



The Caste System in Nepal - According to the youth

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1.0 Problem Field

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was placed at international level through the United Nations in 1948. Article one of the declaration states that: *"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"* (un.org1). These rights cannot be given or taken away as all human beings are designated to rights, without any form of discrimination. The Universal Declaration is interesting because it has actively been recreated for more than 65 years, but we still to this day live in an unjust world. Far from every country and every person has their basic rights secured, as a hierarchical division does exist in some societies, which places inborn privileges and restrictions by birth; a tendency especially taking place in South Asia. A study made by the United Nations shows that a number of human rights have been violated, especially related to caste-based discrimination. Caste-based discrimination is a violation of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. According to United Nation, societies based upon the caste system are denied *"a life in dignity and equality"* (idsn.org1).

As it is stated through the declaration is it not allowed to discriminate based on gender, race, status etc., yet this is the condition many people live in, in a country like Nepal. According to Danida Nepal is a country still influenced by the traditional mindset, due to the existence of the caste system (um.dk1). That means that some minorities such as the casteless and the ethnical minorities experience discrimination on a daily basis, which is a condition of chronic human rights violations. Even though a law against caste-based discrimination was constructed in 1962, the country is still focused upon the social differences between the high caste and the lower castes (um.dk2). More than 200 kinds of caste-based discrimination has been identified; *"Discrimination is more entrenched in the country's less-developed areas, especially in the Mid- and Far-western regions, but caste continues to influence inter-personal behaviours throughout the country"* (DFID 2006; Pp 23). The caste system is a complex system where status and part of the identity is determined beforehand and this means that the caste determines the cultural behaviour. This is an interesting factor, despite of article one, does the caste system still exist in the social sphere of the country, which does not allow the people to be equal and free, as well as it does not allow the citizens to live a life in dignity. In the article: *"As long as Nepal is crippled by caste, it shall remain an economic untouchable"* does an untouchable (Arjun) state that *"The lowest caste, to the other three casts, is like what the black man was to the white man"*. The writers opinion about Nepal is that *"It's a country imprisoned by its past."* (Telegraph.co.uk). Through the existing caste system in Nepal's social sphere it is

therefore interesting to examine how the youth of Nepal perceive the caste system in order to determine its future. This leads to the following thesis statement:

Thesis Statement

How do young Nepalese look upon the existing caste system, and how do they identify themselves according to this?

1.2 Reader's Guide

This section will be an outline of the content of the chapters

Section 1 contains the introduction of our research field and our thesis statement. This section describes our interest field in comparison/ in addition with human rights.

Section 2 provides our reason to include human rights in our project, as we find it relevant when describing caste-based discrimination.

Section 3 gives background knowledge about Nepal and its context. We have thus given a description of the history, religion, ethnicity and caste.

Section 4 is our literature study, in which we have three studies and one article that supplements our research field.

Section 5 is where we introduce our theoreticians. We have used Anthony Giddens *Theory of Structuration*. In addition to Giddens have we used Bourdieu's *Theory of Capitals and Habitus*. We have lastly used Arendt's *Theory of Recognition*.

Section 6 is our methodological approach. In this section we give a description of our case, our method of data collection, the process of the data and an analysis strategy. Within the method of data collection, do we argue for our choices of interviewees and introduce them. We also describe our observations and how these will benefit our report.

Section 7 contains the analysis, which is structured in three sections. First, we analyze upon the interviewees capital forms and habitus, thereafter do we, on the basis of Arendt's theories, analyses upon the discrimination that is related to the caste system. Finally, do we analyze the view of the caste system and the future from our interviewees' point of view. This analysis will contribute in answering our thesis statement, in section 9.0

Section 8 is the discussion, which reflects upon our findings through our entire research, based on human rights. We discuss human rights through Arendt's point of view as well as Giddens' structuration theory in relation to the point of view of the youth.

Section 9 contains the conclusion of the project, and gives an answer to the thesis statement based on the findings in the analysis and discussion.

Section 10 is the perspective, which describes another important finding, which, we through our work believe, is an interesting matter to further research.

The annexes are attached after the bibliography and our group and own evaluations. The annexes are put in the order of; annex 13.1 is the interview guide, annex 13.2 is the interview with Amrita, annex 13.3 is the interview with Avantika, annex 13.4 is the interview with Jinita, 13.5 is the interview with Nils and lastly annex 13.6 is the interview with ST.

Through the study have we used both Danish and English quotes. We have translated the Danish quotes, but the original quotes in Danish are put in footnotes.

2.0 Human Rights

In this section we will describe how we use human rights throughout our report. This section is a part of the report because human rights are a relevant factor when discussing the caste system. The concept of human rights will be used to support the thesis statement, as well as the relevance of the problems that exist in the caste system. We will use the study "*Caste Discrimination and Human Rights*" by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, as a part of our literature study, as well as compare it with our collected data in the analysis. Margaret Somers text "*Towards a New Sociology of Rights*" will be used in our theory section (5.0). From this text will we use Hannah Arendt's theory about recognition in relation to the caste system.

3.0 Background of Nepal

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of the specific Nepali context a brief introduction to Nepal is provided in the following section. This chapter forms basic background knowledge about the country, which is relevant for the understanding of this report.

3.1 Historical Background

The year 1846 is one of the major turning points in the history of Nepal. Jung Bahadur Kunwar staged a massacre of the congregation during this year that led to murder of almost the entire country's elite (Struve Nielsen, 2001; Pp 21). Kunwar took the name Rana as a new surname and inserted himself as prime minister and imposed the position of the prime minister as heritage. After this Nepal was a closed and stagnant country for 104 years through

the Rana regime, which isolated the country from the outside world and for Rana was the goal not to develop Nepal. This way of controlling the country was based on the caste system, which largely excluded social or political change for individuals and the society (Struve Nielsen, 2001; Pp 22). During the last 40 years has Nepal moved from a system of the Middle Ages to a society that has many modern features, which includes a democratic system (Struve Nielsen, 2001; Pp 26).

Since 1990 has Nepal been in constant political crisis with growing corruption, which have prevented a coordinated effort aimed at the country's encountering serious financial and social problems (Denstoredanske.dk1). Democracy was implemented in 1990 but since then has the country had countless changing and weak governments, which have been characterized by corruption and inability to create better living conditions for the population. In 2006 did a culmination of conflicts take place, which led to the royal regime's fall and a restoration of the parliament. This meant that Nepal, which once was the world's only Hindu monarchy, was in 2008 proclaimed a republic (um.dk1).

3.2 People, religion and caste

Nepal is a country where different ethnic groups have migrated throughout two thousand years. These different ethnic groups have co-existed with linguistic differences and religious communities. 60 caste and ethnic groups (primarily Indo-Aryan and Mongols), 70 languages and dialects (primarily Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman) were verified in the 1991 'Consensus' of Nepal. Some ethnic groups such as Gurung, Tamang and Limbu, all speaking the Tibeto-Burman languages, immigrated from across Himalayan regions over different periods of time. The Newar ethnic group is combined by several communities, that migrated to the Kathmandu Valley (the capital) over two thousand years. These different communities with differences in culture, language and religion established livelihoods in different parts of the country, with their own separate political units and small chiefdoms and principalities (Dixit, 2002; ff 30-38).

Hinduism and Buddhism are the largest and second largest religions in the country, with more than 80 percent Hindu inhabitants and around eight percent Buddhist inhabitants (um.dk2). The Hindu religion has three main practices, which are; the religious offering *puja* or prayer, the caste system and cremation of the dead body (reincarnation). The belief of reincarnation is; good behavior in the previous life leads to rebirth in a higher level, whereas bad behavior leads to rebirth at a lower level. The believe in rebirth is central to the caste

system, because it is believed that people are born into a particular caste based on their past behavior (globalskole.dk). The caste system in Nepal is special because of the diverse backgrounds among the inhabitants of the country, which has led the caste system to adapt and adjust to a socio-cultural system (Bista, 1999; Pp 55).

3.2.1 Caste

Nepal was invaded by a group of Indians known as the Licchavis in the year 300 and along with them did they bring Hinduism and the caste system. Although the caste system of Nepal was brought by a group of Indians, it differs and is complex compared to the caste system in India. The caste system of Nepal is generally based upon four main castes, and is based upon rules and regulations. The caste system creates a fixed and hierarchical framework in the communities with sharp distinctions within the various castes. The four main castes are *Brahmin* (originally priests and at top of the hierarchy), *Chhetri* (soldiers and governors), *Vaisya* (farmers and tradespeople) and *Sudra* (craftspeople and people with unskilled jobs). Underneath these main castes (the lowest of the hierarchy), are the untouchables; also known as *Dalit's* (tribe people) (Struve Nielsen: 2001 Pp 15). The Brahmin and Chhetri are the two largest caste groups, and have had the most dominant role in forming the modern Kingdom of Nepal, both in political and throughout all social and religious fields (Dixit, 2002; Pp 1). The three upper castes have due to their social and economic status for example access to states funds, whereas the lowest castes and the untouchables have challenges; such as social exclusion and economic marginalization, they are considered the most impure, are degraded and have humiliating jobs (Struve Nielsen: 2001 Pp 17).

The caste system has because of the multi-ethnicity in Nepal been mixed with other ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups have tried to position themselves within the fixed caste system but mostly does the population divide itself into two main groups: the clean and the unclean (globalskole.dk).

4.0 Literature Study

In the following sections we have described three studies and one article. Section 4.1 is a study called *Caste Discrimination and Human Rights*, based on the discrimination of the caste system from 16 countries. In section 4.2 is the study *Unequal Citizens* described. The study focuses on social exclusion on the basis of various factors. Section 4.3 is written based on the

article *Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal*, which describes various aspects of Nepal and its people. We describe in section 4.4 the study *Recasting Justice: Securing Dalit Rights in Nepal's New Constitution*, which that is about assuring the Dalit's their rights in the new constitution and how human rights are important when discussing caste-based discrimination.

4.1 Caste Discrimination and Human Rights

The Dalit Solidarity Network has written the study about caste discrimination and similar forms of discrimination. The study describes how caste discrimination is taking place in the world and has focused on 16 countries including Nepal. As described in section 1.0, caste-based discrimination is a violation of human rights, which negatively affects the political, economic, social, cultural, and civil rights of more than 260 million people in all geographical regions (IDSN, 2013; Pp 5). Especially in Nepal and India are the implementation of the existing legislation and access for justice for the Dalit's proven not to be heard, when it comes to the most crucial issues of addressing caste-based discrimination (IDSN, 2013; ff 5-6). Often are the discriminated cases not even reported, investigated or prosecuted, as the policemen, lawyers and judges often belong to the higher castes and are unwilling to investigate the crimes, even though the laws of human rights are violated.

4.2 Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal

The multi-year study written in 2006 describes social exclusion and its effects on the outcomes of development in Nepal. The study attempts to understand how gender, caste and ethnicity as interwoven institutions affect people and suggests how to overcome the obstacles related to this. The study examines old hierarchies that still have access to political influence and economical opportunities. "Even in the democratic polity [...] the formerly "untouchable" castes who now call themselves Dalit's, the ethnic groups [...] remain on the margins." (DFID, 2006; Pp XVI). One of the four pillars in Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2003) is inclusion, but to achieve inclusion requires major psychological changes in the governance structure, the access to economic opportunity as well as changes in hierarchical norms, values and behaviors (DFID, 2006; Pp XVI). In order to achieve change within the system the study states "Empowerment and social inclusion play complementary roles in promoting equity of agency and sustainable prosperity for all." (DFID, 2006; Pp XVII). According to the surveys made by The Nepal Living Standards Survey in 2003 and 2004, did 31 percent of the Nepalese

population live below the poverty line. The Brahmins, Chhetris and the Newars have the fewest households in poverty, contrary to almost half of all Dalit's. Therefore, ultimately, does it require changes in people's norms and values (DFID, 2006; Pp XXVI).

