrimination.

Untouchability issues in urban areas is not as serious today because of high population density, people's busy schedules, constant media scrutiny, and the higher likelihood of close contact with people from many different castes in public transportation and public places. In this regard, Chatterjee and Sharma (1994) noted:

A widespread interpretation of the modern role of caste is that it is only a significant determinant of behavior at the point of marriage. Restrictions on eating and drinking with, let alone touching, people of low caste are certainly rendered meaningless in many urban contexts by the close proximity of anonymous strangers in buses, city streets, and office canteens. (p. 17)

In the context of Nepalese society, caste still plays vital role in marriage. Urbanization and the rapid spread of information are playing positive roles in minimizing untouchability in Nepalese society. However, marriage is still a very strong social and cultural system, which is guided by the Hindu hierarchical caste-based structures, which may need many generations to accept inter-caste marriages. The Nepalese print media are giving priority to the news stories on

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inter-caste marriage conflicts. Because of the media alertness and quick information dissemination, many inter-caste marriage conflict cases (114 cases in 2013 alone) have appeared in print and have subsequently been positively settled; some were registered in their administrative offices, and some were still in the process of reconciliation within the families. I observed that the Nepalese print media are providing high priority in reporting inter-caste marriage conflicts and in most of these conflict cases, local opinion leaders engaged in cultural assimilation and social acceptance. Therefore, the roles media play are slowly helping in minimizing inter-castes marriage conflict.

In the semi-structured interviews, 33 interviewees expressed their strong views against inter-caste marriage. Almost all interviewees were leaders and educators from different institutions and their views mattered when it came to social change. Similarly, in all focus group discussions, most of the participants disagreed about whether or not they would give permission to their child for an inter-caste marriage. However, they expressed respect to those others who had married inter-caste. Some of the study participants, such as two in Jumla, two in Rupandehi, one in Janakpur, and five in Kathmandu informed me that they had married someone from outside their caste and they told their stories of social and cultural struggle after the inter-caste marriage. The stories indicated that the social and cultural assimilation of inter-caste couples is harder if the caste differences are great. Figure 7.4 shows the participants' views from the semi-structured interviews on inter-caste marriage.

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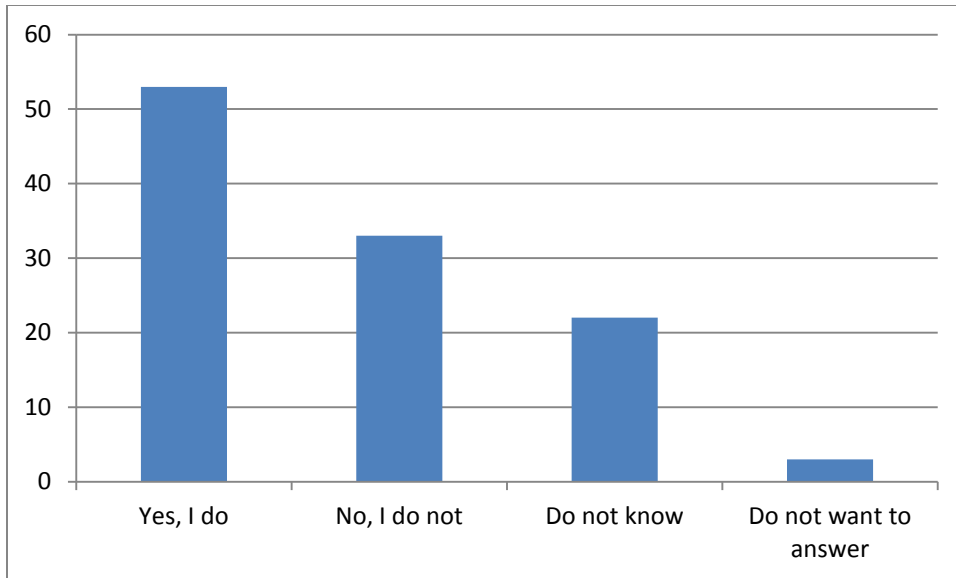


Figure 7.4: Interviewees' Perception to Give Permission to Marry their Children to Someone from another Caste, Religion, or Ethnic Group

Most of the participants' views on inter-caste marriage were positive; however, 33 participants (shown in Figure 7.4) disagreed when asked whether they would provide permission to a family member for an inter-caste marriage. It is interesting to note that being influential leaders or professionals in society, participants were progressive on the issue of untouchability but they were still conservative in terms of inter-caste marriage within their own families. Why was the media less influential when it came to the important social issue of inter-caste marriages? The media's role in influencing opinion leaders and then the larger public seemed strong on political issues including election campaigns and on social progressive movements such as the media's roles against the Maoist's violence (1996-2005), against the king's autocratic regime (2006-2007), against press censorship (2006-2007), against Madhesh violence (2007), against press suppression (i.e., the Kantipur FM Radio seizure) (2005), and against the caste-based identity conflict (2008–present). However, as urged by Beteille (1996), "Mobility in the

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caste system is very slow and gradual process” (p.190) and inter-caste marriage is a part of the Hindu caste system, and therefore, the change in the mindset of opinion leaders regarding the social acceptance to inter-caste marriage is a slow process. *Kantipur* and *Gorakhatra* equally gave space and priority to all types of social changes including inter-caste marriage, anti-caste discrimination, the quota issue, and restructuring of the state. Yet, opinion leaders showed their reluctance toward accepting cultural changes while simultaneously being more flexible, even though slow, when it came to accepting socio-economic and political changes. For instance, in the case of inter-caste marriages, the opinion leaders were reluctant to internalize the dynamics of the inter-caste marriage but they supported the need-based quota system and anti-caste discrimination. Similarly, regarding political agendas or economic rights, opinion leaders reshaped their views faster than they did on cultural issues because of their interests in social and political gain. For example, after a landslide defeat in the second CA, the Maoist party has been slowly transforming their caste-identity policy towards the demands of caste-based quotas and political representation. This indicates that the media conflict coverage affects opinion leaders in complex and shifting ways. This supports the third hypothesis. The next section discusses the issue of internal displacement caused by the Madheshi-Pahadi conflict and the role of the media in this dispute.

Internal Migration

This section describes the forced displacement of the Nepalese people during and after the Madheshi movement. Specifically, this section focuses on the forced displacement of the Pahadi people who inhabited the Terai over generations and how the print media covered this issue of internally displaced persons.

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In the last 50 years in Nepal, before the start of the Maoist insurgency in 1996, internal migration was not a big issue. During the second half of the Maoist insurgency (1996-2006), however, almost two million people were internally displaced.⁴⁹ The 21-day Madhesh movement of 2007 participated in by a large number of Madheshi people, caused the forced migration of mostly Pahadi people from the Terai to the hills and mid-hills as well as toward the urban and suburban cities where a majority of the Pahadi people now live.⁵⁰ During and after the Madhesh movement in 2007, the speed of internal displacement of the Pahadi people increased. Hachhethu (2007) provides a detailed description of the Madhesh movement in 2007. According to Hachhethu:

Madhesh *bandh* (general strike) was called by the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), backed by the Tarai Jantantrik Mukti Morcha (TJMM) of both factions (Goait and Jwala Singh) and participated in by workers of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). Most of the demonstrators were from the age group of 12-25 and the number of demonstrators increased almost double each day. Schools along with shops were closed; the movement of all forms of transportation was disallowed and those attempting to defy the ban were destroyed or burnt. Demonstrators carried out the batons and organized “Masal” (torch) rallies every evening. Tires were burned at every corner of the city. Police deployed were mostly Madhesis and their actions sometimes ended in shootings, failing to control the situation. The protesters defied the curfew and set fire in government offices, banks, and some private properties. The text of the Interim Constitution was burned every day.

⁴⁹ See *Human Rights Yearbook-2008*, p. 3-5

⁵⁰ The majority of the Pahadi, who were displaced from the Terai, were resettled in small town centers near the main East-West highway of Nepal such as Damak, Dharan, Itahari, Lahan, Bardibas, Chandranigahpur, Hetauda, Bharatpur, Butwal, Kohalpur, and Ataria.

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“Pahadis out of Madhesh” and “Down with the hill administration” were the main slogans chanted in the rallies. Some shops and hotels run by Pahadi people were destroyed and burned to the ground. None of the Pahadis were seen on the streets (though they constituted one-fifth of the Janakpur city population) throughout the days of the Madhesh *bandh*. In a public speech organized at the end of each day, speakers stressed the following demands: abrogation of the Interim Constitution, declaration of federalism, census before the election of the Constituent Assembly, delimitation of electoral constituencies on the basis of the population, and inclusion of Madhesh in the state apparatus. (p. 3–4, translation mine)

The Madhesh movement, which started as an identity rights movement, transformed into a communal movement in the subsequent years of 2008 and 2009.⁵¹ According to the *Rajadhani* daily newspaper (2007) and the INSEC (2008) report, 24 Pahadis people were murdered during and after the Madhesh movement of 2007 excluding the Gaur massacre of 27 Maoists who belonged to the Pahadi community. In the name of the Madheshi identity movement, “several small splinter armed Madheshi groups have continued anti-Pahadi actions in different forms: Kidnapping, extortion, killings etc.” (Hachhethu, 2007, p. 5). Pahadi people were scared to move around the Madhesh areas. The government and private sector employees, if they were Pahadi, requested to be transferred to other Madheshi minority areas. In the Madheshi majority areas, people were surprised if they saw any Pahadi people in the streets or in the markets. Pahadi people started selling their houses and lands at below market prices.

⁵¹ Communal movement is defined as caste/ethnicity-based political movement that discard caste or culture based harmony.

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I also personally experienced moments of panic as my parents were in the Madhesh core area, Rajbiraj. Being from the Pahadi community, we were forced to sell our home and agricultural lands to the local Madheshi during the Madhesh movement at below market prices. My parents suffered from physical and psychological threats, which were more severe than the loss of property.

Therefore, the impact of the Madhesh movement was huge in the Pahadi community of the Terai areas. People were physically and psychologically terrorized. Because of this, many Pahadi were internally displaced from the Madhesh. According to Dr. Bhogendra Jha, a professor from Janakpur and a Madheshi scholar, “The internal displacement of Pahadi people from Madhesh is the result of the physical and psychological threats to Pahadi families, and this is not an exaggeration but true” (as cited in Nepal, 2007, translation mine). The INSEC reports on the internal displacement recounted:

The main demand of the agitation was to get more power to the local Madheshi people. To achieve this, the Madheshi people demanded for the federal system with special rights to the Madheshi. During the agitation, many Madheshi people entered into the Pahadi’s majority village in the night with Mashal-light (handmade torch with fire in the top of it), and they threw stones, chanted racial slogans, and created psychological threats to local Pahadi people. During the Madheshi agitation, from most of these plain area districts, many Pahadi people left their villages for the safety of their families. These internally displaced people migrated to those areas where both Madheshi and Pahadi people reside. Many of these displaced people are still waiting for the peaceful return to their birth-place. However, when asked of the Madheshi leaders on the anti-Pahadi agitation, they outrightly rejected the blame and claimed that the anti-Pahadi activities were the result of

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the state's infiltration to weaken the Madheshi agitation. (Nepal, December 16, 2007, Translation mine)

During the Madhesh agitation, the Madheshi people thought that the forceful displacement of the Pahadi people was the natural revenge for the intentional migration of the Pahadi people from the hills to the plains areas of Nepal in the past (Hachhethu 2007, p. 4). Therefore, many Madheshi indirectly supported the Madhesh-based armed groups who targeted mainly the Pahadi community during several years of Madhesh agitation. However, after the migration of most of the upper class Pahadi people from the Madhesh to the hills because of the threats from the Madhesh-based armed groups, and since most Madhesh-based armed groups were apolitical and interested more in making money and gaining power, they turned their agitation against the remaining upper-class Madheshis for ransoms and other financial benefits. "Most of the armed Madheshi groups targeted mainly Pahadi people for extortion, kidnapping, killing, and threats in 2006–8 however, in recent time, these Madheshi armed groups started to target normal people including Madheshi" (Samaya, Nov. 8, 2007, p. 34).

Later, the Madheshi leaders and Madheshi people started realizing that any armed conflict or any demand, which disintegrates community based on culture and ethnicity, are threats to the society and sustainable peace and development. According to Lal, a Madheshi influential leader, "Madheshi people may think that if Pahadi are forcefully displaced from Madhesh then the remaining Madheshi get benefitted, but with Pahadi and Madheshi, a mixed society is necessary for development and peace" (cited in Nepal, 2007, December 16). Similarly, the 23 Madheshi and all 12 Madheshi-indigenous opinion leaders from different parts of Nepal who participated in the focus group discussions supported the need of Madheshi-Pahadi mixed society to achieve peace and development. Five Madheshi participants showed much concern

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about historical processes and urged that the Madhesh movement was the result of the intentional migration of Pahadi people from the hills and mountains to the Terai. An interviewee argued that “the planned resettlement program of Pahadi people into Madhesh by King Mahendra in 1960s created cultural intervention into Madhesh and the present Pahadi-Madheshi conflict has roots in this internal migration.” Almost all Pahadi participants claimed that they are part of the Terai, some of them (22 participants) told me that Terai was their birthplace and that they were waiting to return after the permanent peace settlement between Madheshi and Pahadi in the Terai is reached.

The Madhesh movement was and still is influenced by regional politics, especially formal and informal influence from India. The demands of creating a new province in India based on ethnicity and language (such as Darjeeling and its periphery separate as “Gorkhaland” province), the recent recognition of Telengana as a separate province, the demand of Bodo land as a separate province, and the Tamil versus Hindi language issues in Tamilnadu, are significantly impacting the caste and identity movements in Nepal. “Nepali leaders need not look far to find compelling illustrations of such policies in practice” (Middleton and Shneiderman, 2008, p. 39). Similarly, indigenous issues of the Chakma ethnic groups in Bangladesh, and Tamil language and culture conflicts in Sri Lanka are other influential issues impacting Nepalese caste and identity movements. For example, the Nepalese media reported and highlighted many of the news stories related to the Indian influences during that time. *Nepal Saptahik* reported involvement of the Indian secret service in the Nepalese Madheshi movement:

A lot of direct and indirect information compel us to believe that the Indian intelligence service (Research and Analysis Wing RAW) are highly active in the Madheshi issue and

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their plan is not to settle on behalf of Nepal but, India wants the upper hand on the Madheshi issue for their own political interests. (2007, December 9)

Similarly, an extremely controversial view on the Madhesh movement from an Indian senior envoy of the Indian Consulate Office in Birganj, Mr. S. D. Mehta, is an example of how the Indian interventions on the Madhesh movement are deep and serious.⁵² According to the *Telegraph Daily* (May 18, 2012), at a dinner meeting with most Madhesh leaders and parliament members, Mr. Mehta said, “Much ahead of May 27 entire Madhesh should be under the grip of a political blizzard” (Paragraph 5). May 27 was the last date of the First Constituent Assembly tenure and the Indian envoy knew that the First Constituent Assembly was going to fail to reach consensus on the new constitution. Further, Mehta said, “Splitting Madhesh into several provinces would be similar to breaking my heart into pieces” (Paragraph 6). The internal strategy of the Indian political leaders on the Madhesh issue, by mistake, surfaced at this Birganj dinner. Because of the media, which importantly highlighted the envoy’s highly controversial views (for example, *Kantipur* continuously reported this issue on May 18, 19, and 20, 2012), the Indian Embassy was forced to clarify the matter publicly through the press.⁵³ This event indicates that because of the Nepalese media’s involvement, a regional political power, India, was forced to reconsider their Madheshi identity policy and put Nepal’s national interests first.

Moreover, an official call for the intervention from India on the Madheshi issue was formally welcomed when the late Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala told a BBC radio

⁵² *Kantipur* (2012, May 18, 19, and 20) has given higher priority to these news stories mostly on the first page and sixth page of their coverage.

⁵³ Indian Embassy Press Release, May 18, 2012. Retrieved on March 18, 2015 from:

http://www.indianembassy.org.np/index2.php?option=Ui3vzctxn5xHZVIBeyayl4Esp_mDrgNifomf1lhLMr4&id=qoYCTbI2H5ATJhuIyfp2LZNGLxPv0Z0f5Q5ulSnKQKw

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program on December 18, 2007 that “only an Indian and Nepali joint effort can solve the Madhesh problem in one minute.”⁵⁴ However, the Prime Minister’s view on the call for Indian intervention in the Madhesh movement was rejected by all Madheshi leaders as well as the oppositions in the Nepalese Parliament. Later, the Indian foreign ministry and the Nepalese foreign ministry released separate statements that “Madheshis’ identity issue is the problem of Nepal and Nepalese are responsible and capable of solving it (Indian Embassy Press Release May 18, 2012).” According to a report published in the *Telegraph Daily* (2012), “Officially, Indian foreign policy does not permit any interference in Nepal’s internal political affairs. However, there is a suspicion that actually the Madhesh crisis is provoked by India or some political elements based over there.”

The debates on Indian interventions continue in the Nepalese media. Additionally, questions about the inferior social, economic, and political conditions of the Madheshi people exist and need to be properly addressed by the state. When analyzing the socioeconomic conditions of Madheshis, one can observe that Madheshis are not given national attention on education, government jobs, or representation. Yadav (2007) urges that Madheshi are denied access and resources in many social and economic sectors in comparison to other groups. Yadav (2007) noted that:

Independent commissions of Janajatis, Dalits, and women have been formed by the government, completely ignoring the Madheshis, creating divisions among them by

⁵⁴ The interview of the late Prime Minister on the Madhesh movement (Audio podcast) can be heard at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaselector/check/nepali/meta/dps/2007/12/071208_nayanepal?size=au&bgc=003399&lang=ne&nbram=1&nbwm=1

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segregating Janajatis and Dalits of Terai and lumping them with Janajatis and Dalits of hills and mountains, and weakening the common voice of Madhesis. (p. 97)

The new constitution, which is in the process of being written, is supposed to address all the social, economic, cultural, and political concerns of the Madheshi peoples. The representation of the Madheshi people in parliament is more than 150 in the Second Constituent Assembly, enough to exert real pressure to help relieve some of the protests taking place in the plains of Nepal. Figure 2.1 shows the Madheshi-dense areas of Nepal. These Madheshi do not include Tharu who declared themselves a separate Adibashi community of Nepal. The Terai land remains comprised of Madheshi (less than 50%), Pahadi (less than 30%), and indigenous (less than 20%).

Charles Haviland (2007) reported on BBC News that 70% of Pahadi were displaced from the Madheshi majority city of Janakpur after the Madhesh movement. These situations occurred elsewhere in other parts of the Madhesh areas. The Norwegian refugee Council (NRC) sent out a press release on March 5, 2008 while the International Crisis Group continuously covered the news on IDPs from July 2007 through 2008; many other international organizations such as the UN started showing a deep concern about the forceful displacement of Pahadi people as well. The Nepalese government and relevant NGOs do not have the exact figures of affected IDPs from the Madheshi movement. According to National Human rights Commission Nepal (2008, p. 1), the internally displaced persons (IDPs) could range from approximately 37,000 to 400,000 whereas the official estimate of the government is just 7,000-8,000. The Internal Displacement Division (IDD) mission to Nepal reported that IDPs figure should be up to 200,000.

In conclusion, despite the huge impacts of the Madhesh movement and fragmentation between Madheshi and Pahadi communities, most of the national media played a very positive

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and constructive role in minimizing the conflicts. Hachhethu (2007), who scrutinized the print media in the aftermath of the Madhesh movement, gave credit to the “media as well for not giving communal flavor to the Madhesh uprising” (p. 6). In addition to the Madhesh movement, forceful internal migration due to the inter-caste marriages, caste discrimination, and untouchability are also continuously reshaping Nepalese society, mostly from rural to urban areas. Because of the high levels of media alertness to these types of issues, all caste-related discrimination issues tend to surface. Many Pahadi people are waiting for the permanent settlement of the Madheshi-Pahadi identity conflict so that they can return to their birthplace. The media, which covered most of the Madheshi movement in positive ways, are continuously playing responsive roles to help minimize the conflict. As urged by Hachhethu (2007) the Madheshi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), the Madhesh-based largest political party, “gave a communal flavor to the Madheshi movement for the purpose of mass mobilization” (p. 6). However, *Kantipur*, *Gorakhatra*, and other national newspapers extensively reported anti-communal perception during the Madhesh movement so that the Madhesh movement did not transform into severe caste or cultural violence. This supports the second hypothesis.

The next section discusses the media’s roles in caste identity conflicts related to the quota issue in Nepal. One of the major issues raised in the Madheshi movement was the demand for a quota for the Madheshis in all economic and political sectors.

Quota Issue

The quota issue is very popular among the lower castes, the Madheshi people, and the indigenous people. This section describes various aspects of the quota system in Nepal. I try to analyse caste and ethnic representations in various professional institutions, intellectual organizations, government jobs, and mid-level associations and I will examine how the quota is

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used against under-represented castes, indigenous peoples, and Dalits—ultimately leading to further discrimination. The views of the opinion leaders who were interviewed about Nepal's quota system are summarized and presented. Does the implementation of a quota system reduce caste-based identity conflict? Does the quota system impact society positively? How do the opinion leaders acquire information on the quota system? These were some of the questions discussed in the semi-structured interviews. Findings are presented below.

Nepal is a conglomerate of diverse cultures, religions, languages, and ethnicities. However, social elites, which comprise the Brahman and Chhetris ruling class, have traditionally dominated Nepal's state structure. Their dominance and influence exist in all spheres of social and economic life in Nepal ranging from the government to local-level decision-making processes. People belonging to Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous groups are deprived of opportunities and access to resources and rights. Their representation in government, bureaucracy, and the judiciary system is very low. In addition to the Dalits and indigenous groups, various other groups such as women and Madheshi have also been obliged to live as second-class citizens. Gurung (2003) points out three social groups that have become marginalized by the state's policies: Janajatis are marginalized based on their culture; Dalits based on caste; and Madheshis based on geography. Therefore, adopting a new system of governance should promote wider public participation of the marginalized social groups in all sectors of the national development process. This comprises inclusiveness of all groups and communities in order to safeguard the rights of the marginalized groups and adopt a participatory model in the governing system.

Many neighboring countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka started incorporating Dalits, Adibashi, and other lower castes into the economic and political

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mainstream since the 1970s. In the process of development, many countries started incorporating new programs and government policies toward the inclusiveness of all sectors of society—culture, caste, and geography. The constitution of independent India not only abolished untouchability for example, but also made provisions to reserve jobs and seats in government undertakings and educational institutions, respectively, for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Gupta, 2005, p. 417).

Existing government structures have not been able to ensure the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, however. Similarly, the legislative system has not been able to function as a forum in which diverse issues are raised and discussed, and people's access to the judicial system is difficult and limited. These situations suggest that Nepal's state structure is predominantly centralized.⁵⁵ Many governments since 1949 have tried to incorporate decentralization policies in Nepal, but all have failed. Probably because of this, “one of the major demands of the Janandolan II was not just democracy, but more inclusive democracy” (Bennett, Dahal, & Gibindasamy, 2008, p. 4). The future system of governance needs to ensure decentralization of political powers all the way to the local level, which is so far concentrated at the central level. Therefore, the option of federalism is viable and the political forces have agreed

⁵⁵ A state system in which the power is vested in the central government and parliament is known as the centralized unitary state system. In this system, only the center exercises the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial power. In this system, there is a centralized administrative control, central budget system, and central planning system. The Nepalese system practiced still today is under the central unitary state system. State Restructuring and Issues of Local Self-governance in Nepal report (2007) published by the Association of District Development Committees of Nepal. Retrieved from:

http://www.addcn.org.np/quick_file/State%20Restructuring%20and%20Issues%20of%20Local%20Self%20Governance%20in%20Nepal1.pdf

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in the interim constitution to end the unitary system of governance. It is hoped that a restructured state can ensure good governance at all levels and allow the people's participation in a democratic process that is inclusive and participatory.

At present, most of the political parties in Nepal's parliament support the federal system to decentralize political power to the local levels. Figures 7.5 and 7.6 show that Nepal's government policy for the quota system in formal employment is intended to achieve inclusiveness in the government machinery. The public service commission agreed to support a quota system based on language and ethnic groups for all government employees. Women, indigenous, and Madheshi peoples were given shares based on their population density in Nepalese society.⁵⁶

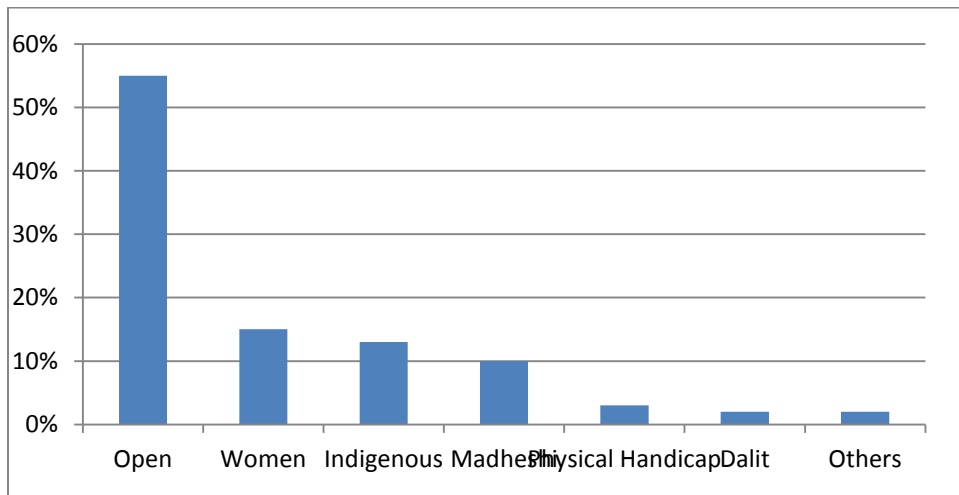


Figure 7.5: Public Service Commission declared their Quota for inclusiveness

⁵⁶ Data for Figure 7.5, 7.6, and 7.7 are selected from Public service Commission of Nepal (2013, p. 15) and later analyzed to make it in the form: Retrieved from: <http://www.psc.gov.np/uploads/201308071375854409.pdf>