4.3 Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal

The article written by David Gellner in 2007 describes different ethnic groups, mainly Madhesis and Parbatiyas. According to the article the people of Nepal know what caste or ethnic group they belong to and usually know about others identity too, by the surname. Caste has for a while, however, in the official sphere not been a decent or respectable basis in defining identity. Until 1990 a shared national identity was defined among all Nepalese and was spread in schools and through government organizations. The problem with this was that it was experienced as an exclusionary factor by ethnic groups, lower castes and by religious minorities.

From 1960 to 1990 the country was ruled by a partyless panchayat democracy. This system was supposed to mobilize the different groups of the country for the general development "*all-round development of the country*" (Gellner, 2007; Pp 1823). At the same time were associations with caste and ethnic groups not encouraged, due to patriotism and nation building. But since there were no development initiatives aimed towards "backward" groups, the benefits of development and the expanding educational opportunities went to those who already had these opportunities; specifically Brahmins, some Chhetris, and some high-caste Newars.

The new constitution (1990) defined Nepal as "*a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom*" (Gellner, 2007; Pp 1825), which describes a new future within the caste system.

4.4. Recasting Justice: Securing Dalit Rights in Nepal's New Constitution

A study by the Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law describes Nepal's new constitution as to recognize and protect fundamental human rights of Dalit's. The study analyzes Nepal's provisional constitution to inform how the new constitution can be drawn up in line with its international human rights obligations, to ensure the rights of Dalit's (has experienced more than 2000 years of systematic discrimination based on the caste system). Recasting Justice has provided Nepalese lawmakers tangible means to demonstrate the country's commitment to inherent dignity and human rights for all

individuals (CHR&GJ, 2008; Pp 2). It's reported that Nepal has indirectly and specifically accepted caste discrimination even though it is illegal in international law (CHR&GJ, 2008; Pp 53).

The commitment to real equality requires emphasizing on securing the participation of the disadvantaged Dalit community (CHR&GJ, 2008; Pp 6). The Dalit's ability to receive a citizenship has also been undermined by the criteria for achieving a citizenship certificate. In order to obtain a certificate of citizenship requires often difficult, if not impossible requirements, for many Dalit's to achieve. According to the study, this means that the Dalit's have been prevented from enjoying a set of constitutional rights and public services (CHR&GJ, 2008; Pp 8). The prohibition of racial discrimination includes discrimination of origin, which includes caste discrimination, and this means that Nepal cannot be involved in any direct or indirect discrimination according to international law (CHR&GJ, 2008; Pp 10).

5.0 Theory Section

In the following section we will describe Anthony Giddens *Theory of Structuration* as well as Bourdieu's *Capital Forms* and *Habitus* and lastly we will describe Hannah Arendt's theory of *recognition*. Finally, these theories will be used to analyze our data in section 7.0, which will answer our thesis statement.

5.1 Anthony Giddens

Anthony Giddens (1938) is a British sociologist and known for his *Theory of Structuration* and his holistic view of the modern societies.

5.1.1 Theory of Structure

The theory of structure is an analysis of the terms agent and structure, in which Giddens tries to exceed the tension that exists between the individual and society. The theory also describes actions within the relationship of the individual and the societal institutions and structures. The social structures are according to Giddens supposed to be seen as both the means to and the result of the individual's action (Larsen, 2011; Pp 212). Giddens defines structuration as "*The structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure.*" (Giddens, 1984; Pp 376).

The social context is either based on the individuals' actions or the social action, which shapes the function of structures. Giddens argues that the relationship between agent-structure

should be seen as structural duality, and to exceed this, does Giddens formulate the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984; Pp 2). The theories should not be based on either an agent or structural perspective, they should rather be understood as two aspects which conditions each other, therefore does the notion structure duality involve that: if an agent acts, will the action be according to some rules of the overall structures. Thereby will society run through a continuing structuring process, and this process is called social practice.

Social Practice

Social practice is an important concept in the structuration theory, as it is a mediating concept between structure and action. Social practice is the foundation of society and is produced and reproduced across time and space (Kaspersen & Blok, 2011; Pp 428). Giddens commences his identification of social practice with a definition of the term agent.

Agent

The agent is, according to Giddens, knowledgeable and has knowledge about the action that he/she is doing in the society, in which the person is part of. This is because the agent maintains the structure of the society, and has the opportunity to change it if he/she is not satisfied with the structure. Giddens believes that any individual can help to change the structure of the society, thus does he believe that it can be a long and hard process, but it is not impossible (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2007; Pp 429). Often will this proficiency act as a practical consciousness where it is not required by the individual to explain his/her actions. The agent is though also able to relate to the action, which is considered a discursive consciousness. For Giddens does the focus on the agents' proficiency mean that one is allowed to take an active approach to structures and review its actions if necessary (Giddens, 1996; Pp 49).

Structure

Structures consist of rules and actions that the agent acts upon in the production and reproduction of the social life. Structure is characterized as virtual existence, and is only present when it is possible to perform social practice (Giddens, 1984; Pp 25). This means that the agent has some norms and values that have been determined and affect the actions of agent. The agent thus creates structures, but the agents are simultaneously created by their upbringing, i.e. structures - this explains the production and reproduction of the social structure (Kaspersen & Blok, 2011; Pp 431).

Social System

The social system is, according to Giddens, supposed to be understood as repetitive actions that are influenced by the norms and rules of the structures. The agent's production and reproduction of actions from generation to generation becomes a social system. Giddens believes that the structures and agents interact with each other, but at the same time, does he believe that the individual can act more freely in relation to the structure. Social systems are described as reproduction of relations and actions between agents, which is organized as a social practice (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2007; Pp 431).

5.2 Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was through his work interested in the way society was reproduced, and how the dominant classes could retain their positions. Bourdieu tried through his work to identify the conditions of social oppression, and how social oppression can be maintained and reproduced even with the involvement of the oppressed (denstoredanske.dk2).

5.2.1 The forms of Capital

Bourdieu worked primarily with three main types of capital. These three types are economic¹, cultural and social capital. Beside these three main types he operated with an overall type of capital: symbolic capital. Capital is defined as the accumulated work of the individual that is embedded over time. Bourdieu defines his concept of capital as material and symbolic goods, which are considered rare and sought after in a particular social formation. These forms of capital are helping to draw power relations in the social space (Richardson, 1986; Pp 241). The agents active, strategic nature appear when the agents fight for recognition of their own capital structure. This emphasizes that the agents will be dominated by the structure that exists in the social field, in which the symbolic battles unfolds (Bourdieu, 1997; Pp 56).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital includes the cultural knowledge and education that gives the individual access to power and status and thereby can the individual secure its place in the hierarchy and cope within the society (makingisconnecting.org).

¹ We don't involve the economic capital in our analysis

Social Capital

"Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1992; Pp 119).

This means that the value of social network and the correlation between people's norms and values creates social capital. This capital can be seen as an intimate relationship; such as relatives, friendships, community and responsibility. It reflects on the resources, which an individual has when being a member of certain group. People who possess a higher amount of social capital have more advantages (Kaspersen and Blok, 2011; ff 71-72).

Symbolic Capital

Bourdieu introduces the symbolic capital concept though it is not classified as an actual form of capital (Bourdieu, 1996; Pp 177). One must have achieved the main forms of capital in order to achieve symbolic capital. The symbolic capital is recognized as legitimate in a given social field and appears in the extension of symbolic battles, where dominant agents try to retain their recognized position in the social space. It is described as a desire to maintain the existing power and order in a society. This is done by exploitation and oppression that are performed in a non-visible way, and thus ensure maintenance of the hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1994; Pp 64) (Andersen og Kaspersen, 2007; Pp 350). Symbolic capital can thereby be prestige, acknowledgement, status and in other words resources, which can be used to achieve an advantage in relation to other people (Andersen og Kaspersen, 2007; Pp 365).

5.2.2 Habitus

Habitus are the actions that convert the internalized structures into a unified social practice; which are positioning's. The agent perceives the world through these positions and the classification pattern of the agent's choices, lifestyles etc. (Bourdieu, 1997; Pp 23), (Bourdieu, 1994; 60). According to Bourdieu does the agent construct an understanding about the world, but this happens under a structural force (Bourdieu, 1994; Pp 60). Habitus is not fixed nor permanent and it can be changed during unexpected situations, or over a long historical period. Habitus is formed through life experiences and already in the childhood does a socialization process occur, in which one's subconsciousness sets the social behavior, and therefore is habitus the way we act in the public sphere.

5.3 Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) is a German-American philosopher, immigrated to France in 1933 because of her Jewish descent. Arendt describes the concept "the right to have rights", which is essential in her work. "The right to have rights" is a concept of recognition. Arendt and a couple of authors have discussed the concept of recognition in connection with Arendt, but we will use her interpretation of the recognition concept.

Arendt challenged and criticized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when it was adopted in 1948 (Somers & Roberts, 2008; Pp 394). According to Arendt, does humanity not give rights, because rights do not simply emerge from humanity. Rights emerge from a political community and because of this sense of community are its members included. According to Arendt, are human rights misleading illusions because they do not cover the right to recognition, which requires membership in a political community (Somers & Roberts, 2008; Pp 395). When humans are in a situation such as statelessness is it, according to Arendt, equal to not having a membership. Without the membership do others not recognize them as human right-bearers and they become the "*scum of the earth.*" (Somers & Roberts, 2008; Pp 413). To be socially included requires to have the right to recognition among citizens as moral equals; who are being treated with the same standards and values, and have the same level of respect and dignity as others (Somers & Roberts, 2008; Pp 412).

6.0. Method Section

We will in the following section describe our methodological approach to this project. In section 6.1 we will start with a description of the field of research; the Global Platform.

We have in section 6.2, data and methods of data collection, described how we have collected our data. In section 6.3 we will, explain how we have processed our data and established categories. Finally, our analysis strategy in 6.4, describes the details of our analysis method.

6.1 Case description

As described our project focuses on the caste system of Nepal. In our thesis statements, in section 1.0, is it mentioned that we will examine the young Nepalese's viewpoint on the caste system. We have decided to delimit the young Nepalese to those in the 20's: to be more precise youth between 23 to 29 years old, because we consider the youth to be the future development of the country. We find this age group a relevant factor when discussing the

future of the caste system. To get a better understanding of the caste system, we narrowed the field down to Global Platform Nepal, run by Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke, also known as ActionAid Nepal, located in Kathmandu. We chose this field because we wanted to get the perspective of the caste system from urban youth, living in the capital. We chose to focus on the participants living at the Global Platform because they came from varying castes. To get an understanding of our field we spent a total of two months (September-November) at the platform and gained throughout this period different information about the caste system, which we found valuable.

6.2 Data and methods of data collection

Our gathered data is not based upon or limited by any predetermined thesis statement. Instead we used an open approach to guide us, this meant that we were not limited in our collection of data. We have through our fieldwork used an anthropological approach and as a methodological basis we have used grounded theory. *“Grounded theory is both a methodology and a product. As a methodology it consists of techniques and guidelines for data collection and analysis in order to produce theory grounded in data”* (O’Reilly, 2009; Pp 92). Glaser and Strauss founded Grounded Theory, with the release of their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). They used an inductive approach and found theories from their data rather than to obtain the data according to their theory (O’Reilly, 2009; ff. 92-93). We have chosen an inductive approach, in order to let our field of research be in focus, and generate the most relevant in the field. Grounded theory is based and made upon four phases: theoretical selection, coding, comparison and conceptualization (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; Pp 38). We will elaborate on these four phases in the following section.

We have selected our theoretical data to accomplish a broader knowledge about our field of research; the youths viewpoint in relation to the existence of the caste system. We have thereby tried to *“[...] capture the complexity of what is being examined by studying the context-dependent phenomena in their natural context”* (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; ff 38-39).