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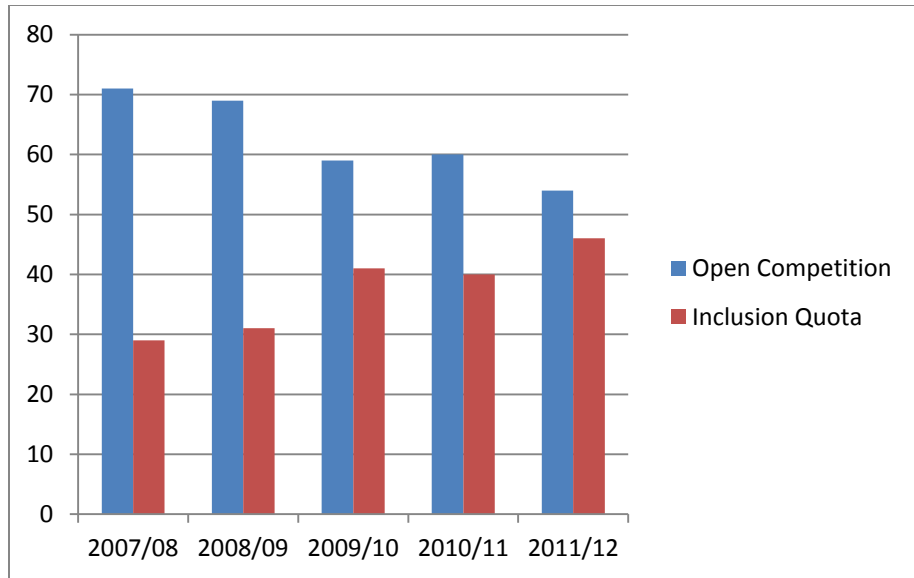


Figure 7.6: Number of Applications Applied in Public Service Commission

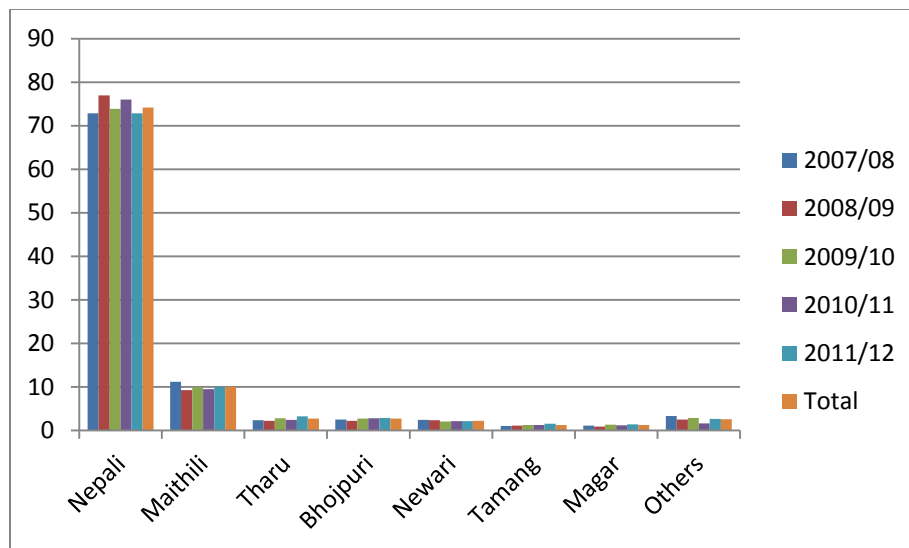


Figure 7.7: Percentage of Applicants Based on Mother Tongue

Figure 7.7 shows the applicants to the public service commission based on their primary language. In terms of language when compared to the population census, the Nepalese speaking peoples' applications are over represented compared to others. This indicates that there is a lower

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percentage of especially, Madheshi, Tamang, and Magar-speaking people in government jobs. Similarly, when compared to the religious faith-based applications and the census data from the public service commission, it is found that applicants who are Hindu and Christian are over represented compared to other religious people such as Muslim and Buddhist.

Figures 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11 show the representation of different castes and ethnic groups in various associations. These associations, especially the Bar Association and Professor Association, are very active in all social and political movements throughout Nepal since 1976. From the analysis of the raw data collected from various professional organizations on caste and ethnic participation, one pattern emerged that indicates that upper-caste participation in high-level organizations is quite high in comparison to the population census figures shown in Figure 7.12. In the case of engineering professionals and the Bar Association, the Brahmin, Chhetri, and Newars have higher representation. It is interesting to mention here that the Newars, who claim themselves as indigenous people, demanded quotas in higher-level socio-political and economic activities arguing that they are underprivileged people in Nepalese society. In the mid-level organizations, the participation of Madheshi and indigenous communities is substantial and the percentage has been continuously increasing in the last decade. All the data were collected from Nepal Bar Association, Nepal Engineers' Association, and Junior Engineers' Association and I analyzed it to convert into the chart form in figure 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11.

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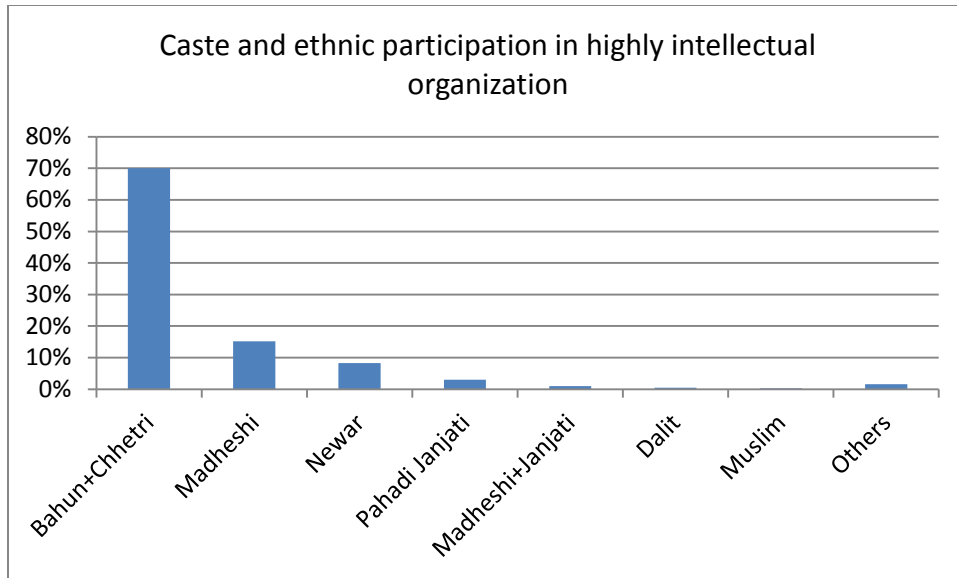


Figure 7.8: Percentage of General Members in the Professor Association

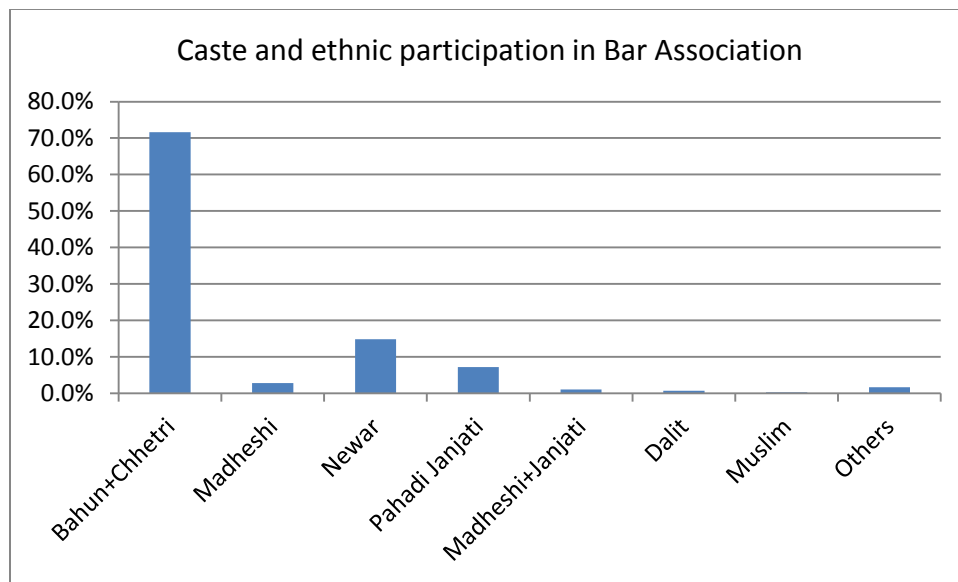


Figure 7.9: Percentage of Registered lawyers in Appeal court: 2012

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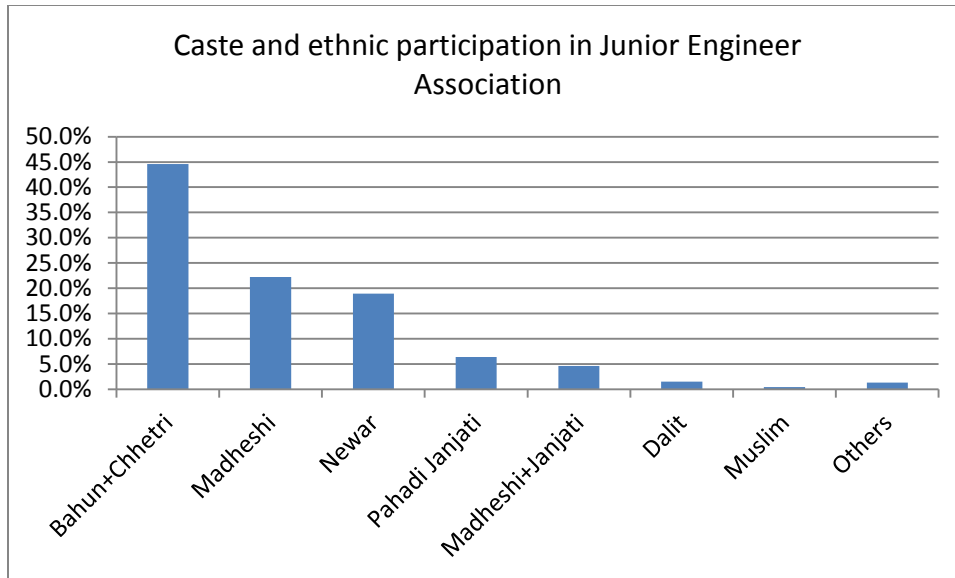


Figure 7.10: Mid-level Development Workers: Junior Engineers

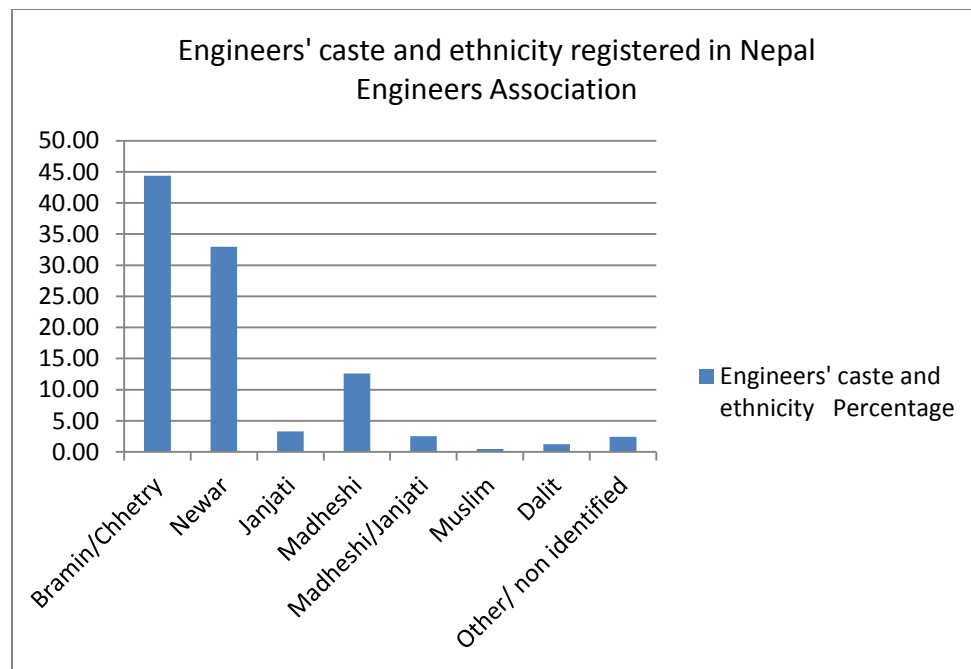


Figure 7.11: Percentage of Qualified Engineers Registered in the Nepal Engineers Association