6.2.1 Interview

In our field of research have we been open, or *overt*, with our report (O’Reilly, 2009; Pp 9). Originally we had taken the apprentices role, as we did not have that much knowledge about the caste system. We did not just study our field, but we also learned from it. Since none of us are related to the caste system, it was thus legitimate for us to be unfamiliar with some of the

rituals and the importance of the system for them (Wadel, 2002; ff 34-35). We got to a stage during our field of research, which O'Reilly describes, as "*The best approach is to appear both naive and knowledgeable.*" (O'Reilly, 2009; Pp 10). We achieved this particularly in a non-formal discussion with the youth, where we got some background knowledge about the caste system. After this, we did have some knowledge but still went ahead with having an apprentices' role. It is though limited how long the apprenticeship role can be maintained, because at some point one can no longer be characterized as oblivious (Wadel, 2002; Pp 36). We were not completely able to step out of the apprentices' role due to the short timeframe being in Nepal.

In the beginning told we our interviewees the purpose of our report. The choice of interviewing Jinita was an initially *appropriate selection*; a selection with a purpose. She was therefore selected with the aim to give us more insight about the caste system of Nepal (O'Reilly, 2009; ff 196-197). Thereafter we started to look more generally on the caste system from the participants' point of view. The remaining respondents were *strategically selected* and through the snowball method. Out of a strategically point of view we chose to interview Nils, our other trainer. However, one can say that this interviewee was also an appropriate selection, as he has lived in Nepal for many years though is he not directly related to the caste system, although his grandfather came from the caste system in India. We selected him because he thereby could give us a different view on the caste system, which we found interesting and inspired us in the upcoming interviews. All of our interviewees have been selected continuously through the interview phase (O'Reilly, 2009; ff 196-199). Because we narrowed down our field of research to the platform, were the interviewees not demographically spread; our selection can therefore be categorized as a "non-probability" selection (O'Reilly, 2009; Pp 194).

6.2.1.1 Interview Guide

For our first interview we had made an interview guide (annex 13.1) with the most basic questions; such as "Can you tell us about yourself, your caste, and so on". This guide was used for our interviews, however with some corrections, depending on the interviewee. Thus, have we used the narrative interview form, so the focus is on the interviewee's history and their stories (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Pp 173). The interviews were deliberately semi-structured, and we tried to make them seem more like conversations rather than interviews. We wanted the interviewees to tell as much as possible about their viewpoints and experiences with the

caste system. We had this approach so that we could ask the interviewees further questions in relation to their own statements. This made a good flow throughout the interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; ff 175-176). The interviews were therefore relaxed and informal, something that is characterized as the ethnographic interview, which O'Reilly describes as *"We usually begin with an outline, guide or plan, but are content to let the interviewee wander off what we think is the point."* (O'Reilly, 2009; Pp 127). At times did the interviewees, by themselves, talk about issues, which we also wanted to ask them and at other times did we used the questions from the interview guide to continue with a new topic. We tried not to influence the interviewees with our own viewpoints, which could constrain them in the interview. They were instead able to focus on some topics, related to the caste system, which they found important. This made us able to understand the interviewees from their own perspective, and by using the semi-structured interviews led to unforeseen issues and topics that proved to be useful (O'Reilly, 2009; ff 126-127). We taped all of our interviews, which were then transcribed with a focus on language and social interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Pp 205).

6.2.1.2 Introduction to the Interviewees

We tried to select the interviewees with different approaches to the caste system, in order to gain a broader perspective. Our respondents, as mentioned, are in the ages between 23-39 years old. The interviewees are:

(Here we had an introduction to all of our interviewees, which is deleted, due to privacy of the interviewees)

6.2.2 Observation

O'Reilly's definition of participant observation is that *"Participant observation is the main method of ethnography and involves taking part as a member of a community while making mental and then written, theoretically informed observations."* (O'Reilly, 2009; Pp 150). We interacted with the participants and trainers at the platform during sessions and when we had leisure time. These observations could either be during interactions among smaller groups or with our entire course group. During an interactional game with all the participants and some trainers, we had a discussion about the caste system, and through this discussion we realized the importance of the caste system in the country. Through our observations and participations in the discussions we discovered for example, Jinita's passion and knowledge

about the caste system. At times did we both observe by participating, as well as we only observed in the different interactions. These interactions led to several interesting conversations about culture, caste, ethnicity, religion etc. that we later wrote down. We reflected on these observations either individually or together between the two of us. An interaction takes place while observing the field and a certain personal interpretation cannot be avoided when these observations are noted down (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; Pp 39). Beside these informal observations, we also visited two organizations in Nepal. These meetings included the entire course group; which we participated in as well as observed. We took notes from the observations and discussed the different information and topics. The meetings were relevant to our project because they had different topics, which made us aware of the cultural context. The ongoing observations were useful when we prepared our semi-structured interviews, as it helped us decide which topics to focus on and what to ask the different interviewees about. Furthermore, the observations were also used when deciding whom to interview. Our purpose with the collected data is to examine the youths' perspective of the caste system, which will ultimately answer our thesis statement (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; Pp 38). Gradually based on our sense of "fullness" we estimated that we had reached the saturation level, as according to Guvå and Hylander means, "[...] *new data no longer adds anything significant.*" (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; Pp 40).

6.3 Processing the Data

Our observations, as described above, have primarily taken place at the Global Platform. Peter Dahler-Larsen describes the essence of qualitative methods as a flexible study design. In advance may the researcher not have made the most important survey categories before the start of the project. These categories are developed throughout the project (Dahler-Larsen, 2008; Pp 322).

A majority of our interviewees have in various ways expressed some of the same themes. The process of coding has taken place by reading each of the transcribed interviews thoroughly, as well as categorized the themes. These themes we have decided to categories, which we have coded and will later analyze upon (elaborating section 6.4). We have furthermore discussed the categories in the interviews, and later selected the main categories. The main categories are; *identification* (of self and others), *discrimination* (based on the caste system), *view on caste system*, and *future* (of the caste system).

We have with the transcribed interviews made open coding's. We have followed the authentication rule, as all of our interviews are recorded and have been transcribed. Therefore can we can ensure that no important points are lost as well have we as interviewers thereby not written any notes or codes based on our own prejudices or our interpretations of the data (Dahler-Larsen, 2008; Pp 43). This means that we have had an open approach to our material and the incidence of any new codes, but overall have we had a special focus on the main categories. Creating an open coding is the first step, according to Guvå and Hylander, and creating some terms and afterwards coding the relations between the terms; is called an interpretive process (Guvå & Hylander, 2003; Pp 41).

In Guvå and Hylanders term comparison, in grounded theory, one would compare the collected material in the order that the codes appear in (Guvå & Hylanders, 2003; Pp 44). But this was not ideal for our material, instead did we went back and forth between our data and codes, and thereby compared these with each other. By doing so, we realized that there was a correlation between the interviewees' caste and the amount of information the interviewee gave about the caste system. This was on a general level, and in relation to their own lives and experiences with the caste system. The interviewees from the higher caste did for example not share as much information about the caste system, as the interviewees from the middle and lower caste groups.

Throughout the comparison of our data we also got the idea of how the code indicators could be compared in the different categories. These coded categories developed to the main categories, which we will use in our analysis (Guvå & Hylanders, 2003; ff 44-45).

6.3.1 Theory of Science

Grounded theory is a mixture of hermeneutics and positivism (Guvå & Hyllander, 2003; Pp 37). Hermeneutics is an interpretative process through which one interprets what others express (Jacobsen, Lippert - Rasmussen & Nedergaard, 2010 ff 151-152). The recital positivism recognizes the given positive, and it can be directly observed (Larsen & Pedersen, 2011; Pp 503). As we were in a field of research, we tried to put our preconceptions behind us and instead have we tried to be as objective as possible.

The theory of science in the report has thus been alternating between positivism, where our perception is based on observations in the field of research (Larsen & Pedersen, 2011; Pp 504), and hermeneutics, as we will interpret the observations in our data. The interpretation

will be based on our understanding, since one cannot put their preconceptions completely aside, but will also be based on the above-mentioned specific theories.

6.4 Data Analysis Strategy

The four categories we found will be used as a basis for our analysis. After the formation of the categories, have we studied various theories to find the most ideal theoretical approaches, that we believe will support our empirical data (section 5.0). We have gone from a lot of individual components in form of interviews and observations that we, in this section and the next, will use to reach a comprehensive unity through our theories. We have thereby used the progressive spiral approach to create sense making in our data. To highlight the youths opinion about the caste system we have, in section 5.0, described that we will use Bourdieu's forms of capital to illustrate how the youth identify themselves within the caste system. We will furthermore use Bourdieu's capital theories and theory about habitus to clarify how the higher castes retain their positions. We will also use Arendt's recognition theory to illustrate the recognition and its challenges in the caste system. In addition to Bourdieu and Arendt we will use Giddens' theory of structuration to describe how the structures are formed and reproduced. In addition we will describe an understanding of the relation between the agents and the functions of the structures, and look at the agents' (interviewees) opportunities to break the structures of the caste system.

7.0 Analysis

In our field of research, as mentioned in the method of 3.3, have we identified four main codes that can illustrate our thesis statement. Through this analysis section will we analyze upon our collected data into the four main codes based on the theories in section 6.0.

7.1 Capital and habitus

We find it necessary when working with the caste system to look at how the interviewees' identify themselves. Cultural capital is an important element when describing the identification of the caste system. As written in the beginning of every interview (annex 13.1), do the interviewees identify themselves in relation to their caste.

The interviewee, Avantika, has a high cultural capital because she is a Brahmin as well as completed a high level of education, and feels no restriction because of her caste; "[...] 23 years

[...] completed bachelors level. There is no restriction and as being a higher caste daughter, the image in the society is [...] high." (annex 13.3, Pp 58). Another interviewee (ST) describes other advantages by belonging to the high caste, Newar; *"I'm from the Newar Community. [...] it is a belief that Newar people are one of the richest and finest ethnic groups that we have in our society. Because we have lots of feasts, festivals [...] that might be an advantage as well beside we are rich in culture, festivals."* (annex 13.6, Pp 88) These quotes emphasize that belonging to higher castes entails that one has more cultural capital compared to the majority of lower caste and the untouchables. The reason for that is that the untouchables mostly live in rural and excluded areas, where the access to education is less available. Jinita described that the untouchables; *"[...] they got discriminated every day because they are not educated and they are economically [...] in poor the conditions."* (annex 13.4, Pp 67). Even though the general lower castes and untouchables want to eradicate the system and accomplish a more equal society, is it not as easy as wanted. Jinita elaborates *"[...] they have the traditional mindset and the concept in their blood [...] maybe it take some few generations to umm go and be little more advanced on this levels."* (annex 13.4, Pp 72). This quote entails that the Dalit community, which Jinita is from, is not as advanced compared to the educational level of the higher caste people.

Having cultural capital is a more natural matter of course for Avantika and ST, whereas Jinita and Amrita are in situations where they have to work harder and overcome more barriers in order to accomplish the same level of cultural capital, when discussing i.e. education. Amrita describes that *"[...] many Gurungs they are not educated, they are not jobholders, official jobholders in state [...] in the state framework [...]. So a lot of them don't have these opportunities maybe because they are not educated or maybe due to other reasons."* (annex 13.2, ff 45;46). Even though Amrita is a Gurung, is her cultural capital different as she was *"[...] pushed forward to get education, to pursue higher studies, to get jobs, you know to go to the public space and you know do that thing, unlike in other households."* (annex 13.2, Pp 46). Being a Newar ST has access to cultural capital differently; as he expresses that being a Newar mean *"[...] you're born like a businessman. [...] it's in our blood, so everyone can be a good businessman [...] people from the Newar Community are usually associated with business."* (annex 13.6, Pp 88)

Besides having cultural capital do our interviewees also have a level of social capital, but in different ways. The interviewees have in one-way or another a social network, and within that

network mutual norms and values. But what is interesting is the fact that the interviewees from the higher castes have more power based on their social capital, this is primarily due to their family and caste, which means they have more advantages in their society.

"I mean if you're talking about the people hating you in different way and stuff, it's not hard as well, because we are the second highest, ranking ethnic group in our society [...]" (annex 13.6, Pp 89)

Even if people were to dislike ST, it would not affect him because he belongs to the second highest group. It is based on the fact that he belongs to the second highest group, that he has more influential social capital than others, which is why he can be careless about what others think of him.

Jinita's social capital differs due to her background. Beside her family, does she, due to her interest of an equal society, also have a more organizational social network. *"So it also depends on the people to people, and how much empowered you are, and your association with different organizations. [...] organizations who are fighting against this caste system and whenever I meet them they always appreciate me and they say "if you want to do anything, then just let us know"."* (annex 13.4, ff 67;73). Through these networks she has a different kind of social capital compared to ST. The organizational networks are a different support system than the network based on her family and caste community. In order for Jinita to achieve a somewhat high social capital, she has to work harder being an untouchable compared to ST and Avantika. This is also something that Amrita supports, as she describes the Gurung society as a *"[...] little disadvantaged group. [...] but I think [...] socially there are disadvantages. People may be looked down upon, like if you belong to the not so established communities, like for example Brahmins and Chhetri's, which are the dominating castes of Nepal. So I think yeah socially we have some disadvantages [...]"* (annex 13.2, Pp 46). Based upon this statement Amrita also has to work harder than a person from a higher caste group, in order to accomplish a higher social capital, though not as hard as Jinita, due to the matter of untouchability.

In the sections above have we analyzed that the mentioned interviewees both have cultural and social capital, which is necessary to achieve symbolic capital. For Jinita is accomplishing symbolic capital more difficult. She describes that *"[...] even though it seems I'm normal girl, I'm educated, I have job and I know lots of things about human rights and I take a stand and I also share and I do the things that perhaps some other so called.. higher caste girls haven't done, but*

still I'm not considered as a human. I have that something that has to.. kind of taboo, or kind of tag with me that "okay she is untouchable, no matter how educated she is, how much contribution she has made into the society [...]" so it is so depressing scenario [...]" (annex 13.4, Pp 70). Although she, to some extent, has the cultural and social capital, the symbolic capital is something she can't easily achieve because of her caste. Although she tries to achieve acceptance and acknowledgement in the society and contributes to the society that will still not remove the untouchable "tag" she has. As for Amrita it is easier to achieve a higher symbolic capital than Jinita because of her middle caste group. Amrita's family supports her decision of trying to achieve an advantage in relation to other people "*[...] they are encouraging their daughters to go to the public space [...] especially in my family [...] Daughters we're especially pushed to get education, seek jobs outside [...]."* (annex 13.2, Pp 46). According to Bourdieu's theories one has to achieve the main forms of capital in order to achieve symbolic capital. This is comparable to Avantika's situation, due to her inborn privileges (by being a Brahmin), which means she has a high symbolic capital. ST describes being a Newar is "*[...] one of the richest and finest ethnic groups. [...] we have lots of feasts, festivals [...] be of statues or gold [...] We are the main sponsors as well [...] advantages you know like you're born like a businessman [...]"* (annex 13.6, Pp 88). This quote describes that ST through his high ranked background has the ability to achieve a high symbolic capital compared to the others interviewees. ST elaborates when "*[...] talking about the disadvantages, I don't think there are any [...] I was born in a Newar family but I was like you know, always to be treated fairly. Fairly you know it's not necessary that you have to follow the culture and stuff. [...] I've never had to any discrimination we don't have any because you are the second highest, ranking ethnic caste in Nepal."* (annex 13.6, ff 89;90). These quotes emphasize that ST and Avantika's situation is different than for example Jinita's. They have symbolic capital, but for them the practice of the caste system do not mean as much, as it does for Jinita. ST and Avantika have an easier access to these capitals whereas Amrita and especially Jinita have faced challenges and difficulties in achieving and obtaining the mentioned capital forms. Based on the way the society is right now, Jinita is not able to fully achieve the same amount of symbolic capital as for instance Avantika and ST.

One's habitus describes the choices made by the individual, but if the individual has a low social capital, it can be difficult to achieve a higher status in society and thus have a better life

without discrimination. Jinita described; *“When I start sensing the things I was controlled by everybody [...] So there was lots of lots limitation for in my life [...] I don’t have good future as my friend has because there was so many restrictions in my life [...] I was so confused whether I should attend or if I should not because if I go there and if I try to mix up with my friends, there was lots of chances of being insulted from the other organizers or from the family of friends.”* (annex 13.4, Pp 63). In the quote above Jinita describes her childhood and a childhood experience. She formed a habitus in her childhood, which she thought she could never change, but then *“all of sudden there was something happened in my life [...] I could do something against that”* (annex 13.4, Pp 63). This is when she, according to Bourdieu’s habitus theory, drew on her own habitus and realized she had a different choice and was able to make a change for herself in the social sphere. In this case, and as described above, she does to some extent have a social and cultural capital, which makes it possible for her to accomplish changes. But due to the fact that she is an untouchable, she is not able to achieve a higher symbolic capital in all levels of the society - and thereby live a life completely without caste-based discrimination; *“I’m educated and I’m an independent person and still people put me in that box and still in rural area of Nepal and also some part of the Kathmandu people still treat me as a lower caste”* (annex 13.4, Pp 61). Through Bourdieu’s habitus concept it is clear that Jinita tries actively to fight for recognition, but the other agents’ dominated structure exists in the social field, which makes it more difficult for Jinita to win the “battle” of recognition and thereby change others habitus. Amrita’s social position makes her want to change some of her own and others habitus, though she is also dominated by the social structure that has affected her habitus. She feels that *“Because it’s a cultural thing [...] Castes should always be there because it’s part of their identity, but the discrimination you know should not be there.”* (annex 13.2, Pp 56). This reinforces that the habitus is not permanent. Amrita has through her capitals, the ability to change her habitus and believes that some of the existing social structures, such as the discrimination, should be changed.

7.2 Discrimination based on the caste system

Our interviewees do not support the caste system, because of the fact that it does not acknowledge the lower caste groups and untouchables. Nils argues that; *“[...] in terms of the caste system and as an unequal power of structure based on discrimination, based on opportunity and disadvantage that it should disappear ultimately [...]”* (annex 13.5, Pp 82).

Another interviewee who argues that the caste system should disappear is Jinita. She describes the situation of the untouchables as they are “[...] excluded from all of development aspects as well as culturally and economically because uh... there is a belief of uh... in the society where people believe that this caste system exist from the uh... so Gods [...] people should have their own class and caste [...] no matter whether they are educated or not, no matter whether they are economically independent or not.” (annex 13.4, Pp 61). This describes caste-based discrimination within the caste system. It is not only because of the religious beliefs but also the matter of not being good enough, when one is related to the lower castes. This is a problem, which especially occurs in the villages compared to the capital, which means the rural areas are more affected. Jinita explains “[...] I hardly get some kind of harassment due to my caste here [...] in Kathmandu [...] but before that when I was in my village that was the daily part of my life, which was completely natural even though I was not comfortable with it I didn't have any option and I could not reply [...]” (annex 13.4, Pp 67). Jinita is discriminated on the basis of her inborn position although she is an active citizen, is still not acknowledged.

Amrita describes that if “[...] a person belonging to Dalit low caste group [...] goes to the temple, he will degrade it or make it a lower, or make it untouchable [...] It will be impure. [...] These are man made concepts and particularly by people belonging to high castes [...]” (annex 13.2, Pp 56). The people who belong to the Dalit's are not recognized as ordinary people. The term “untouchable” is an exclusionary term, upon which one is discriminated and has it's rights violated, according to the Human Rights Declaration article one. On the basis of the man made concept, as Amrita describes, are the untouchables not recognized as citizens because they are considered impure and thereby excluded from the society. This is not to say that Amrita only believes that the caste system is discriminating the lower caste; she has also been discriminated based on her caste and recalls the situation “[...] some years ago I was at my friend's house and her sister was in labor.. She had just given birth to a child and she was.. She was in her room with the baby, so I went to visit her, and at that time her mother [...] she brought the food, and she told me go out, out of the room.” (annex 13.2, Pp 49). Amrita could not think of any other reason than her caste to be thrown out of the room, because her friends' family belongs to a higher caste than her.

The concept of purity and touchability within the caste system, as in the quotes above, shows the unjust situation the lower caste people are placed in. If rights were to “just” emerge from humanity, Amrita and Jinita would not have had such experiences. The caste system is a

discriminating factor and a violation of the human rights. Exactly as Arendt describes humanity is not sufficient enough when discussing the matter of rights. At the same time the matter of “just” creating human rights is neither enough. As mentioned in the literature study, the violation of human rights is an obvious factor to caste-based discrimination, which is why the implementation could create equality among the citizens. But according to Avantika there are “[...] rights but not strictly implemented [...]” (annex 13.3, Pp 60), and this means that there are rights in Nepal but they are not followed. This could describe, according to Arendt’s theory, why the untouchables are not recognized as part of the society as they are excluded and suppressed.

7.3 The View and Future of the Caste System

Even though some people of the Nepali society are not recognized, it does not mean, according to Giddens (see section 5.1), that these agents cannot contribute to the social structure. The agent can change the structure though it is a long and difficult process. According to Giddens’ theory the caste system is a product that is produced and reproduced by the agents in Nepal.

As mentioned earlier the caste system is a “man-made” concept that came from religion. Jinita explains that “[...] there is a saying that there was a very intelligent guy called Manu [...] and he was the priest of the king and on one hand he was very intelligent and had lots of knowledge about how to rule the society and every thing, and uhm. But on other hand he was very clever and he manipulated the original [...] religious books and then he created another versions [...] in that book he mentioned and fixed so many things [...] he was insecure that the power would change to the other community and if he will die then his son won’t be the priest and won’t be able to rule and to be closer to the king [...]” (annex 13.4, ff78;79). As an agent with knowledge did Manu through his position change the society structure. Thereby did he through discursive conscious actions fix the system and immobilized people within the social structures. Since then the caste system has been produced and reproduced as social practice by other agents.

As a Brahmin Avantika does not really think about her caste as a part of her, but for her it is just “[...] a symbol [...]” (annex 13.3, Pp 58). Avantika distances herself from the caste system, but at the same time does she not act against the current social structure by for example

refusing to marry outside her caste² and that means, to some extent, that her actions reproduce the system. This is something that Jinita confirms: “[...] remember Avantika was also telling that she is against the caste system, but she never take a stand in her house because her parents believe on that, and we have a culture to respect our elders even though they are wrong.” (annex 13.4, Pp 71). Thereby is the structure of the caste system produced and reproduced by an agent, such as Avantika.

The agents can through their norms and values decide the country’s social practice³. As activists Jinita and Nils believe in changing the social structure, and they refuse to accept that discrimination is taking place in Nepal. This is also something that Avantika agrees upon, as she states that “I think caste system won't exist in the society because the newer generation do not believe in caste system and other thing is also the rate of illiteracy is decreasing which is also making people's thinking and concepts wider. [...] most of them are educated and they are also aware about the rights, laws.” (annex 13.3, Pp 60). In the future she does not want to “[...] pass the caste system to my future children. It is like only a system being followed from the past days but it has been changing with time.” (annex 13.3, Pp 60). Avantika believes that discrimination will not exist in the future because people will become more aware of the rights and laws against caste-based discrimination. Amrita shares the same point of view with Avantika; that the caste system is “[...] decreasing in way that people are more aware [...] in dealing with these concepts. But generally caste system, I think, is negative for the people because it's a discrimination and people do agree in that.” (annex 13.3, ff 54;55).

In addition to the others view on the system, ST expresses that, “[...] there is no point in having a caste system these days. It's more like separating people and like their rights and duties as well. [...] majority of the youth doesn't follow the caste system” (annex 13.6, ff 92; 95). The quotes above illustrate, according to our interviewees, that the youth has a different standpoint about the caste system compared to the “elders” or the previous generations. The youth is more aware of the consequences of the caste system, which they find discriminatory, and take a stand against it. If the youth break these current norms and values of the caste system, a modification of the social system occurs, and a new or amended society will be formed. Nils supports the other interviewees standpoints and believes that a new system is emerging; “[...] I feel that there is a new system in Nepal, which is replacing the caste and that's the class system.