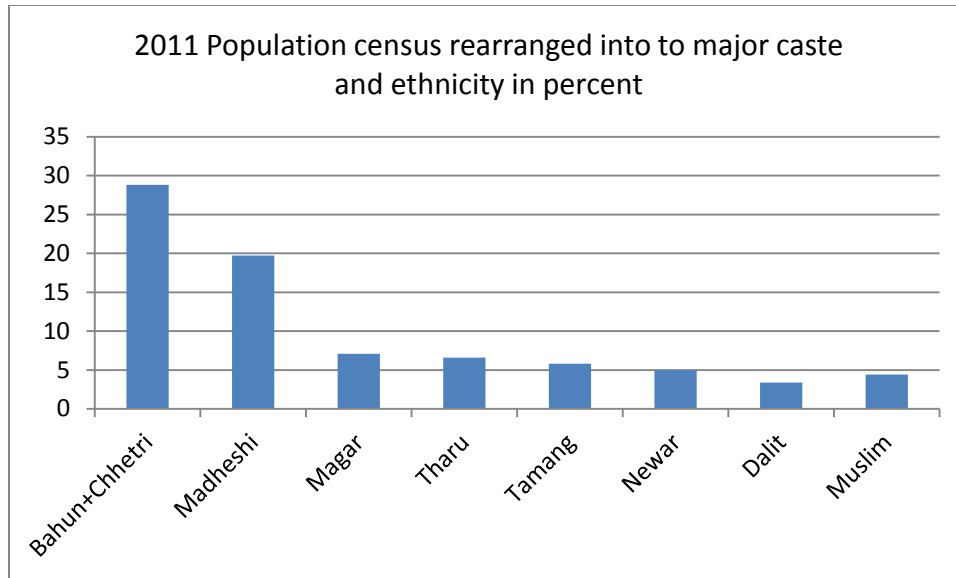


Figure 7.12: Population census about caste and ethnicity in percent

There is a high demand for quotas in all sectors of public and private institutions for employment. In addition, quotas are demanded in education and cultural sectors as well. One of the major demands of the Madheshi movement is to the quota system in all sectors. However, whether the quotas truly address problems of inclusion of all underrepresented and underprivileged castes or if it facilitates upper sub-castes who are already representing the wealthy within the same ethnic groups is still to be determined. For example, Dhakal (2014) gives a detailed description of the representation of all sub-castes within the Madheshi community in government jobs. Table 7.2 below provides the details of the Madheshi sub-castes representation in the government jobs.

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Table 7.2

Madheshi Sub-caste Representation in Government Jobs

Caste	Population %	% in Public Service jobs	% of higher representation compare to population %
Rajput (Upper Caste)	0.158	0.889	5.6
Kayasta (Upper caste)	0.167	0.741	4.4
Brahmin (Madhesh)	0.506	1.69	3.3
Brahmin (Pahadi)	12.1	39.2	3.2
Thakur (Upper caste)	0.444	0.585	1.6
Newar	5.008	7.89	1.57
Sanyasi (Upper caste)	0.86	1.25	1.4
Gharti (Bhujel)	0.448	0.585	1.3
Chhetri	16.6	19.59	1.18
Kalwar	0.48	0.543	1.1

Further research shown in Table 7.2 was done by the department of humanities and social sciences at Tribhuvan University, Nepal, and published on an online digital media website (Setopati, 2014). Table 7.2 shows that the upper castes within both Pahadi and Madheshi communities have higher representation in public service jobs compared to their population size and it also shows that Rajput, Kayasta, Madheshi Brahmin, and Pahadi Brahmin are over-represented. The lesser percentages of castes in public service are Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Kami, Musalman, Rai, Gurung, and Limbu, which are the sub-castes of the Pahadi Janajati communities.

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The government rules on the quota for the indigenous and Madheshi people do not specify which castes/sub-castes within the indigenous and Madheshi are more underrepresented in the public services sector. Because of this, those sub-castes within indigenous and Madheshi, which are already overrepresented in socioeconomic sectors, including public services, are getting more opportunities under the quota system and creating further differences between the haves and the have-nots in Nepalese society. In this regard, Mishra (2014) suggests that:

There is a need to reform all those institutions which do not guarantee the equal rights and equal opportunity for all castes, and they should be discrimination free. The Nepalese people want adequate representation in all institutions and proper accessibility in all development activities. The honest actions on this regards can reduce the caste-based advocacy in the Nepalese society. (p. 6)

During the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews, more than 72% of the participants raised issues regarding the problems within the quota system. The quota system increased the inclusiveness of the castes and ethnic groups but, most beneficiaries were from the upper class and upper sub-castes within the broader ethnic groups. Twenty-nine interviewees pleaded for quotas for lower castes. Similarly, 13 interviewees pleaded for the inclusion of lower castes and poor people in all sectors by giving them their proper quotas. Eighty-one participants argued for the inclusion of lower castes and the poor in order to minimize the caste-based identity conflicts in Nepalese society because economic inclusion and access to resources were the major contentious issues. Two interviewees, a politician (Dahal, S., personal communication, February 14, 2013) from Kathmandu and a lawyer from Jumla (anonymous, personal communication, August 3, 2013), believed that “economic rights and economic enhancement provide health, education, and food security which is foremost important than caste rights.”

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Eleven interviewees expressed their view saying that “both economic and caste identity issues are different and not related to each other. However, the economic issue is more important than the caste issue.”

In conclusion, it was found in all the focus group discussions and interviews that the quota system seemed to be necessary but it needs to be more inclusive in terms of lower class and lower castes as well as excluded communities, in other words, extremely remote areas (such as most parts of the Karnali zone). In this regard, media is playing a strong role in Nepal by providing information and analysis about the advantages and disadvantages of a blanket quota system versus an effective and inclusive quota system (Newar, February 27, 2004;⁵⁷ Mahato, 2007;⁵⁸ Magar, 2009⁵⁹). On the inclusiveness of lower castes, minority language groups, and lower classes, some of the major recommendations provided by the International Crisis Group—ICG (2007, p. 4) to the Nepal government to address the Madhesh identity conflict were:

- Address the reasonable demands for political participation of all excluded groups (not just those whose protests have forced attention);

⁵⁷ Newar (2004) noted that “There are over 100 ethnic and caste groups in the country and there is no agreements about which are eligible for reservation. Many fear quota percentages might be excessive in some cases and end up leaving others out altogether.”

⁵⁸ Mahato (2004, p. 4) submitted a research report to SNV and suggested that “Reservation is most necessary to end the discrimination carried by the state from the centuries to mount the national campaign.”

⁵⁹ Magar (2009) noted that “the provision of reservations in India did not alleviate poverty and end oppression; it gave birth to a new elite class within the community” (Paragraph 2). Further he urged that “there is a 'poor class' within each linguistic, ethnic and regional community. Affirmative action is supposed to uplift them, but what look workable in the beginning may turn out to be infeasible as it has in India” (Paragraph 5).

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- Revise the electoral system to ensure fair representation of Madheshis and all other marginalized groups, including a fresh delineation of constituency boundaries if the mixed electoral system is retained; and
- Implement some immediate affirmative action measures to boost Madheshi presence in the civil service.

Therefore, the quota system is not a perfect system for the inclusiveness of all the downtrodden but, this system can be scientifically used for the needy, underrepresented, and underprivileged people. A high precaution should be taken not to provide additional benefits to the socially, economically, and politically powerful in the name of a quota system.

I concluded that quota issues are one of the major concerns of caste-based identity conflict as it is socially, economically, and politically beneficial for the upper crust of Madheshi and indigenous communities since people at the bottom in each of these communities do not have access to resources to get required qualifications. In Nepal the issue of the quota system is given much space and it has become a major concern in the media world. Continuous reporting in the print media and participants' concerns on the quota issue indicates that quota demands are one of the major issues, with strong correlations with the caste-based identity conflicts, and therefore, it needs further in-depth study in the case of Nepal. The Nepalese media especially, *Kantipur* and *Gorakhatra* provided adequate spaces in favor of a needs-based quota system so that the blanket quota system does not develop further economic gaps leading to further social and economic conflicts. This supports the second hypothesis.

Conclusion

This chapter, thus, analyzed and discussed the issue of Pahadi identity issues as represented in the print media, specifically, *Kantipur* and *Gorakhatra*. In order to support the

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validity of the research hypothesis and answer its corresponding research question (How do various print media outlets—i.e., public versus private—depict Pahadi identity-based conflict in contemporary Nepal?), this chapter made a comparative analysis of the content of *Kantipur* and *Gorakhapatra*. Similarly, interviewees' perceptions on the caste discrimination issue, inter-caste marriage, internal displacement during the Madhesh uprising, and quota demands were also analyzed. From the analysis, what I found was that both newspapers and most of the interviewees were against the caste based discriminations and internal displacement of Pahadi people from Madhesh. As I concluded earlier, contents in *Kantipur* newsprint were focused more against caste identity-based restructuring compared to *Gorakhapatra*; whereas, in the case of caste discrimination, inter-castes marriage, internal displacement, and quota demands, both newspapers' emphases were very similar, supporting the first and second hypotheses. In addition, opinion leaders have mixed views on inter-castes marriage. Some interviewees supported them whereas some did not; however, both newspapers continuously pleaded in favor of inter-castes marriage, supporting third hypothesis.

CHAPTER 8

GENERAL FINDINGS OF THE PAHADI-BASED IDENTITY CONFLICT ISSUES IN
MADHESH AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

In this chapter, I explore how the media played important roles in the Pahadi-Madheshi conflict of the Terai. Further, I discuss the findings related to the media's roles in the Pahadi-Madheshi identity conflicts. The Pahadi identity issue is the byproduct of the Madheshi identity demands that emerged after the Second Janandolan in April 2006 and it accelerated during the 21-day Madhesh movement in January and February of 2007. According to Yadav (2006), the Pahadi people in the 20 districts of Madhesh make up 33% of the total Terai population. This is a significant size compared to the Madheshi population overall in Nepal. Madheshi leaders' perceptions about the Tharus are inclusive as well, suggesting that they should be treated as Madheshis and not as indigenous people of the Terai or plains in the southern part of Nepal. This perception may strengthen Madheshi leaders' bargaining power in the process of power-sharing with the Pahadis. However, Tharu leaders dispute this politically-driven classification of their identity.

In the focus group discussion in far-west Dhangadhi, Tharu opinion leaders showed disagreement and claimed that they are indigenous but are not Madheshi. Similarly, 12 Tharus who participated in the interviews also claimed that they should be identified as indigenous, not Madheshi. The Madheshi leaders are playing a political game by proposing the Tharu identity as Madheshi for their own political gains. The ICG report (2007) supports the Tharu participants' claims as it stated, "Tharus do not consider themselves as Madhesis, except for some assimilated Tharus of the eastern Terai" (p. 2).

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Similarly, Muslims, who are considered part of the Madheshi ethnic group by most of the Madheshi leadership, reject the Madheshi identity. Muslims instead claim themselves as a religious minority in Nepal. Lawoti and Langen (2013) noted that “Tharus in the far-western Terai reject the Madheshi label and instead claim an independent identity as the original inhabitants of the” Terai (p. 148). Similarly, some segments of the Muslim population in the Terai have also contested being identified as Madheshi (p. 148).

During and after the Madhesh movement, most of the leaders demanded identity rights for the Madheshi people along with language rights and quotas in the socio-economic sectors. They pushed for the creation of a single province of Madhesh in the state. However, Madheshi leaders failed to consider the 36% Pahadi minority in the Madhesh. Nobody showed concern for the physically and psychologically endangered Pahadi population in the Madhesh after the Madhesh movement because the Pahadi people were in the majority within the national context. This is referred to as the “double-minority problem,”⁶⁰ in which the Pahadi concerns were overlooked because they were the minority in the plains while they were a majority within the overlapping areas of Nepal. As mentioned earlier, the Madhesh movement, which began by demanding the Madheshis identity rights, turned into an anti-Pahadi agitation during the Madheshi movement of 2007.⁶¹ The Indian border areas from Jhapa in the east and Kanchanpur in the west, which have a similar culture and have cross-border kinship and intermarriage relationships, psychologically and economically supported the concept of “One Madhesh, One Province” based on their linguistic and cultural affinities. In connection with the cross-border

⁶⁰ The term double-minority is used to describe the psychological state created when two devalued identities interact to influence the individual in a way that is greater than the sum of the independent effects of those identities (Gonzales, Blanton, and Williams, 2002, p. 659).

⁶¹ See Hachhethu, 2007, p. 5.

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support for the Madhesh agitation, Mishra (2007) noted that “the trans-national linkages along with the open border have contributed significantly to enhancing the capacity of the Madhesis to fight against the hill-dominated state” (p. 4). According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, as many as 100 armed groups in Terai mushroomed after the Madhesh uprising and many of them were supported from across the border in India. Most of these armed groups operated as criminal gangs and engaged in killings, abductions, threats, and extortion in the name of Madheshi peoples’ rights and autonomy (AI, 2013, p. 11).

The Chure Bhabar Ekta Samaj—a forum of Pahadi people residing in the north part of Siwalik hill—emerged in response to the Madheshi uprising where 51 Pahadi people were killed and thousands were forced to evacuate their homes in the Madhesh. The emergence of the Chure Bhabar party threatened three main national political parties and the main Madheshi party, “Madheshi Janadhikar Forum” (MJF), which took extra precaution not to transform the Madheshi movement into a communal conflict.