² Observation

³ This supports the literature study section 4.2

And the class system in areas such as Kathmandu, which is urban, which is technically more modern than the rest of the country, despite the caste system disappearing or aspects of the caste system disappearing in this urban area, the emergence of the class system is coming [...] you will still have this issue of class even if the caste system goes away [...]" (annex 13.5, ff 81;86). The emergence of a class system replacing the caste system, as Nils emphasizes, can be because of the mentioned changes in the youth's viewpoints on the caste system. This reflects Giddens theory, that individuals can change the structure of the society, though will it be a long and hard process. This means that the youth of Nepal can change the structure of the caste system, but it will be a long and hard process, but as Nils argues is it "[...] important to eradicate it from the mindset but [...] it's a process that takes time. [...] I think it's just a generation gap [...] I think within a few generations that mentality will slowly disappear." (annex 13.5, ff81;84). All the interviewees statements emphasizes Giddens' theory of structuration as the youth through their actions and social practice can change the social system of Nepal within some generations, which in the end would mean that new structures would be produced.

8.0 Discussion

The basis in our field study was to examine the youth's vision on the caste system. This discussion will describe our findings in the analysis and will address the different issues, which is presented in our thesis statement. We will include human rights in our discussion as Nepal is going through changes and we have in our section 4.0 described how the country does not implement these rights. We will discuss human rights because we find it interesting when describing the youth's standpoints on the caste system.

The country is affected by changes and corruption, which also leads to the fact that the human rights declaration is not followed in relation to the caste system, even though the new constitution has international human rights obligations. In this case discrimination is based on ethnicity, caste, etc., a violation of human rights and thereby are the human rights "just" an illusion, as Arendt argued. On the other hand can one, from Arendt's theories, discuss whether human rights are merely misleading illusions or whether they actually make a difference in a country like Nepal. Just as described in section 4.4 are the people not convicted when discriminating the lower castes and untouchables, this further support that human rights are just an illusion when it's written in the constitution but not implemented in the social sphere.

The recognition of the caste system is discriminating and excluding, according to both our interviewees and our own observations, which means that human rights in one way or another are within the youth's of Kathmandu's consciousness. On the other hand one can discuss whether human rights are enough to ensure non caste-based discrimination, as it is an ingrained part of religion, culture and everyday life. We do on behalf of Giddens theories, however, discuss that because the caste system is embedded on all layers, it does require a long-term process to implement the human rights' laws, even though Nepalese lawmakers have the means to ensure all individuals to live an equal dignified life.

9.0 Conclusion

We will in the following section answer the thesis statement, which is: *How do young Nepalese look upon the existing caste system, and how do they identify themselves according to this?*

We conclude that the young Nepalese see the caste system as a discriminatory, oppressive and exclusionary system. According to our field of research, the caste system is a "man-made" concept and designed to suppress and sustain the power in the country and violates the laws of human rights. At the same time education and globalization are important factors among the youth in how one perceives the caste system. The more people are educated and have awareness, the more are they aware of the negative points of the caste system. The youth identify themselves in extension of the caste system as well as they identify others. They accept it as a given and inborn part of their identity.

Bourdieu's capitals and habitus theories have clarified that those belonging to higher castes, have an easier access to benefits, while those not belonging to higher castes, in particular the untouchables, experience difficulties when trying to achieve the same, as the higher castes. We have also described that the interviewees' habitus differs from the older generations. As mentioned, an individual is by birth given a caste and thus a habitus; however, many young people's habitus has changed when it comes to caste-based discrimination. Hence there is a kind of dualism which exist among the interviewees, as they are clearly against the system and explain that it will not exist in the future, but at the same time, the youth from higher castes, know less about the caste system and express, though they are likely to reproduce it. Even though they are aware of the violation of human rights, and clearly are against it, it is not all of them that fight against the system or challenge the current structure. According to

Giddens theories, this means that it will take time to change the social structures and it will be a difficult process to achieve this change.

Therefore we conclude that the youth of Nepal look upon existing caste system as a discriminatory system that excludes the lower castes and untouchables as well as they see it as a symbol, which will not be reproduced in the future. The youth identify themselves through the caste system although they do not accept all aspects of it. That being said, we do not believe that caste system, in the future, will completely disappear from the social structure.

10.0 Perspective

We became aware of the fact that the Nepalese youth does not want to reproduce the caste system to the same amount as the older generations, but subconsciously do they reproduce it though with some changes. These changes could ultimately lead to another social structure, which could be a class system. The matter of a class system was something Nils drew our attention towards.

The class system as a new social structure can occur because of the changes in youth's habitus, norms and values as well as a recognition of the oppressed people. An alteration in the current social structure of Nepal could also lead to changes in the individual's access to the capital forms as well as it could possibly be easier for the untouchables and other lower caste people to achieve higher capital forms. As the youth does not want to reproduce the caste system, could the establishment of a class system lead to changes in the current caste-based hierarchy, as the class system then would erase the caste-based hierarchy. An interesting perspective could be to examine whether a class system could lead the population of Nepal be treated more equally compared to now. Therefore do we believe that the topic, class system in Nepal, is important to further examine. Would a class system in Nepal lead to an eradicated hierarchy or a new class-based hierarchy? Then with a class system would a class-based hierarchy then be a better replacement compared to the caste-based hierarchy?

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12.0 Group evaluation

The group work has, throughout the anthropological fieldwork in Nepal, worked in a different way than it would have in Denmark. Our work strategy was different due to the different circumstances and the fact that we lived together. We planned the first and second phase of our work (data collection) and followed it well. Through our fieldwork - both in Nepal and Denmark - have we had a good understanding of each other and each other's work method. We have not had any issues or major problems because we have been very honest and clear with each other - this has been easy due to our friendship. Both of us have been hundred percent dedicated to this project and have had the same goals, which is important in long term group work. In the planning of our work, have we been honest with certain personal

events, which we have been considerate towards and worked around; thereby have we been very flexible in our entire work process.

12.1 Ida evaluation

I feel that this semester have I evolved since the last semesters. I also believe that it has helped that Zalla and I are friends beforehand, which has made this writing process much easier. Our group work has been really good whether us working alone, together or over Skype but no matter what do I believe that the written work is something we're both agreeing upon. We have discussed our collected data, which has made the analysis an easier process as well as when you're only two in a group - you can't hide. So this semester I also feel that I have grown A LOT. I haven't had anyone to hold my hand as I've had to work and show Zalla that I can also do it, which I have felt I've done very well. Zalla and I have also been good at discussing and expressing our self and giving arguments for our vision/feelings etc. So therefore do I feel that the roles in this semester have been split between us; it's not like anyone has taken the lead role and the other one just followed. So I feel I've learned how to group work in a different way than the other semesters. Another thing I feel I've learned this semester is how to work with different nationalities and cultures. I have as well learned how to do fieldwork in a different setting than in Denmark.

12.2 Zalla evaluation

I have had a very different experience through this project. A major difference compared to the former project-experiences was the fact that we carried out anthropological fieldwork in a completely different field, which meant that the planning and working process, of the project, had to be different. Furthermore was this my first time being in a group consisting of just two members. The fact that I was in a different country and carrying out the project with just one other group member has been a big learning experience. By working in Nepal have I become more confident, as I now am more aware of how much I actually can perform. I have learned to plan according to completely different circumstances. Due to the circumstances have I also become more flexible, and I have learned to carry out the writing process of the project in a different and more useful way. I don't think that I have had a certain role in this project as the roles have been equally divided between Ida and I. By working in a group consisting of only Ida and myself has been fruitful. Because we were only two members was it easier to plan, carry

out work and I felt comfortable of expressing my self. To sum up have I gained a lot by working with Ida and by doing fieldwork in Nepal.

13.0 Annex

13.1 Interview guide

- Tell us about yourself: age, where you are from, caste and so on.
- Describe your caste in your own words
- What meaning does your caste have for you?
- Which benefits and disadvantages do you see by belonging to your certain caste?
- Has the caste that you belong to had any particular influence or importance on your upbringing?

- Do you on a general level see any point with the existence of the caste system in Nepal?
- How would Nepal be as a country if there were no caste system according to you?
 - And how would your life be?
- Have people treated you differently because of your particular caste?
 - If yes, why do you think they have?
- Is it possible to hide which caste a person belongs to?
 - If yes, have you hidden yours?
 - Why have you or why have you not hidden your caste?
- Do you think the caste system simplifies the society?
- Is it possible to get out of the caste system?
- Does the caste system have the same meaning to you as it has for your parents?
- Can you marry a person from another caste or would that be problematic?
- If you marry a person from another caste have any impact on your or his working conditions?
- Does the caste system benefit the society?
- Do you think the caste system will exist in the future?
- Will you pass on the caste system to your own kids?
- What do you think is the viewpoint among the Nepali youth about the caste system?
- Even though Human Rights are against caste based discrimination, why do you think people based upon their caste are still being discriminated?

13.2 Interview with Amrita

Zalla: Can you tell us just a little bit about yourself, where you are from and which caste you belong to and so on?

Amrita: Okay, my name is Amrita, I'm from Nepal and I'm twenty six years old and I live in Kathmandu. I belong to gurung community, it's an ethnic group, so my caste is gurung. So it's an ethnic uhm.. ethnic caste I would say, ethnic indigenous caste.

Zalla: Okay. Can you describe it a little bit further, about the gurung caste ethnic group?

Amrita: Yeah, yeah. Gurung uhm.. It's a ethnicity, and gurung people they usually reside in the hills but my grandparents they migrated from the hills to terari, you know the plains. So in a way we've lost our language. My parents they don't speak in gurung language and actually I

think I'm more of a hindu person, hindu in religion than gurung, you know.. actually gurung people are animistic, they believe in nature and they worship nature, but I think we've lost that, even my grandmothers they lost it over the years. I think we are like more towards Hinduism now.

Zalla: The reason for why you lost the language and the religion because like your family moved away, or is it because your family got another belief?

Amrita: I'm not sure, because I remember my grandmother she believed in Hinduism, she worshiped hindu gods and goddesses so I think even in her time her beliefs had already converted into you know.. towards Hinduism, and they were already inclined towards Hinduism even at that time. So it's really hard to say if they ever spoke in gurung language. Maybe they spoke, but I'm not sure exactly because none of my family members, not even my uncles they don't speak in gurung language.

Zalla: Okay. Would you have wished that you were able to speak the gurung language?

Amrita: Yeah yeah definitely, especially now because Nepal is going through a transitional phase and we all are, you know looking for an identity in a way. Everybody wants their identity so.. And there is a discourse going on, on the identity, on the politics of identity, on ethnicities, on indigenous people because Nepal is a small country and there are so many casts and customs and things, and people are finding it hard to claim their identity. So I think at this point I wish that I spoke Gurung language.

Zalla: okay, because that may have helped you in your search for your own identity?

(connection lost)

Zalla: Amrita can you please repeat, our connection just stopped.

Amrita: Yeah yeah. I would be so much proud, it would be such a pride to be speaking in gurung language, and you know, and known so much things about gurung language, because

in a way I know nothing about Gurung, especially in terms of language and culture I don't know so much and also because.. I think some gurung speak gurung language and some Gurungs they don't, so I exactly don't know, you know. And also because of the modernism, the way we were brought up and the kind of education.. even our education system they didn't teach us languages other than Nepali and English. I think it's not just a problem for a woman like me, and also for other people, other castes I think they have similar problems in identifying their identity and so.

Zalla: Finding themselves.

Amrita: Yes.

Zalla: Okay. You have already been around my next question, but I would still like you to elaborate a little bit about it; about what your own caste means to you, like what does being gurung mean to you?

Amrita: Yeah the first thing that comes to my mind when I think about being a gurung is my features I would say, like facial features like my facial features, you know the chinky eyes – it has always been associated with not just gurung people but indigenous people and ethnic people in Nepal, so I think eyes and you know my skin, and features you know like whole features.. even my nose it's short (all three laughing) and my eyes, you know it comes to my mind, but apart from that I also think about courage, you know gurung people they were very courageous people, they went to war and they served indian.. uhh they served British people in the army. There are stil, there are lots of gurung, were in the british army and other army. It comes to my mind the courage and things they did.

Zalla: Uh, that's interesting. Do you have like, your friends and your social circle, are the majority of them maybe from the gurung community/ caste system or is it just random?

Amrita: I think it is random, it's random. I have a lot of.. not a lot of friends, but friends who belong to *all* the castes, you know Brahmin, Chhetri, and even Gurung, Rai, Magar. It's hard,

it's difficult for me, but I do have a Gurung friend, but she is just like me, she doesn't speak Gurung language, just like me. So it's just hard to say I belong to this..

Zalla: Okay. Where would you place the Gurung ethnic group/caste in the caste hierarchy? Where is it placed?

Amrita: Uhm.. I think like according to the caste system I think we belong uhh.. It's actually really difficult question but let me say it like this, because.. because we don't belong to the.. the traditional, uhh I don't know hierarchy because we are a separate group of people with separate identity of language and culture I think we don't belong to the caste system. We don't actually, and even if we do I think it's.. we are separated, it's not like higher or lower, we are identified as Gurung people and not high and low, we don't have that system; high and low.

Zalla: *Oh*, is that even possible in Nepal?

Amrita: Yeah yes it's possible, it's I think the high caste and the low caste I think.. It's a Hindu thing, you know. Like the state thing. The state uhm uhh gave the license.

Zalla: Okay –

Internet connection lost. Continuation of the interview the next day:

Zalla: I asked you yesterday but I will just ask you again cuz I don't remember whether you got to finish your answer, but the question was what your caste meant to you?

Amrita: Uhh, yeah maybe I answered this, yeah caste meant for me, or was it like what I think of when I think about Gurung? Was it the same question?

Zalla: No it wasn't that was another one.

Amrita: I mean it's an indigenous caste so.. Gurung is an indigenous caste so I think I belong to an indigenous group, and ethnic group of Nepal uhm.. which is a very.. Grung is a very rich community with it's own set of cultures and traditions, so I think, yeah that's it.

Zalla: Okay, the next question is which benefits and disadvantages you see by belonging to Gurung?

Amrita: Uhm.. Uh, I don't see so much of disadvantages, like direct disadvantages you know, but maybe there are indirect uhh disadvantages, because uh I don't know maybe.. because.. Because a lot ethnic people they are not so much educated like Brahmins and Chhetries, they didn't have access to education and you know the facilities in the beginning, but now it's changing, but I think were are like socially if we are to speak about socially then I think there are disadvantages. People may looked down upon, like if you belong to the not so established communities like for example Brahmins and Chhetries which are the dominating casts of Nepal. So I think yeah socially we have some disadvantages but directly I don't think we have such.

Zalla: What kind of socially disadvantages?

Amrita: Uh, I think it's also cultural, little bit cultural but I think mostly social because uhh because as I said before that many Gurungs they are not educated and they are not uhh.. They are not in the.. they are not jobholders, official jobholders in state you know, in the state framework, in the framework.. in the national framework of Nepal. So a lot of them don't have these opportunities maybe because they are not educated or maybe due to other reasons. So socially I can say and culturally we have those disadvantages people.. I mean we don't have access to those positions, still now and there are some allocations for jobs for minorities like indigenous and ethnic people, but I don't think that's enough, so maybe socially we are somehow maybe economically, socially we are little disadvantaged group, yeah I would say.

Zalla: Okay, although you mentioned yesterday that you don't exactly fit into the caste system, but somehow there are still some areas which you.. Which the ethnic group can't enter?

Amrita: Uhm.. It's not that we don't belong to the caste system, we are there but as I said culturally we are backward and disadvantaged, like in terms of access to education, access to health and access to jobs you know in national framework. So we have very little people

working for the state you know very little number, and that's why Nepal government.. They initiated you know positions for the people belonging to the ethnic and indigenous groups but I don't think it's enough you know. Yeah, I think in that way we are little bit backward but yeah things are being changing.

Zalla: Okay.. Being a Gurung, has that had any particular influence or importance in the way you were brought up?

Amrita: Hm, uhh I think so, yes, because you know Gurung people they are like liberal people in a way, in a sense they are liberal, they are.. In my home we are like girls were always you know pushed forward to get education, to pursue higher studies, to get jobs, you know to go to the public space and you know do that thing, unlike in other households. But generally it's changing in Nepal. So from other castes and even high castes they are.. they are encouraging their daughters to go to the public space but that was already there in Gurung society I think, yeah.. That was influential, especially in my family yeah. Yeah we were.. Daughters were especially pushed to get education, seek jobs outside you know things like that.

Zalla: Okay. Do you, this is a completely different question but on a general level do you see any point with the existence of the caste system in Nepal?

Amrita: Yes, there is a presence of a caste system in Nepal, as you may know. There are concepts like chune and not chune, chune is somebody like you can.. Touchable and untouchable these are concepts that are heavy, heavily, you know predominate in our society, especially in relation to like high caste group as in Brahmins and Chhetries they are considered high caste groups and especially like Dalits and you know other groups, minorities they are like considered as untouchable. I think in that case concepts of touchability and untouchability exists even indigenous people they believe in these concepts, and they try and act in the similar way as Brahmins and Chhetries would do to the people belonging to Dalit groups or you know other groups. It's same; I don't think there is a difference, yeah.

Zalla: But do you see any point with it? Do you see a.. an idea with the existence of the caste system, like just in your own opinion?

Ida: Do you think there is a point with it?

Zalla: Yeah, do you think there is a point with it?

Amrita: Point, hm yeah I think there is point as in why people would behave in such a way.. Because.. Because it had already been established these concepts of touchability and untouchability, if you did not follow that, you are not following to the expectations of society you live in you know, so I think there was a lot of expectations among the people.. Even if they did not like to.. Like to follow these concepts of touchability and untouchability it will be social pressures would get into their habits you know, because if they don't do as higher.. as the people of higher caste would do, then there would be an out caste you know just to fit in to the society they would also do the same, and I think that's when even people of ethnic background and indigenous background they also treated the people of lower caste, similarly as that of the high caste people, so I think that's a point. I think there were also expectations from the society to be fit into that society.

Zalla: Okay so it's in a way a matter of inclusion, in a society, in the society be a part of a different –

Amrita: Yeah yeah I think that's a good point that you brought in; inclusion and exclusion. People excluded because they, they felt the need to be included themselves you know.

Zalla: hm.

Amrita: Yeah I think that's where this social factors and cultural factors.. hm influence the ways in which people have been treating people of Dalit hm people of low caste group.

Zalla: But how would Nepal be as a country in your opinion if there was no caste system?

Amrita: I think it's impossible (laughing), because saying that would be.. It's an impossible, I think even to think about because it's evident, and it was natural I think in my opinion to have

this concept of inclusion and exclusion, there would definitely be the concept of inclusion and exclusion, and I don't know about untouchability and touchability this is very much hm established norms by some group of people of some caste among their caste system, you know, but there would still be the concept of inclusion and exclusion yeah, also because of the multiplicities and identities, different identities I think it's natural for it to happen because –

Internet problems, connection got cut

Zalla: You said that it's impossible to have a Nepal without the caste system. Why do you think it's impossible?

Amrita: Because of the, you know given the situation of Nepal, because it's a multiple.. It's a multi.. It's a multi-lingual country, it's a multi caste system you know, because the people they uh have so many castes, existing in Nepal, so it's impossible to say that there would not be such concepts. I would not say that there would not be uh uhm concepts of inclusion and exclusion, it's bound to happen but I think in case of touchability and untouchability I think it's discrimination. In a way it's very much a case of discrimination you know. Yeah I think it's humiliation more.. Discrimination is the inclusion and exclusion as, but I think in the case of touchability and untouchability I think it's a humiliation to the people you know, I think there is a difference, a thin.. There is a line between inclusion and exclusion and touchability and untouchability.

Zalla: Yeah, have you had any experience with people treating you differently because you are from a particular ethnic group, that you are..

Amrita: Yes sure, definitely.. I think uh yeah you brought a good situation to talk about. Uh like some years ago I was at my friend's house and her sister was in labor.. She had just given birth to a child and she was.. She was in her room with the baby, so I went to visit her, and at that time her mother uh her mother she brought the food, and she told me go out, out of the room.

Zalla: The mother-in-law?

Amrita: Her own mother, she was in her own house at that time after giving the birth, it's a tradition that women they come to their own houses.

Zalla: Yeah.

Amrita: So I was there and then, she asked me to leave the room because she was going to eat, and can not not think of any other reason why she would ask me (dogs start barking loudly on the other side, us all laughing)

(...)

Zalla: Okay, you told us the story.

Amrita: Yeah, yeah. When she told me to leave the room, can you hear me?

Zalla: Yeah.

Amrita: Yeah yeah, when she asked me to leave the room, I could not think of any other reason than me not belonging to their caste you know, because I belong to a different caste; maybe they did that. Yeah I could only think of that reason.. Why I mean she could have done that. So I think socially and that's what I meant, socially.. But it's not something like direct you know, I don't know.

Zalla: Hm, did she belong to a higher caste, perhaps?

Amrita: Yes she belongs to Newar uh not high (record machine stops recording).. She belongs to the Newar community and they have their own sets of beliefs and customs and even in the Newar community they have the concept of high caste group and low caste group, as you may know.

Zalla: Yeah, uhh.. Do you think it's possible, is it possible to hide which caste a person is from?

Amrita: I think in Nepal it's impossible, because.. Because it's so much into our society that when we ask for name.. We are not necessarily asking their name, instead we are asking their caste, you know. *What's your name*, I will ask, you will say Zalla, but that's not enough for me, I will have to ask you *what's your caste?* People will do it, it's normal thing you know, so I think it's impossible not to have that caste system you know in every thing you do like.. Maybe by.. Even by the futures you can say that "*this person belongs to this group*" or maybe by the activities they do.. Because it's also linked with the professions. Yeah low caste people they clean the toilets and they sell I don't know what, something like that.

Zalla: But when you.. Or other young people, when they meet somebody, would they also be asking beside the name, would they also be asking the person they are meeting, about their caste?

Amrita: Yes, sure sure they do, they do yeah. Mostly they do.

Zalla: Okay so even the young they would ask about..

Amrita: Yeah yeah and then as soon as they know the caste, then there is already this kind of.. You already make up into your mind the background and you already have some kind of idea, and how you treat them automatically comes I think. So it's very much ingrained in the.. in the ways we deal with people, we ask questions you know, how we talk, it's already ingrained there I think in caste system.

Zalla: Okay. Does the caste system have the same meaning to you as it has for your parents?

Amrita: No not really for me, not really for me. I think it's not just me, I mean even I would ask the name and I would also ask the caste, but I would not.. Based on their caste, I would not like discriminate them, you know I would still talk with them and I would still hang out with them I have no problems in doing that. But in case of my parents or my grandparents it's different, you know they would not have tea with them when they are together, but for me it's different. I could and I have done that also. So I think it's different for me.

Zalla: Okay, so in a way you could say that there exists a sort of judgement?

Amrita: Yeah you could also say that. Yeah uh yes you could also say that judgement based on your backgrounds, because you know at the end of the day it's also a matter of social capital, you know like what status you have, what social status you have in your community, even if you may belong to a lower caste group, but you have a good social status then people would still love talk to you, you know.. Or they would not at least not ignore them, or you know say bad things to them in their faces. So I think it also influences.. so you can say it's also being judgemental in terms of the social status they have. I think social status also plays bigger role in how you treat people.

Zalla: Hm, but doesn't this judgementality, the fact that you ask somebody beside their name about their caste, doesn't it in a way have an impact on people's.. identity?

Amrita: (laughs) It's a tricky question. I think the reason why you ask their name and also the caste, is to know their identity you know, it's to know the identity of the person you are talking to. So it's little tricky you know. By asking the identity you are playing with the identity, I would say.

Zalla: How can.. You just said that, when you ask somebody about it it's to know their identity-

Amrita: But you are still playing, you will also have judge.. you are also being judgemental there you see, so it's tricky (laughs).

Zalla: Yeah. Okay so what it basically is, is that the caste.. Belonging to a caste is a part of the identity.