The Madheshi agitations were covered extensively in all the major newspapers. I examined eight national newspapers (*Kantipur, Nepal Saptahic, Samacharpatra, Annapurna Post, Gorakhapatra, Himal, Samaya, Rajdhani*) after the Madhesh movement between February 2007 and March 2008 and found that a total of 871 news stories related to the Madheshi movement were released. The details are shown in Table 8.1.

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Table 8.1

Detail Categories of News Reported during the Madhesh Movement

Types of News	Number of News
Development issues of Madheshi (social and economic discrimination, access to resources and development)	82
Killings	45
Torture	17
Policy custody, security	55
Agitation	60
Fights among political party cadres	32
Bomb explosions (destruction of public property)	37
Threats, abductions, illegal drugs, and kidnapping	55
State support to victims	21
Internal displacement	33
Comments on agreements (negotiations with Madheshi armed groups)	135
Comments on quotas	53
Identity demands (One Madhesh, One Province; Language; Tharuhut; Limbuwan)	91
Others (Madheshi party's activities news, election news)	155

During this whole period of the Madhesh movement and its aftermath, most of the national media including the FM radios continuously campaigned against any kind of communal thinking and activities and highlighted the negative results of caste-based identity conflicts. For example, *Kaya Kairan*, an analytical program aired every morning at 7:00 am from Kathmandu

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and aired by more than 80 local FM radio stations in various districts, called various Pahadi and Madheshi leaders and social activists for short interviews (3-5 minutes). I talked to the chief of the FM radio, Mr. Hem Bahadur Bista, about the selection of interviewees. Mr. Bista told me that they gave priority to the most current issues such as caste-based identity issues, debated federal structures, arguments over caste-based restructuring of the state, and also addressed other political conflicts. Further, he claimed that he gave priority to those participants for interviews who expressed positive and constructive views on the current issues. I was also called two times, first to give a short interview and, in the second interview, to provide a presentation in a round table discussion on the issue of caste-based identity conflict and natural resource management. In this regard, it can be seen that the media played fairly effective roles in safeguarding the Madheshi-Pahadi harmony during the Madheshi-Pahadi conflicts. Because the media campaigned against caste- and ethnic-based communal activities and extremist thinking, *Kantipur* and *Nagrik* newspapers were looted and burned many times in the Terai area during and after the Madhesh movement by Madheshi extremists. According to information compiled by the Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies (CEHURDES):

On 21 July 2006 a group of about 15 youths associated with the Nepali Madheshi Students' Front, affiliated to the Madheshi People's Rights Forum burned copies of "The Kathmandu Post," the daily newspaper "Kantipur," the weekly "Saptahik," and other newspapers and magazines in Janakpur. (2006)

The Pahadi identity issue in the Madhesh was not an aboriginal issue but, it was the byproduct of the Madhesh uprising and it had negative impacts on the minority Pahadi people residing in the 20 Terai districts of Nepal. As time passed, the people in the Madhesh started realizing that their mixed society was necessary in order to preserve the long-term peace and

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development of the region. In the focus group discussions in the four Terai districts of Nepal, all participants expressed concerns about the mishandling of the Madhesh movement by the political leadership in Madhesh for their personal grievances. According to Anil Jha (Feb. 2013), Former Minister for Commerce, the attack on the Pahadi community was the result of the past suppression, discrimination, and domination to the Madheshi by Pahadi people in the historical period. However, when asked about the mainstream socio-economic involvement of different communities, more than 80% believed that the Pahadi upper-caste people were the socio-economic and politically powerful communities in the Madhesh. But, the situation of Madheshi main castes such as Jha, Yadav, Srivastav, Rajpoot, Pahadi indigenous people, and Christians were comparatively better as they were extensively represented in the bureaucracy as shown in Table 7.1. Whereas, the situation of Muslims, Pahadi Dalits, and Terai Dalits were much worse off.

When asked about caste and ethnic pride, forty-one interviewees expressed extreme pride in being a members of the their caste and fifty-three interviewees showed moderate pride for their caste, shown in Figure 8.1. This pride is self-identified feelings of pleasure and satisfaction over something regarded as highly honorable or creditable to their own caste, which is, in reality, an imagined perception. Being a member of a caste and of an ethnic group is a matter of ascription. A shift may be taking place in Nepalese society in which pride becomes tied to achievement based on education, experiences, profession, or contributions toward society and humanity. The psychological perceptions of caste pride is therefore, somewhat linked to the “self and other” perceptions described by Wynter (2003) and it provides a basis for caste identity feelings in relation to others.

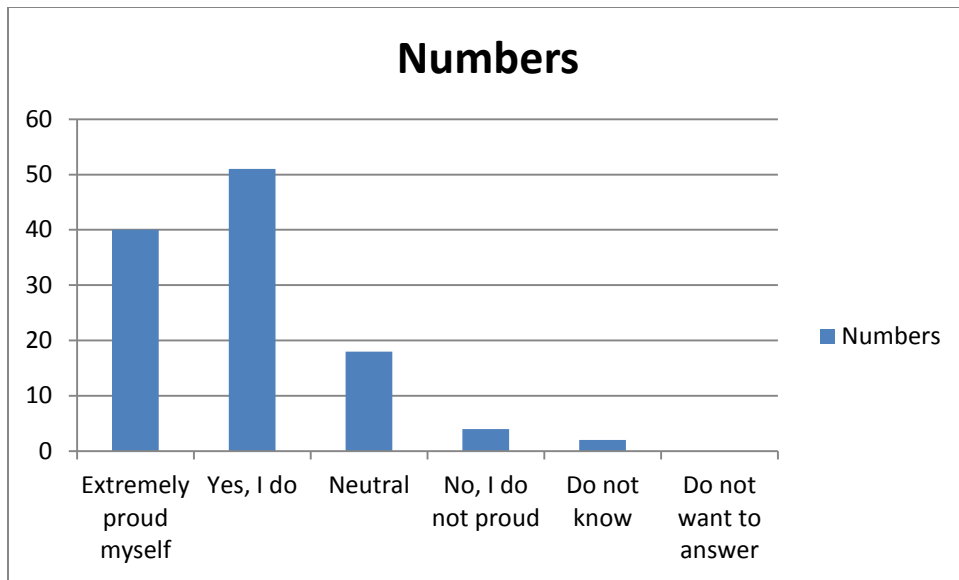


Figure 8.1: Pride at Being a Member of One’s Own Caste or Ethnic Group

Some of the participants’ views in the interviews, when asked about why they were involved in the Madheshi movement, were:

- I am a victim. I was discriminated by Pahadi people. I was undermined during my college life. Movement is necessary for the rights and dignity of Madheshi people. For me, economic agenda is necessary but, it is the second priority. Madheshi as an identity is most important for me. (Mrs. Sarita Giri-Chair NSP, June 23, 2013)
- I suffered caste discrimination from the Pahadi community during college union elections. I was forcefully blocked from registering my nomination form. I sat a hunger strike and then I got access to register. It was the event in 1993 in Biratnagar. I was also teased by Pahadi students. I even left the college and moved to India for higher education. However, at present I believe in the economic issue first and then the caste-identity issue. (June 23, 2013)
- Quotas should be given to the Pahadi minority in the Madhesh region.

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- Security of the Pahadi is most important issue in Madhesh for the resettlement back to their home in Madhesh. Pahadi people are still in a mistrustful situation of the Madhesh as we still remembered the 2007 Madheshi movement and its impact in corresponding years. (June 27, 2013)
- Coordination and cooperation between Madheshi and Pahadi are most important things for the development of the Madheshi as well as Pahadi community in Madhesh. (June 25, 2013)
- In 2007-2008, I was more influenced by the caste-based identity perspectives on the state restructuring of the country. Now, after observing lots of caste-based identity strikes, agitations, and processions, I feel that a mixed society is needed for the development of our country, thanks to Radio FM and newspapers. (Madheshi intellectual, June 18, 2013)
- Nepal is a mix of ethnic/cultural/caste society. Dividing this society is bad. High political level coordination is necessary. (Seventeen participants expressed this view.)
- Inclusion and quotas should be provided to Madhesis and as well as all poor and backward Pahadi people too. (Eighty-two participants expressed this view.)
- We, Limbu, are historically cheated by Brahmans and Chhetris, but national newspapers are not focusing on the historical discrimination. (July 7, 2015)
- It was the Kantipur media who continuously reported the news about the Indian envoy's views on Madheshi movement which, as a Madheshi activist, compelled me to rethink about the demand of "One Madhesh, One Province." (June 18, 2013)
- I feel discriminated by Pahadi people teasing as "Desi" and "Madese" in urban areas even though I am married to a Pahadi girl. I vindicated my feeling through an article in the newspaper. (June 19, 2013)

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- After knowing the representation of caste and indigenous people in government postings, I came to know that Dalit and some indigenous groups like Magar need to get quotas and some Pahadi minorities in the Madhesh region. It should not be for Madheshi Brahmans or Chhetris or Pahadi Limbu or Thakali. (Nagarik news and Onlinekhabar.com, Oct 15, 2013)

Public and private media have given equal importance to the conflict between Madheshi and Pahadi issues. However, the depths of the content were different. The private media such as *Kantipur* and *Nagrik* focused on the news stories, which pleaded for the social, economic, and political inclusion of all castes and ethnicities, but strongly criticized the anti-Pahadi movement and caste-based restructuring, “One Madhesh, One Province.” Because of this, as stated earlier, many issues of *Kantipur* were burned in the Madhesh during the Madhesh movement. On the other hand, providing equal amounts of space and importance, the *Gorakhapatra* contents were more descriptive, reporting events as they happened. During that time, the cabinets were comprised of all parties, and because of this, the public media could not report anything which went in for or against any castes or ethnic groups. This suggests that the second hypothesis is equally valid as the public media’s focus is influenced by the leadership in the government whereas the private media reports more in-depth news stories to a higher degree and provides more advocacies reporting when it comes to caste-based identity conflict events. Many of the interviewees were regular contributors to these newspapers. Some of these influenced people through their writing in the media. Results that demonstrate this connection between the interviewees and the media were:

- Four interviewees wrote articles for the print media.

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- Six interviewees gave interviews and participated in live discussions played out in the media.
- Six interviewees argued that media in Nepal was highly politicized, which is bad for the democratic enhancement of the Nepalese society.
- Seventeen interviewees told me that they attended many caste-related forums to discuss caste-based identity and quota issues where the media were present.
- Two interviewees suggested that there were lots of politically motivated media in Nepal. “We should not trust in one media. We need to read 2-3 media and then develop thought about the particular events.”⁶²

The caste identity issue was popular during the first Constituent Assembly election. The Maoist party became the biggest political party in the first CA election using caste identity as an issue and playing up inter-caste conflicts for their political gain. However, as time passed, entire media outlets campaigned against all types of extreme views related to caste-based fragmentation and conflict. For example, during the end of the first CA, out of almost 90% caste-based identity news coverage in the private newspaper *Kantipur*, more than 80% of the news spoke out against caste-ethnic divisions (see Table 6.8 and Figure 6.5). Similarly, print media always favored those stories that critically attacked the Maoist’s single-caste identity arguments. Two major popular private print media outlets, *Kantipur* and *Nagrik*, provided sufficient space on their front page for caste conflict issues (e.g., Table 6.8). Some of the print media reports on the “Pahadi” identity issues in Madhesh follow:

⁶² A former communication minister Mr. Sankar Pokhrel, and a government official (Chief District Officer), told me during the interview that he always read 2-3 media before coming to a conclusion on any political news stories.

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Pudasaini (2013) reported from Makwanpur district that:⁶³

The National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) appealed to the political parties to incorporate multiple caste identities into the restructuring of the state. In a high-level gathering in the central development region in Hetauda, Member secretary of NFDIN urged all new members of the Constituent Assembly from indigenous communities to pressure their political parties for the multiple-caste identity concept. Further, he opined that the single caste identity demand was the main cause of the failure of the first constituent assembly, a multi-caste and multi-ethnic identity in the state restructuring could settle the present caste-based identity conflict and an agreement could be reached in the second constituent assembly. In addition, the member secretary appealed to MPs that all extreme thinking on the issue of caste identity should be neutralized to achieve a federal constitution. (p. 2)

In another example, Timilsina wrote critically about Maoist conservativeness regarding the single caste identity, which appeared on the front page of *Kantipur* (December 9, 2013):⁶⁴

Even after the huge defeat in the second constituent assembly election, the United Maoist party is still in favor of the single-caste-identity-based restructuring of the state in the first place followed by the resource issue in the new constitution. The Maoists further stuck on the issue of rights to self-determination to the Madheshi and indigenous community, which they promised before the CA election. (p. 1)

Print media in Nepal gave higher importance to all ethnic conflict events whether they happened in Nepal or abroad. For example, Kumar (February 6, 2014) wrote a news story on

⁶³ This report was originally published in Nepali, translation mine.

⁶⁴ This report was originally published in Nepali, translation mine.