Amrita: Yes yes, yeah and it's also about, it's also the matter of social status in some ways I would say, like people belonging to uh if they have the caste of low group, then automatically people have some kind of judgement about them and they will act accordingly, yeah and if they belong to high caste group like Chhetries they have different tone even when they speak, or even in their gestures you know. Even if they may not speak bad words or they may not

say.. Their gestures might suggest you know, so different gestures also, postures and gestures to use then you we can immediately..

Zalla: I think I already know the answer for the next question, but I will still be asking you. Can you marry a person from another caste? If you can or can't, would you face any challenges or?

Amrita: You mean by saying other caste, you mean low caste group? Is that –

Zalla: I mean just in general both low caste and higher caste, is it possible for you to marry somebody from another caste?

Amrita: It's possible why not, but you know there are social pressures and I would think twice before getting married, and I think anybody would do that in Nepal especially. Because I come from an ethnic background, uh you know indigenous background, we are socially disadvantaged, uh little bit treated not fairly, so maybe that will have consequences in the marriage and I would think twice or maybe trice before getting married to the person of another caste, but maybe high caste but if it's a low caste I would think so much or maybe I would not get married. That's how it is and you know.

Zalla: Okay so you would consider it even more if it's a person from a lower caste because of

Amrita: Yeah yeah, yes.

Zalla: Because of the culture and the social..

Amrita: Yeah and the kind of pressure it will have on the marriage and all my identity and you know because it will be a greater challenge, if you don't think about it you will be confused for your whole life and maybe your marriage will not be good, and I don't know..

Zalla: Okay, but the issue is not that you wouldn't be allowed from your family?

Amrita: No it's not like that, it's not like that. But I would still think you know.

Zalla: Yeah. Do you think the caste system in any way benefits the society?

Amrita: (Laughing) No I don't think it benefits in any way. I don't think caste system benefits society any society for that matter, because I think it's a discrimination, it's a straight discrimination against people you know, because these were discriminations as such were made by people in power you know. So to get benefits from the people who did not have the power, people who could not speak for themselves, you know they were using that power to gain something you know, so it's creating a kind of hegemony you know a hegemony against other kind of people you know people who cannot speak or maybe they don't belong to low caste group of people you know but they will still not be able to speak you know there is still some kind of hegemony some these established norms and societal values you know, so I don't think it's benefitting Nepal at all. I think if there is continuity in in in.. in these kind of.. in these ways of getting towards.. (connection problem) or people do not think about it, then I think there will be a lot of polarization among people you know; like high caste and low caste groups, indigenous and nonindigenous groups you know, so I think this will divide more than unite people. I think it's in no way benefitting Nepal especially because it's a *smaaall* country with so many people, so I think there is no other way other than to come together you know.

Zalla: Okay. You say that you don't think it's.. You think it's more polarizing the people right?

Amrita: Yeah, it.. It does already polarize the people, there is already these concepts heavy concepts like high caste and low caste but there will still be more polarization like even more.... indigenous people who do not have these concepts; touchability and untouchability will start to you know act the same way, you know they have already started it and they do already but more and more of these kinds of things will happen in future if it does not stop somewhere or if people do not take it seriously you know the matter of caste system.

Zalla: Okay so you don't think it's decreasing it's actually increasing?

Amrita: Uh I think it's decreasing in way that people are more aware you know people are more aware and more sensitive I would say. People have become more sensitive when

addressing people of low caste you know. Like before maybe they would maybe just say their profession you know kami, damie something like that metal worker, people of metal work they are considered like low caste they (mener andre) would say their profession instead of calling their name, now people are being sensitive towards this issue. People would especially in public, people have to be more sensitive and they address and they just think twice before addressing people. I think there is a, is a, I don't know if it is increasing or decreasing but I can see people have become more sensitive towards the issues of these castes.

Zalla: Would you consider passing on the, either the caste system or being a Gurung on to your own kids? The traditions, the culture the

Amrita: Yeah. Yes I would love to but, as I mentioned earlier. I don't know so much about mine. Because I don't speak my own language, you know. My mother tongue I mean. Which is I don't speak, so maybe I can, I would still want my kids to.. Be proud of the fact that they belong, their mother belong this community, ethnic community you know. I would still want them to dig into the culture to know more about it, maybe even speak, if there is such an provision that are meant regulate in feature, if there are classes in these mother tongues, even in this family level. They would have so much knowledge, which I do not have and people of my generation or feature generations don't have at all. You know. Speaking their own, yeah I would do that, I would still be proud of being

Zalla: What do you think is, is the viewpoint among the general youth in Nepal about the caste system?

Amrita: Uhm Negative, yeah negative.. If you ask me generally I think negative, but practically it influences people also you know in practically.. In practical terms it may be different, but as I say they have become sensitive and they know lot about high caste and low caste group, and touchability and untouchability I think they have become more responsive and you know more sensitive.. in dealing with these concepts. But generally caste system I think is negative for the people because it's a discrimination and people do agree in that.

Zalla: Okay, but if people agree on that, then why continue it?

Amrita: Uhhm

Zalla: You may not be able to answer it, Yeah.

Amrita: Maybe you could put that question, maybe can you rephrase it? Yeah

Zalla: You said that people are more sensitive about it and they are more negative about it and anti-caste than pro. And if people are more against it and if they see it as something more negative and something that morally excludes and polarizes, then why is it, why does it keep existing, why do they keep allowing it.

Amrita: I think because it is a gradual process, just like it didn't happen in a night, it will not eradicate, the caste system will not be eradicated in one night. It is a gradual process and the fact that people bring sensitive towards it means that they are going through that direction of eradicating it. But it will take time and I think in future, I hope that the caste system will be eradicated from Nepal and people will be treated equally you know regardless of their castes, caste system and their profession they belong to.

Zalla: There is also this one factor that, the human rights they are against discrimination based on castes. But people are still, they still have their lives based upon their caste and by that they either, if you for example are a Brahmin or a Chhetri they are either having either having benefits or if they are from a lower caste then they of course have a lot of disadvantages. Why ... What do I want to say.

Ida: I think she wants to say is that even though human rights has this law against caste discrimination, why do you think people still are being discriminated based upon their caste?

Amrita: Uhhm.. Because it's a cultural thing I think even in Nepal according to Nepal law it states clearly its multi lingual and multi caste country, and then it also states that all men are equal regarding of their caste and things. By eradicating the caste system doesn't mean that they have to eradicate, they have to.. delete their castes, you know. Castes should always be

there because it's part their identity, but the discrimination you know should not be there. You understand what I'm saying? Yeah..

Zalla: Do you think that religion, Hinduism and reincarnation as a part of the religion has something to do with the existence and also the acceptance of the caste system?

Amrita: Yeah, I think so yes. Because these religions are also you know.. because it's a man made concept this cases of touchability and untouchability I don't know about religion exactly, but later it was like uhm I read somewhere that of a group, a person belonging to Dalit low caste group, when he went to worship in a temple, he was kicked and thrown out of the temple. But these are not something, that was.. That came from religion you know, this is man made, something you know, something people created you know, that if a low caste group, people of low caste group goes to the temple, he will degrade it or make it a lower, or make it untouchable you know something that pure and impure you know. It will be impure. These are concepts.. These are man made concepts and particularly by people belonging to high castes people with power they created -

(Connection lost)

Zalla: Amrita can you hear me ?

Amrita: Yeah.

Zalla: We could not hear you, from when you mentioned that it was a concept created by people with power.

Amrita: Yeah. So people with power created that, initially they created these concepts of purity and impurity. If a person of, if a untouchable person goes to a pure place like temple, then he will impure that place, you know these are man made concepts especially people from the power. But in the later times, you know it came into the psych of the people, that it is by the religion you know, that they are forbidden to go to these places. You know, you understand?

Zalla: Yeah

Amrita: Yeah yeah. Its like that. People also, also saw that part of the caste system came into the religion, they mixed up, I will say.

Zalla: Do you have any question (to Ida)?

Ida: No

Zalla: These were all the question we had. Do you hear me? Can you hear me?

Ida: Amrita ?

Amrita: Yeah yeah yeah. I'am back.

Zalla: Okay. I don't think we have anymore questions for now.

Interview finishes

13.3 Interview with Avantika

Tell us about yourself: age, where you are from, caste and so on.

I am Avantika Pyakuryal aged 23 years girl from Nepal. I am from Brahmin background family. I have 3 siblings and I have completed Bachelors level.

Describe your caste in your own words

I think caste is a just a symbol but not the social identity. It is division of the people in the past according to the work .

What meaning does your caste have for you?

As I am from Brahmin background, it is so called as high caste. This caste is like supposed to be involved in traditional and worships stuffs.

Which benefits and disadvantages do you see by belonging to your certain caste?

I think there is not any certain advantages and disadvantages with the cast. The main thing is that lower caste in Nepal is so called as untouches casts. I think there is not any specific advantages and disadvantages as being a Brahmin. There is a belief that Brahmin are supposed to be the high level caste.

Has the caste that you belong to had any particular influence or importance on your upbringing?

Yeah, of course. There is no restriction and as being a higher caste daughter, the image in the society is somehow high I guess.

Do you on a general level see any point with the existence of the caste system in Nepal?

It is like only a system being followed from the past days but it has been changing with time.

How would Nepal be as a country if there were no caste system according to you? And how would your life be?

I think there will be respect and no discrimination. And no one has to live with being inferior.

Have people treated you differently because of your particular caste?

No I have not felt such but the people with lower caste feels some discrimination with the caste.

Is it possible to hide which caste a person belongs to?

Somehow it is possible but the society know which caste does the person belong to.

Do you think the caste system simplifies the society?

I do not think so. I don't think that caste simplifies the society because it leads towards discrimination rather than unity. The people who are from lower caste have to be dominated and also the inter caste marriage is the main issue with that as the society and the generation gap is highly increasing.

Is it possible to get out of the caste system?

Maybe, it will take some decades.

Does the caste system have the same meaning to you as it has for your parents?

No because I think parents believe in caste system more than us. I think because they were grown up in such environment where there was much more discrimination than now and also the main reason is the society and lack of knowledge too.

Can you marry a person from another caste or would that be problematic?

If I marry the person from another caste that would be problems for the family and mainly with the society.

If you marry a person from another caste have any impact on your or his working conditions?

No. There might occur the huge problems too such as the couple may have to stay separately, the society may see them as in a discriminating way. And also the customs and traditions are also different which makes one another to adjust .

Does the caste system benefit the society?

Never. I don't think that caste system benefit the society because the first thing is there is discrimination, domination, and next is that the people from one socio cultural background and caste cannot marry the girl or boy from other caste, which is the main problem and in a sense it is like not having proper freedom.

Do you think the caste system will exist in the future?

I do not think so. I think caste system won't exist in the society because the newer generation do not believe in caste system and other thing is also the rate of illiteracy is decreasing which is also making people's thinking and concepts wider.

Will you pass on the caste system to your own kids?

I don't want to pass the caste system to my future children.

What do you think is the viewpoint among the nepali youth about the caste system?

Young generation rarely believe in the caste system. I think because they have wider concept and most of them are educated and they are also aware about the rights, laws.

Even though Human Rights are against caste based discrimination, why do you think people based upon their caste are still being discriminated?

There are rights but not strictly implemented and older generations and the society who still believe the caste system.

13.4 Interview with Jinita

Interview Jinita part 1:

Zalla: Can you tell us about yourself? What your name is? Where you are from? And which caste you are from?