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ethnic conflict in Sudan in *Kantipur* where he portrayed the ferocity of the ethnic conflict. Similarly, the Nepalese print media also covered the caste-based identity programs such as meetings, discussions, or cultural events abroad. For example, *Kantipur* (February 6, 2014) provided information on international events. On an event happening in Hong Kong on February 3, 2014, Shrestha reported:

A popular comedian, Mr. Manoj Gajurel, performed a number of programs in various parts of the world within the Nepalese community focusing on Nepalese identity as foremost important compared with caste relationships. He pleaded that caste defragmentation is dangerous to the Nepalese unity through various comedy plays and acts. (p. 10, translation mine)

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Kantipur* print media roles were found to be very positive in preserving social and cultural harmony among different castes. *Kantipur* media house has taken all sorts of physical and business risks to save inter-caste harmony by providing critical thinking to the concerned political leadership and general populace. *Kantipur* has given adequate space to positive writings and positive political thoughts during the caste conflicts and its aftermath of the Madhesh movement. Their broadsheets gave more space and comparatively more humanistic reporting on caste-based identity conflict issues, whereas the public media reporting was highly descriptive and influenced by Nepal's Information and Communication Ministry's leadership. This chapter, thus, mainly concentrated on how caste-based identity conflict is represented /reported in print media, specifically, in *Kantipur* and *Gorakhapatra*. In so doing, I mainly explored how the Hindu caste system, in the context of the Pahadi-Madheshi conflict, was heading through the politics of quota into caste-based identity conflict. As per the research

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questions and their corresponding hypotheses, it was found that private media outlet coverage of caste-based identity conflict was higher and more emphatic than that of the public print media. In this study it was found that the role of *Kantipur* was also to help manage the caste-based identity conflict through the use of highly regarded opinion leaders and by providing more space to articles and news stories in favor of inter-caste marriages, anti-discriminatory news stories, and articles favoring need based quota rather than blanket quota and colorless restructuring of the state. At the same time, it must be acknowledged as pointed out in the previous chapter that the public news reporting was not beholden to increasing market shares and therefore often provided less sensationalistic reporting in some instances such as following caste-based identity conflicts through to their resolution instead of just portraying the conflict without its resolution such as was done on occasion in the private media reporting.

This chapter further strengthens the study's argument that the role of opinion leaders was very crucial in shaping and reshaping people's opinions on the issue of caste-identity conflict, particularly as they related to the Pahadi-Madheshi conflict. Moreover, it was also shown that print media, private and public, had positive roles in creating socio-cultural cohesion and peace in Nepalese society.

CHAPTER 9

THE HINDU CASTE SYSTEM RELATED TO CASTE-BASED CONFLICTS INCLUDING
QUOTAS AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

This chapter explores how the caste system in Hindu society was gradually transformed into caste-based identity politics of quota and political representation. In the case of Nepal, do the present contentious issues such as caste-based identity restructuring lead to caste-based identity conflict in Nepal? What role do the media play in either mitigating or exacerbating this conflict? How do the opinion leaders perceive and disseminate information related to caste-based identity politics? The discussions of these questions in this chapter lead to some conclusions on the role of media on caste-based identity conflict in general.

As mentioned earlier, caste identity is an imaginary conception. Caste identity in the Hindu caste system relates to the existence of the various sub-castes within a main caste. For example, Pariyar (2013) urges that within the Newar caste, there are many sub-castes. Within these sub-castes some are low, such as Chyame, Pode, and Kasai. These lower sub-castes are socially and culturally suppressed by the upper Newar castes themselves. Therefore, how the lower sub-castes of the Newar community think about their social, economic, and political improvements by developing a caste-based state by demanding a Newa province will have repercussions throughout the Newar caste, of which not all will be positive.

Does the Madheshi leadership agree to sit together, eat together, or intermarry with the Madheshi untouchables such as the Dom, Mushahar, and Chamar? Similar to the Newar, the Madheshi proposed to develop many provinces within the Pahadi majority areas based on caste; however, with lots of divisions related to caste and sub-caste membership within the Madheshi community itself, Madheshi leadership and their constituents must be cautious when arguing for

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“One Madhesh, One Province” in order to safeguard the Madheshi identity. Madheshi leaders are pleading “One Madhesh, One Province” in the name of the Madheshi identity to distract people from related issues of untouchability, caste divisions, social and cultural misconduct, prejudice, suppression, underdevelopment, and poverty in the Madheshi community. However, unlike in the 2008 CA election, a majority of voters in the Terai, for example Morang where majority people are from the Madheshi community, cast their ballots this time, leaving aside the issue of ethnic identity (*Kathmandu Post*, November 27, 2013).

However, the issue of Brahmin identity is a little different. The identity of Bahun is not the self-identity formed by them but, it is created by “others.” The Brahmin identity issue is the byproduct of the demands of various other communities for their caste and ethnic identity rights. According to Daryn (2003), “Bahuns, who do not view themselves as a group, nor meet the usual anthropological definition of an ‘ethnic group,’ were so classified and are generally seen as a group by outsiders (other Nepalese ‘groups’ and scholars)” (p. 162). Therefore, being a Bahun means, in others’ views, a social and cultural distinction. In a report by Amnesty International India, Divya Iyer (2014) mentioned that “members of dominant castes are known to use sexual violence against Dalit women and girls as a political tool for punishment, humiliation and assertion of power” (Paragraph 5). Therefore, being a Bahun, an upper caste person, is not just a caste category, but it is also a perception about a powerful self in relation to an “other.”

This perception of power related to Brahmanism, however, is not limited to their particular caste; it is also a behavior and characteristic of a person in society. In this regard, an eminent Dalit movement leader, Dr. Ambedkar’s opinion is important to remember:

“Brahmanism was not simply about maintaining the power, dignity and welfare of Brahmans as a community, but that it was also about denying freedom, equality, and brotherhood. He believed

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that Brahmanist tendencies are inherent in all groups of people and that Brahmanism is an unadulterated self-centrism which can be found in all caste” (Keer as cited in Kisan, 2005, p. 6).

Therefore, in Mishra’s (2014) view, “Brahminism and Dalit issues cannot be a part of democracy. For the enhancement of democracy, the caste arrogance, in whatever name Brahminism or caste-identity, should be condemned” (p. 6). Related to the Nepalese caste identity issues, popular media such as radios and print newspapers are playing a central role in the dissemination of news and views, media campaigning, and support of awareness-building of these identity-based conflicts. Gitlin (1980) argues that “media images also become implicated in a movement’s self-image; media certify leaders and officially noteworthy ‘personalities;’ indeed, they are able to convert leadership into celebrity, something quite different” (p. 3). Because of this, media is one of the key elements in national elections campaigning where media can posture some leaders as heroes and others as villains. For example, in the first CA, the supreme commander of the Maoist party, Puspa Kamal Dahal, a.k.a. Prachand, was portrayed as a miraculous leader who could run the 10-year Maoist war at the time of the fall of the communist rule in many other parts of the world such as the Soviet Union. Therefore, political party leaders always tried to influence or secretly invest in private media so that their public image was portrayed positively. After the first People’s Movement in 1990, to the present, media is having a strong influence on political events in Nepal.

This study also portrays analytical results of the news story coverage of the caste-based identity conflict during the end of the first CA, which clearly indicated that was the print media’s high priority issue (Figure 5.6). On the roles of media in the Nepalese second CA election, for example, three prominent scholars’ views and their field survey reports were published in the *Nagrik* newspaper on November 30, 2013. Some excerpts are presented here:

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I asked 82-year-old Phulmaya Upadhyay on the second CA Election Day at the voting place how she decided who to cast her vote for. Ms. Phulmaya answered that she heard news and views on the radio most of the time and because of the information she heard, she knew every political party and could distinguish right and wrong. When asked the same question to another person in the voting place, the person replied that everyday gossip within friends' circles in college, informal chats with family members, newspapers, and information in social media provided him with information and helped him to decide about who and which political party to vote for in the CA election.

(Shrestha, 2013, translation mine)

According to sociologist Mishra (2013):

Dissatisfactions with ruling political parties as well as political gossips on public places help people to develop their perceptions about socio-economic and political issues. The political thought is shaped and reshaped in informal talks in village tea shops, local markets, at water taps and well, restaurants, and so forth. (p. 1-3)

Similarly, Khanal (2013) a political analyst viewed that 70 to 80% of the people cast votes based on their influential family members' beliefs. In addition, he added, people also watched if there were any national political waves of some political party to determine whether to vote in favor of or against the political party (pp. 1-3).

Another Political analyst, Hachhethu (January 7, 2014), believed that print and visual media constructed a nationwide political opinion in general. The major defeat of the United Maoist party in the second CA was because of the media construction of Maoist's caste-based identity policies (p.1). Hachhethu further noted that it was not the Maoist's policy itself, but the media campaign against the Maoist caste-based identity policy. Almost all media were

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negatively campaigning against the Maoist party for their policy on the caste-based identity restructuring of the state. The media covered every negative behavior of Maoist leaders and internal conflicts among leaders within the party, which provoked the people against the Maoists (pp. 1-3).

Similarly, Pokhrel (*Kantipur* January 6, 2014) also commented on the caste identity issue mainly raised by the Maoists:

Maoists raise the identity-based federalism but how is that? Could downtrodden castes benefit from the caste-name given to the province? Equality and access to political and economic activities need structure, which the Maoist did not propose. How were the resources distributed in the past and what would be the future policy so that left-out castes and communities could have equal opportunities for resources? Maoists did not provide any reliable and trustworthy explanations to people on these issues. They put caste-based federalism as a jargon or slogan. The caste-based federal slogans were made suspicious to other majority castes such as the Bramin and chhetriya. (p.7, translation mine)

Articles, which related to the negative effect of caste or ethnic identity violence and disintegration of the country, were given importance in the print media during the first CA and this trend has continued. For example, Table 5.8 gave the news priority on the issue of caste-based identity conflict in the first CA. Similarly, when I examined one week's worth of content after the second CA (*Kantipur* November 22 to November 28, 2014), I found that more than 70% of the reports were against the extreme views on caste-based restructuring. Professor Druba Kumar, Krishna Khanal, Pitambar Sharma, Subodh Pyakurel, Ganesh Gurung, and civil society leaders wrote about the negative consequences of the single-caste and ethnic-identity issues

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providing the example of the violent conflicts of the Sudan and the breakdown of the country because of the ethnic disputes. For example, Kumar (February 7, 2014) wrote:

In the past, Sudan was one of the democratic countries with inter-ethnic and inter-caste peaceful society. Sudan has huge natural resources with high agricultural production in the African region. However, because of ethnic conflict, Sudan suffered from internal violent conflict and broke down into two countries. (p. 6, translation mine)

Similarly, the print media regularly covered the ethnic violence of Nigeria, Congo, Chad, and Myanmar as well as other ethnic and religious conflicts around the world. Opinion leaders, when encountered with these types of reports in the print media, linked the international ethnic-conflict events to the Nepalese caste-based identity conflicts. In many focus group discussions, participants raised the issue of ethnic conflicts in Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, and elsewhere. Most of the opinion leaders knew about these conflict-affected countries because the Nepalese police and military were heavily involved in peacekeeping missions in many of those conflicts. These types of reports in the media played strong roles in developing community perceptions. Eighty-two opinion leaders expressed their concern about caste-based identity restructuring of the state and showed fear over the ongoing caste and ethnic violence in Nepal. The print media also gave space to security personnel views on the caste-based identity conflicts. In the following report, it can clearly be observed how the national armies perceive the caste identity issue in Nepal. A report in the *Nagarik* newspaper (February 14, 2014) quoted the Chief of the Nepalese Army's speech:⁶⁵

The Chief of the Nepalese Army Gaurab Samser J. B. R. addressed a graduation ceremony of 43 officer cadets who attended from different security sectors of home

⁶⁵ This speech was reported in Nepali, translation mine.

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affairs and defense departments. In his speech, the Army Chief stated that “the security challenges, regarding the caste and religious threats, are increasing every day in Nepal, and all cadets should be wakeful on these matters.” (p. 9)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the caste system, which is the legacy of the Hindu cultural and historical connections and religious interpretations from religious specialists, is in clear decline. The infrastructure and communication development at the village level, education, easy access to move between villages and urban centers by public and private transportation, and most importantly the radio and print media’s coverage of divisive movements in Nepal, help engage and shape people’s understandings about the different aspects of caste conservativeness. In this regard, Gupta (2005) argues that with the breakdown of the closed village economy and the rise of democratic politics, the competitive elements embedded in caste have come to the fore. This has resulted in the collapse of the caste system, but also in the rise of caste identities (p. 409).

People in Nepal have started to realize that the kinship and blood relations of the caste system and the concept of upper and lower or Dalit castes promote conservative thinking that maintains a lopsided status quo. As evidence-based education spreads and media reaches into all parts of Nepalese society, the caste system, which is a part of the country’s cultural, historical, and religious legacy is changing. However, the lack of equal access to resources and employment, uneven development of various castes and various communities, patchy participation of different castes in both formal and informal economic, political, and cultural activities, and the rural power injustices are all being targeted as priorities to overcome in Nepalese society. As this chapter and dissertation have shown, the Hindu Nepalese society is

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very speedily transforming from a conservative caste-based system to one based on identity politics of caste and ethnicity.

Similarly, the caste identity politics are linked to socio-economic and political demands, whereas the caste system is linked to kinship and blood relationships and caste sensitivities with historical roots. However, when I analyzed the population settlement data with respect to castes and ethnicities, I found that the present Nepalese society is diversely settled in terms of caste, language, ethnicity, and religion, as shown in Figure 9.1. All castes and ethnicities are scattered throughout Nepal. No one caste has a clear majority in any district or in any region. And therefore, any restructuring of the Nepalese state based on caste, language, ethnicity, or religion would fail to manage caste-based identity conflicts. In the semi-structured interviews, 85% said that “inclusiveness is necessary through quota or other means to include all left-out people to mainstream development processes, but the inclusiveness should not be decided based on one’s caste.” The media can play strong roles in advancing a critical and knowledgeable society, which will ultimately help to minimize the present caste-based identity conflicts found throughout Nepal. Through important tools such as the media and its campaign against caste-based identity

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politicking and conflict, positive change may be the result in Nepalese society.

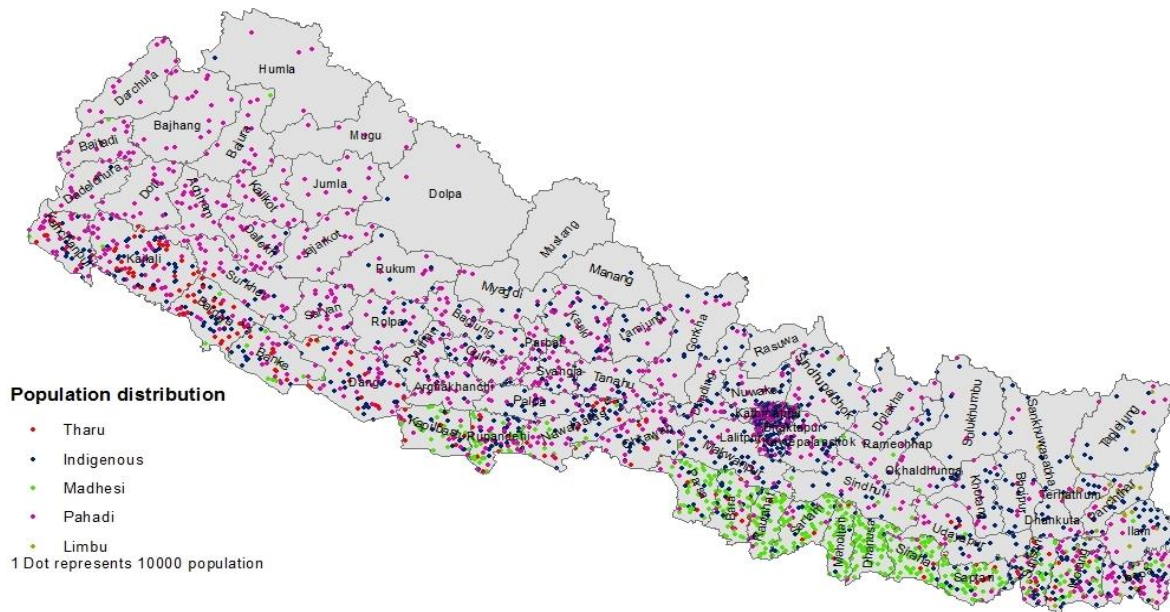


Figure 9.1: Population Settlement of all Major Caste and Ethnic Groups in Nepal.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ This map is created using ARCGIS. The data are retrieved from the 2011 Census and recalculated based on the various caste and ethnic categories which I used in this study.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Free and independent press and media are called the fourth pillars of democracy.⁶⁷ Nepal recognizes the power of the media and its value and potential influence on the executive, legislative, and judiciary processes. This fourth pillar of the democracy has the critical responsibility of analyzing the different activities of all three pillars of the state machinery and providing proper, accurate, honest, real-time, positive, and accountable information to the broader population in society. Media institutions have the duty to cater the important information and spread it to the broader sectors of their communities. In this sense, media has the power to influence every sector and person in society. Therefore, free press and media are recognized as an important precondition for the democratic political system. The Nepalese press, however, suffered many ups and downs in the last 17 years (10 years during the Maoist insurgency and seven years in the present peace transformation). Because of the undergoing peace transformation process with the Maoists, the recent Madheshi uprising, and the caste and ethnic based conflicts, the Nepalese press ranked 120th in the world for press freedom.⁶⁸

Nepal has had a free press since 1990 except during 2006 to 2007, which coincided with the absolute monarchy period. Any autocratic system or non-democratic regime has as their first and foremost priority to control the free press. In this regard, Nepal has benefited from having a free press over the last 22 years (except the two years during the absolute monarchy period) in

⁶⁷ See Nepali Times, May 2-8, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://nepalitimes.com/article/headline/Freedom-of-expression,1318>

⁶⁸ The press freedom rank is retrieved from: <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>

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terms of easy registration, press rights guaranteed in the constitution, and state facilities. However, during the same democratic period, Nepal suffered a violent insurgency. During the insurgency period and after the peace agreement in 2007, media played very strong, positive, and pro-democratic roles in Nepal. In addition to others, one private media outlet, *Kantipur*, was always in the forefront on human rights, democracy, rule of law, and campaigning for information awareness. Because of their constructive services, *Kantipur* has been praised for their stance towards multi-party democracy and press freedom by World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers and International Association of Journalists. In the multiparty democratic movement of 1990, during the Maoist violence (1996–2006), during the absolute monarchy of King Gyandra (2006–2007), and currently, on the issue of caste-based identity conflicts in Nepalese society, the private media has received high respect for their positive roles in society.⁶⁹ In every political change in Nepal, print media, especially the private media, has emerged as a powerful institution whose strong roles were recognized by every sector of the Nepalese society.

The print media in Nepal are playing important roles in the present peace transformation process of Nepal. The peace process, which started in 2008, is still at a crossroads. Nepal engaged in two constituent assembly elections in the last seven years after the peace agreement. Nepal suffered from thousands of strikes, demonstrations, agitations, and soft as well as violent

⁶⁹ Nepali media played great role in **P**people's Movement 2046 (1990) started with Chaksibari meeting at the leader Ganeshman Singh's residence on 2045 (1989), Magh 5. Nepali congress and left political parties joined hands for movement to dethrone Panchayat system. Active role played by private and foreign media to support the movement. Government media were compelled to support Panchayat system till last minute but the journalists extend their moral support to the movement. History of Nepali Journalism (2015). (Nepal Press Institute, Paragraph 39). Retrieved on March 16, 2015 from: <http://npi10month.blogspot.com/2010/02/history-of-nepali-journalism.html>

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protests during this period. Most of these agitations revolved around caste and cultural identity conflict issues. As it was said earlier, one of the major causes of the failure of the first constituent assembly was the inability to reach a unanimous agreement related to caste and cultural identity demands from different political parties, which were in direct and indirect confrontation with each other over limited resources. At present, the caste cultural harmony of the Nepalese society is at a critical juncture. There is a dangerous possibility of sparking inter-caste or inter-cultural conflict within the Nepalese society, which might have the potential to escalate into violence. “Caste arrogance is extremely dangerous for the enhancement of democracy. Democracy cannot provide caste based superiority in country” (Mishra, 2014, p. 6). Similarly, any conflict based on language identity arrogance harms society because as Mishra (2014) argued:

Language is not a racial perception. It is the social need for the interpersonal and group communication. People can learn different languages. Therefore, language-identity is not static. The caste-identity, however, is almost static, and change in caste-identity is extremely slow process. (p. 6)

Nepal comprises a mix of caste and cultural settlements; therefore, unitary caste-based identity restructuring of the state will create a second round of ethnic and caste-based identity conflict in the country. There are many contemporary examples of conflict as a result of identity politics (e.g., Nigeria, Kenya, Israel versus Palestine, India versus Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and others) that can be topics for further research. The example of Nigeria’s ethnic conflict is heavily referenced in the Nepalese media. In Nigeria, the military sought to diffuse ethnic tensions by creating 12 states, each with a share in the newly discovered oil bonanza, but this only fuelled minority demands for the creation of even more states. Today there are 36 states and 774 local government areas based on ethnicity and religion (Dorward, Jan. 30, 2012: *The*

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Conversation). The demands of creating new provinces based on culture and ethnicity are endless which created various violent conflicts in Nigeria since the restructuring of their states. The Nigerian experiences can be a lesson to the Nepalese policy makers to rethink the incorporation of the demands of caste- or ethnicity-based provinces in Nepal.

The Nepalese media are playing highly important and responsible roles in minimizing the caste conflicts focusing on inter-caste harmony and cooperation. In the earlier chapters, the research showed that the print media has given more than 90% of its physical space over to news coverage related to caste-based identity issues in their print during critical moments of caste conflict. During the Madhesh uprising and at the end of the first CA, I found that *Kantipur* played constructive roles by disseminating more than 80% positive news. Even the public print media provided almost the same amount of coverage in their issues although their content was slightly different than the private outlets. *Gorakhatra* was comparatively neutral in their news content during the end of the first CA, however, more constructive during the Madhesh uprising; and reports were influenced by the ministry's leaderships.

In the case of Nepal, because of the media's roles in shaping societal opinions, extremist leaderships' views, either in favor of caste-based identity or against it, are debated or sometimes ignored in the Nepalese media and subsequently, by society at large. The results of the second constituent assembly election also indicated that those national and regional parties who supported the extreme caste-based identity views were significantly reduced in their strength in the parliament by almost 70% compared to their strength in the first CA parliament (e.g., see Table 1.6). In the wake of the huge defeat in the second constituent assembly, the Maoist Supremo, Puspa Kamal Dahal, accused the Nepalese Army, the election commission, and the Nepalese media of helping to orchestrate this landslide defeat (Neupane, 2013).

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Media roles and direct influence on opinion leaders, decision makers, and the general populace are always debatable. For some people and institutions, media roles are positive and for others they are negative. The findings of this study help to answer the three research questions—How do various print media outlets (i.e. public versus private) depict Pahadi identity-based conflict in contemporary Nepal? Do print media outlets aggravate or help manage caste based identity conflict? To what end do opinion leaders receive and deploy caste/Pahadi identity-based conflict information as reported in the print media?—and largely support their corresponding hypotheses.

The first anticipated result of this study—private print media outlet coverage of caste-identity conflict correlates with caste-identity conflict events to a higher degree than public print media outlets—is supported by the fact that during the Madhesh uprising and at the end of the first CA, I found that *Kantipur*, as stated earlier, covered and correlated news stories of caste identity conflict to a higher degree than *Gorakhapatra*, as the latter was influenced by the ministry's leadership; whereas *Kantipur* was not. This supports the first hypothesis.

Kantipur disseminated more than 80% of their news stories focused on anti-conflict aggravation, for instance, *Kantipur* concentrated their news coverage on influencing the Madhesh movement by arguing that it should not transform into a communal conflict during 2007. *Gorakhapatra* was comparatively neutral in their news content during the end of the first CA because of the political power structure in the CA, however, more positive for the peaceful management of the Madhesh uprising. This supports the second hypothesis.

The third anticipated result—the print media's identity-based conflict coverage affects opinion leaders and ultimately public opinion in complex and shifting ways regarding caste-based identity conflict in Nepal—is validated by the fact that media coverage influences the

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opinion leaders in shaping their opinions, for example, in the case of cultural acceptance of inter-caste marriages, 33 opinion leaders out of 121 expressed their views against the inter-caste marriages, which shows their reluctance to accept the dynamics of the Nepalese society, on the other hand, in the political agendas or economic rights, opinion leaders reshaped their views regularly to promote social cohesion, thus supporting the third hypothesis.

The study concludes that the print media coverage influenced opinion leaders to a fair degree; however, in the case of cultural-identity such as inter-cultural marriages, the impact was more complex and less immediate. This finding leads to another conclusion: although private print media, *Kantipur*, provided a higher importance to the caste-based identity conflict events, the influences to opinion leaders and to the larger masses was multifaceted and the process remains slow to unfold.

In Nepal, the private media are playing significant roles in reshaping the diverse caste system toward caste-cultural harmony and inter-caste as well as inter-religious coexistence by influencing opinion leaders and the broader Nepalese population. The existence of active and free media is an indication of the forward-looking social and political system. With the present strong and free media in Nepal, the Nepalese people can hope for a caste-cultural harmonious society and peaceful coexistence.

Limitations

This research project is about current caste and ethnic issues in Nepal. It also explores the proposed quota and power-sharing arrangements, for example, the caste-identity-based restructuring of the state, currently under debate. I started this research focusing on caste-based identity issues of the Nepalese Hindu society, which suffered from 10 years of violent insurgency and which is currently undergoing a process of peace transformation. The caste

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identity issues raised in this dissertation are of central concern to the state restructuring of Nepal. The insurgent Maoist groups, which are represented in the parliament after participating in the second round of the Constituent Assembly election, are continuously raising the agenda of caste and ethnic identity in the restructuring of Nepal. The Nepalese media are constantly following these issues, placing a great deal of emphasis and public awareness to this debate sometimes resulting in outright caste-based identity conflicts. I started the project intent on relating the caste identity issue to media roles, but later, I realized that all private and public media within every sector such as print, radio, and television broadcasting, digital and electronics, and social media cannot all be incorporated into a single initiative. Therefore, I selected only one form of media to concentrate on, print media, since it was archived, accessible, and overlapped considerably with the other forms of mass media disseminated in Nepal.

In addition to media selection, the caste issue has many complex facets. The caste sensitivity, which has manifested in the Nepalese society, has been heavily visible after the peace agreement with the Maoists in 2006; and its affects are noticed in political, economic, social, and cultural sectors of Nepal. This research therefore had to focus by concentrating on only three problems related to caste-based identity conflict. These were caste identity issues such as inter-caste marriages, internal migration/displacement, and the proposed quota system though there are many conflict issues in the Hindu caste-sensitive society of Nepal. Other important caste-based identity conflict issues such as religious conversion,⁷⁰ caste conversion, caste conflict in the rural power structures, and debates surrounding primary education are beyond the scope of this current research project.

⁷⁰ For example, now in the Modi regime in India, religious conversion issues from Islam to Hindu and Christianity to Hindu are hotly debated. At present all media outlets are giving this news high priority.

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Caste-based identity conflict issues are spread throughout Nepal. Media influences every sector of Nepalese society. This research had to be selective in choosing typical samples of study participants for semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in purposefully targeted districts. Nepal has 75 districts and this research could not reach them all. Similarly, this research could only capture some of the many newspapers and stories reporting issues of caste-based identity conflict through the purposive sampling of one public and one private newspaper. Coverage was also focused on the last 11 years to make the data manageable and up-to-date. This research tried to avoid those participants who had any connections with the past Maoist conflict in Nepal. However, the Maoist conflict, which caused the deaths of more than 15,000 people and internal displacement of more than one million, has had a direct or indirect impact on almost every family in Nepal.

Policy Recommendations

These are some of the policy recommendations to Nepal government and concerned institutions.

- Countryside people's major priorities are rights to adequate healthcare, rights to education, and employment. Many people during the focus group discussions showed higher concerns about their livelihood rather than caste identity demands. For example, in Jumla, drinking water was the major concern of the people. Therefore, livelihood concerns of the Nepalese people should be given foremost priority to caste and ethnicity-based demands.
- Many opinion leaders expressed their concerns about the development of their community, and suggested that infrastructure development with higher employment opportunities could help reduce or help manage the caste-based identity conflict and caste discrimination in the Nepalese society.

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- Strong and responsible media can play positive roles in managing caste-based identity conflict, and therefore, the state has to support independent media and press freedoms.
- A blanket quota system is not going to address the low representation of the downtrodden people; rather it may further deepen the discrimination to the Dalit who are the most vulnerable group in Nepalese society. Therefore, the quota should be based on need rather than on caste, ethnicity, language, or color.
- Inter-caste marriage can dilute caste discrimination, and therefore, help to reduce caste-based identity conflict in Hindu society.
- People's cultural identity should be respected and rights to people's cultural choices on languages, customs, and practices should be formally recognized in the constitution, however, the state should not be based on any particular religion, culture, caste, or language. The state should have colorless identity where all caste, ethnic, religious, and LGBT person can feel equally recognized and respected.

Further Lines of Research

This research project analyzed the print media roles in the caste-based identity conflicts of Nepal. Caste identity issues are new in Hindu society. Inter-religious conflict such as Hindu-Muslim, Christian-Muslim, Tamil-Singhalese, Muslim-Buddhist are currently being analyzed by many scholars such as P. Williams (2007) looking at Hindu-Muslim brotherhood; C. A. Kimball (1999) examining Muslim-Christian dialogue; and J. D. Rogers (1998), who is evaluating political violence and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. A Google search shows thousands of news and research articles on these issues. However, identity conflict within the same religion, Hindu, within the same language speaking communities, Nepalese, within the same "Barna," such as Pahadi or "Madheshi," and within the same region, are currently an under researched area. The

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impact of caste identity on children of inter-caste marriages, education systems and how they deal with caste identity issues, inter-caste settlements and resettlements, trends of internal migration toward caste integration or segregation, media roles on inter-caste policies, local media roles on caste-based identity conflict, FM radio's roles on caste-based identity conflicts, and social media's roles in caste issues in the urban areas are some of the issue which can be further researched within the Nepalese context. The Nepalese peace process is expected to be a long-term endeavor. Those different aspects of caste conflict issues will not be settled in the short-term. This study's findings on different aspects of caste-based identity conflict issues will help the concerned people and individuals in developing policy to achieve caste-cultural harmony and inter-caste coexistence in Nepal as well as other part of the world.

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Table A.1

Code book for Contents in public and private newspapers

Indicator	Value
Areas of caste related news in percentage	Areas covered by the caste-identity news, caste discrimination news, caste-based restructuring news, indigenous identity news, Dalit news, Inter-caste conflict, all types of conflicts, which is related to caste and/or indigenous conflict, Pahadi-Madheshi conflict, Regional areas conflicts, and language based conflict.
Other news areas in percentage	Areas covered by news stories other than the caste news
Number of caste news	Number of the caste identity news, caste discrimination news, caste-based restructuring news, indigenous identity news, Dalit news, Inter-caste conflict, all types of conflicts, which is related to caste and/or indigenous conflict, Pahadi-Madheshi conflict, Regional areas conflicts, and language based conflict.
Number of other news	Number of news other than the caste news
Caste-identity supported news	News stories, which supported caste-based identity conflict and caste-based restructuring of state (Negative news stories)
Caste-identity anti news	News stories, which were against the caste-based restructuring of state (Positive news stories which focus on the management of the caste based identity conflict towards caste and culture harmony.)

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Media news	News stories, which were related to the FM Radio seizure
Madheshi news	Madheshi related conflict news, Madheshi and Pahadi conflict news, Madheshi discrimination news, Pahadi displacement news due to Madhesh movement, “One Madhesh, One Province” news, Madheshi identity news, special quota for Madheshi related news, Demand for rights to self-determination news
Dalit news	Dalit related news stories, Dalit discrimination news stories

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APPENDIX B

NUMBER AND TYPES OF NEWS STORIES IN BOTH *GORAKHAPATRA* AND *KANTIPUR*

Table B.1

Various types of news in randomly selected one-week in each year between 2002 and 2012 appeared in Gorakhapatra

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks
1	16	59	0	
2	17	38	0	
3	18	48	0	
4	19	37	0	
5	20	40	0	
6	21	45	0	
7	22	43	1	News on Dalit discrimination

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks
1	2003 April- May	59	0	
2	26	46	0	
3	27	60	0	
4	28	47	0	

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5	29	49	1	News on Dalit discrimination
6	30	37	2	News on Dalit issue
7	May 1	44	0	

SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2004 July	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	24	56	0	
2	25	46	0	
3	26	57	1	News on Dalit issue
4	27	53	0	
5	28	59	1	News on indigenous issue
6	29	62	2	News on Dalit and caste issue
7	30	63	1	News on Dalit issue

SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2005 June	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	3	62	1	News on Dalit issue
2	4	61	0	
3	5	53	1	Indigenous issue
4	6	51	0	
5	7	56	0	

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6	8	44	0
7	9	53	0

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks
1	24	65	3	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit issues
2	25	62	1	
3	26	71	2	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit, indigenous issues
4	27	69	2	Caste and Madheshi issue
5	28	73	0	
6	29	56	1	Caste issue
7	30	58	0	

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks
1	7	65	5	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit issues
2	8	61	2	Caste issue
3	9	68	4	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit

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				issues
4	10	59	4	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit
				issues
5	11	57	3	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit
				issues
6	12	62	1	Dalit issue
7	13	67	4	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit
				issues
SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2008 Dec.	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	7	45	1	
2	8	56	3	Caste issue
3	9	51	2	
4	10	52	5	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit issues
5	11	44	1	
6	12	53	2	Caste issue
7	13	59	6	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit issues

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SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks: All news related to
	2009 Sep.	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Caste identity, Madheshi, Dalit, indigenous issues
1	2	55	9	
2	3	54	5	
3	4	42	4	
4	5	72	11	
5	6	76	6	
6	7	58	3	
7	8	48	6	
SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2011 Feb. – March	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	23	40	1	
2	24	58	2	
3	25	72	3	State restructuring and caste issue
4	26	47	1	Rights to Dalit Quota (p. 7)
5	27	46	4	State restructuring issue
6	28	60	2	Caste inclusion
7	May 1	57	3	Dalit issue, Caste issue

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SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2011 May	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	7	58	4	State restructuring, Caste, Quota
2	8	56	4	State restructuring, Caste, Quota, Madheshi
3	9	47	1	Caste issue
4	10	42	2	Caste, Quota
5	11	37	4	State restructuring, Caste, Quota Madheshi
6	12	43	3	Caste, Quota
7	13	48	4	State restructuring, Caste, Quota, Indigenous issue

SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2013 Feb.	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	12	62	4	Tharu indigenous issue, Dalit, and caste issue
2	13	45	1	
3	14	65	4	Dalit, Caste, and news about the self-killing of a Buddha Lama in Tibet issue

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4	15	51	2	Dalit – Marriage issue
5	16	78	3	Dalit issues and meeting demanded with all caste
6	17	56	1	Madheshi women issue
7	18	59	0	

Table B.2:

Various types of news in randomly selected one-week in each year between 2002 and 2012 appeared in Kantipur

SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2002 Nov.	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	18	61	0	
2	19	54	0	
3	20	60	0	
4	21	62	0	
5	22	58	0	
6	23	84	0	
7	24	60	0	

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SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2003 June	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	19	51	2	Indigenous identity issue (Kirat workers) and Dalit issue
2	20	53	0	
3	21	53	1	Dalit news
4	22	55	0	
5	23	51	0	
6	24	61	0	
7	25	52	0	

SN	Dates	Number of	Number of news on	Remarks
	2005 Oct.	news	caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	
1	24	53	1	
2	25	58	0	
3	26	48	0	
4	27	59	2	Madheshi rights issue, Dalit issue
5	28	44	0	
6	29	50	1	Dalit issue
7	30	69	1	Indigenous issue

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SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste and Dalit	Remarks
1	5	53	0	
2	6	52	1	2 news about flaw on communication policy
3	7	52	0	
4	8	45	0	News on FM radio electricity supply cutoff by police
5	9	72	0	Protest on the issue of electricity supply cutoff of FM radio, Nepalese speaking Bhutanese people's issue, Dowry issue
6	10	60	0	
7	11	44	1	State should active against Madheshi discrimination: Freedom house

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks
1	26	35	0	
2	27	52	1	

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3	28	67	2
4	29	39	3
5	30	51	0
6	31	50	1
7	May 1	46	3

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, and indigenous issue	Remarks Indigenous issue, Dalit, Madheshi issue, and caste issue (Most news focus on Madheshi issues)
1	15 Feb.	42	7	Front page news 2 and a large Photo of Terai unrest, 4 Photo on page 3
2	16	38	6	Front page news 1 and a Photo of Terai unrest, 1 Photo on inside page
3	17	57	8	Front page news 2, Photo 1 on inside page, 2 articles in page 7 full page covered, one news about Pahadi people displacement due to Madhesh movement
4	18	70	9	Front page news 3 and a Photo of Madheshi issue, 1 Photo on page 8
5	19	53	9	Front page news 1, Photo 2 on page 5
6	20	56	12	Front page news 3 and a Photo of Terai unrest, 1 large article on page 7, 1 news about language

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				issue of Nepali speaking people in Bhutan
7	21	46	10	Front page news 1 and 1 Photo of Terai unrest, 1 Photo on page 8, Half page article in page 7 on Madhesh, 1 large news about Gorakhaland indigenous movement of India, 1 news about the language issue of Muslim in Madarsa.

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous issue	Remarks:
	2008 Dec.			Mostly one-two news appeared in the front and articles in page 6 and 7
1	8	52	4	
2	9	44	5	
3	10	58	7	
4	11	45	10	
5	12	45	6	
6	13	37	5	
7	14	45	4	

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous issue	Remarks:
	2009 Sep. – Oct.			Mostly one-two news appeared in the front and articles in page 6 and 7
1	21	6		
2	22	11		

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3	23	7	
4	24	14	
5	25	5	
6	26	9	
7	Oct. 1	5	September 27 to 31 Festival Holiday

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous issue	Remarks:
	2011, January			Mostly one-two news appeared in the front and articles in page 6 and 7

1	21	34	4
2	22	44	0
3	23	49	3
4	24	52	4
5	25	41	2
6	26	44	2
7	27	47	2

SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous issue	Remarks:
	2011 September			Mostly one-two news appeared in the front and articles in page 6 and 7

1	4	53	5
2	5	66	5

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SN	Dates	Number of news	Number of news on caste, Dalit, Madheshi, and indigenous issue	Remarks
3	6	64	4	
4	7	68	7	
5	8	51	7	
6	9	52	3	
7	10	37	3	
1	20	74	5	Half page article on Madheshi identity on page 6
2	21	61	2	Janajati news and caste inclusion news
3	22	41	1	One Madheshi armed group surrender to the state
4	23	52	5	Nationalism in danger – the former king, Article against caste federalism by Pradeep Nepal, News about a discussion on Federalism in Nepal held in New Delhi
5	24	45	1	News about caste based segregation
6	25	69	5	King speaks about nationalism, Articles about caste identity (against and for), Article about inclusion

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7	26	50	1	Caste inclusion on federalism
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