Jinita: Uhh... Hi. This is Jinita. Uhh... I'm from Nepal and I'm 29 years old. Um... basically in Nepal we have a caste system and there is a 4 caste group and uh... among them I'm so called lowest caste – lower caste. So I belongs from the Dalit community umm... which is very like uh... which is... which caste group is uh... so much uh... excluded from all of development aspects as well as culturally and economically because uh... there is a belief of uh... in the society where people believe that this caste system exist from the uh... so Gods and it has been made by nature and everything so, this is how it should be and people should have their own class and caste, so where they should ... where ever they are they should be remaining there,

no matter how... no matter whether they are educated or not, no matter whether they are economically independent or not. But still in the country like Nepal or India, the caste system exist and you can see me I'm educated and I'm an independent person and still people put me in that box and still in rural area of Nepal and also some part of the Kathmandu people still treat me as a lower caste and uh... it's so difficult for me to react on that because I don't believe on that things and if people enforce me to believe on that which is a very difficult for me and in that case it clash and sometimes I argue with them and sometimes I try to talk to them but still that didn't... doesn't make that much difference because that belief is so much strong in them. So... yea... it is a bit hard difficult to change their mindset and perception towards this caste system.

Zalla: yea um... Well we had a question, which said, which... uh. What

Ida: What's the meaning of ... what does the meaning of your... the caste. What is the meaning of your caste to you?

Jinita: uh... actually it's um... very hard for me to explain and describe because the way I grew up in the society, I was um... taught to accept myself as a lower and inferior person, who doesn't have uh... like equal uh... dignity as other people and who supposed to um... except whatever society gives and not allow to questions and not allowed to raise the voice, so it means that the uh... so called lower caste, it means that for me it's a completely discrimination towards the human being, it shouldn't be there and this is not something natural. It has been made by the people and if it was, it was happened by natural it should have been all over the world and not only in this some part of the world, so I... for me it's completely nonsense and still there are lots of people from within the caste and outside of the caste, they still believe on that even though they don't believe, but they don't dare to challenge that system because if they challenge it will be difficult for them to survive their daily life because most of the people who belongs to that community, they are working class and they have to uh... they have to makes money and they have to you know, work with their household and get job in the so called higher caste people, so if they try to argue and if they try to go against them it would be so difficult for them to survive and stay in that uh... place, because they don't want any land, they don't have any education, they don't have uh... that much awareness, so even though they

don't feel good when people treat them as a lower caste without any kind of respect but still they are bond to you know...

Interruption

Zalla: Uh... We have a question, which says uh... Whether you're being part of the Dalit Community has had any impact on your childhood and the way you have been raised? Have you been raised in a different way – compared to your from another ...

Jinita: Another?

Zalla: Higher...

Jinita: Caste group?

Zalla: Yes.

Jinita: I think yes, because of the uh... caste system the uh... be default I was born in that caste, which was completely not anybody's fault and I grew up in a way that was different from other people and then my friends because... When I start sensing the things I was controlled by everybody – that you should do this, you should not do this, you should go there, you should not go there, you should toss this, you should not, you should go to temple, and you should not. So there was lots of lots limitation for in my life and if I sometimes you know ignorantly or annoyingly, or if I challenge those things I would have punished uh you know psychologically or physically. Also from my teachers and also from the elder from the community, and sometimes even my parents they would shout on me because they don't feel good if somebody else are controlling me or somebody else are being angry on me, so it was lots of lots of limitations for me and because of that I felt that I'm not a normal child. I don't have any, I don't have good future as my friend has because there was so many restrictions in my life and when I grew up and I was in teenage years by then there was lots of events used to go and get but it was so difficult for me obtain that, I was supposed to uh... I was so confused whether I should attend or if I should not because if I go there and if I try to mix up with my

friends, there was lots of chances of being insulted from the other organizers or from the family of friends. So that was so difficult and I really like uh... bound to think that, I used to think that I don't any future and I hardly complete my you know... this uh 10 class or 10 standard and then you will be married and I will be the housewife, so when I was like uh... 12 13 years old I used to think that but all of sudden there was something happened in my life and my father is also a little bit you know, um kind of activist besides having his job. He was also a bit active, involving in this social moment of Dalit moment, which help me to think differently and I used to meet lots of leaders from the Dalit Community and then I uh then I click on my mind, so "ok there are other people who are also suffering from the same issues and they have been fighting so I'm also bit fortunate to get some educations and my parents are so supportive" So I could do something against that

Zalla: Um... Now that you are talking about your parents, we have the question saying, "Whether the caste system has meaning for you as it has for your parents or do you look at it differently?"

Jinita: Actually my parents they have never been to the uh school. They are literate but they have never been to the uh school. Even though they are so much strong and they don't believe in any kind of discriminations, but still they have some sort of insecurity, they still think that even though we try to challenge the caste system, it is not possible to eradicate by time, by now. So sometimes uh we try to you know, sometimes in our house we make joke out of "ok I marry with somebody else who is not from my caste" then my father and mother they feel so insecure, they say like "Oh no. That's not fair. Even though you are like educated and you are like beautiful and everything but it wont be sustainable even though you marry, it wont be sustainable, so please don't do that". So they have some sort of insecurity and even though they feel proud now but still they feel like they are lots of people who don't accept, so ... it's different the way they think about the caste system and they way WE think about the caste system.

Zalla: Yea, would you... would you uh... take the chance and marry somebody from another caste?

Jinita: Um... actually... Actually I had a boyfriend who is from another caste, and it's a... recently he expired and because of that I was away from the class

Zalla: He expired?

Jinita: Yea

Zalla: Which means?

Jinita: I mean he was uh... he died from an accident. So because of that I was away from the class and I didn't tell anybody, because it's bit personal and I'm sorry to say but

Zalla: I'm sorry to hear that

Jinita: It's so... difficult for me right now to be in the class and to be in front of everybody. So I had a boyfriend and he is from different caste and we grew up together and we were planning to marry by December, so but right my dream is not gonna be fulfill, so I don't know, I don't know

Ida: Sorry! Sorry for asking

Zalla: I'm so sorry. Because we thought it was your friend that had passed away or that was what we were told

Jinita: There was an accident and he got burned by the electricity and he was in the hospital, so yesterday I was not in that rally because in front of that there is a hospital where he died. So it was so difficult for me to be in the rally

Zalla: I'm sorry... We can just stop here and then we will find some other time to keep it going yea

Shuts off the phone

Interview part 2

Ida: So... On a general level do you see any point with the caste system?

Jinita: From my point of view I can't see any.. Anything special on the caste system. But maybe the idea behind the caste system was to identify each group rather than keeping them entering different levels, or different hierarchy. So maybe the previous idea of this would have been categorizing the people to know what they belong to, but later on people manipulated on that end, they fixed the system and then they start behaving people according to their professions and then they would also start treating them lower and the higher. So people couldn't move from that system so I don't think any specific.. like rationale behind the caste system especially the hierarchy behind the caste system.

Zalla: Is it possible to hide which caste you are from?

Jinita: Actually it is possible but it's more than hiding your caste, it's your psychological belief. Even though people from the so called lower caste they are afraid of hiding their caste because they believe.. They also have a strong belief that if they hide then also God will punish them and they will be in hell in their next life, this and that. So there is lots of this myth behind the belief and especially people from the so called lower caste they are uneducated and they are from the working class background so their understanding of the caste system and the social structures and the hierarchy and the injustice is *very very very* low which don't allow them to think differently and critically. So that is the main point.

Zalla: So what it means is that the caste system is a part of the religion and the belief?

Jinita: Yah, yah. More than the identity now it's became their religious belief and the culture and according to that people should behave in a certain way according to their caste group, if they don't then people don't accept them and they try to exclude them from every social activity and it's very difficult for them to survive if they.. and the most of them I already mentioned that most of the population from lower caste group are extremely under the poverty line.. So you can imagine how difficult it would be for them to take any challenge between the higher caste and it's also matter of getting job and surviving and getting place to

live because 80 percent of the Dalit people they don't have their land and house so they live in temporary house, and they make temporary house in the landlord land so.. Even though they don't want that kind of treatment to them but they don't have the power to say no to that.

Zalla: So they don't have the power because of the belief and because of the culture and the society.

Jinita: Society, and let me tell you that this caste system, practicing the caste system became illegal and punishable, but beside the law it's not being implemented and more than the policy and law people believe in the culture and people don't think that if behave or they discriminate somebody on the basis of caste, color or gender they will be punished, rather than they think that is how it should be and that's our culture and they feel proud.. and somebody who is harassing somebody on the basis of caste and gender or something else – the perpetrator we can say, they never like feel sorry or they never feel that.. guilt on that, so those kind of perceptions or the mindset of people.. so much discouraging for the people who fighting for the justice. And also people who are in the legislations, and you know in the government authorities they are also from the so called higher caste and they also have a strong belief on that. So where they can go and complain. Ultimately they are going to get nothing so that is very very demotivating part.

Zalla: Is it on a daily basis.. How often do you maybe.. face harassment due to your caste?

Jinita: Uhh.. Honestly it's been seven years in Kathmandu I have been living here, and I hardly get some kind of harassment due to my caste here, but before that when I was in my village that was the daily part of my life, which was completely natural even though I was not comfortable with it I didn't have any option and I could not reply on them if I would then people take me as a rude and very.. you know impolite person. So, I used to.. accept whatever people would say about my caste so that was the daily routine of my life. But once I moved to Kathmandu people hardly behave in that way because uh.. they think that, first of all they don't think that I am from the so called lower caste because my appearance and they way I speak because there is some kind of misconception about the caste. People think that from Dalit community or the Dalit community people look in a certain way. So when they see me they don't think I'm belonging to the lowest community so they behave me well and even

though they ask my caste and I tell them confidently and they don't. they really dare to say like challenge or really dare to um insult or discriminate me, because now I feel that I can fight back on that. So it also depends on the people to people, and how much empowered you are, and your association with different organizations. But still there are lots of people from my community they got badly insulted and they got discriminated every day because they are not educated and they are economically *very very* uhh economically in poor the conditions. So it depends on the class and your economic and your education level as well.

Zalla: But if they economically are in.. like if they aren't that economically empowered is that.. that's also because of the caste?

Jinita: Umm, because there are certain number of people who are economically empowered in our community too, but still their conditions, the social conditions are same; they are untouchable but don't say anything in front of them because they have money and they have uhh good life and they can see them better than their life, so even though they don't accept them, they don't allow them to enter their house, or they don't allow them to marry with their children but still they don't treat them so much badly because they have economic power, and they need to like have good relations because sometimes they need to borrow money, and so like that.

Zalla: How would Nepal be as a country if there was no caste system here, in your opinion?

Jinita: Umm I think if there was no caste system or no caste hierarchy, then it would have been better conditions, people would have lived their life differently because.. because of the caste system people are facing lots of discriminations and their selfesteem being challenged and their like.. dignity being challenged so those things really really matter. When I was child I used to.. I was so angry if somebody told me that "*you are from this caste and you are untouchable and you are not allowed to do like this*" this and that, I used to be *so so* angry because I didn't know that there was any way to escape from this and I thought this is how I should live and in my whole life I should accept this kind of behavior, but when I realized that this is not natural and there is some different way and people are fighting against it and that gave me so much strength to listen even though people are saying so much bad things about my caste, I used to take my stand in a nice way rather than being so argumental and being

angry on them. So that was the condition so if there was no caste system then people would have got equal opportunity, and they would have faced less discrimination and they feel less suppressed so that these kind of conflicts between different ethnic group wouldn't have been done and the war wouldn't have been done. So.. I remember when there was the Maoists war, by then lots of their military or the army was from the lower caste because they have so much indignation inside them and they want to take some kind of revenge, and that was the time they felt that that is the proper way to take revenge or go and change the system, and without knowing they just jumped in that and people easily manipulate them because they are so much emotional and this is something related with your dignity and emotions so people could go to any level in order to have dignified life.

Ida: So the Maoists they pretty much consist of lower caste?

Jinita: Yeah and the.. because of.. Because their war was succeed in somehow only because they used that weapon.. of like *"you guys have been suppressed this is not the right way, we need to be empowered, everything will be alright, we will fight against the cast system and all"* and somehow they also when they came to elections, they also put in their manifest that Nepal will be like, a secular country and Nepal will be the country where won't be any caste based discrimination and the general based discrimination and.. they also gave lots of tickets to the different casts, so they also kind of encouraged.. encouraged.. the so called lower caste and excluded to come to the parliament. Which I think was positive points and other parties also followed them and that's how there was some 20 percent or 22 percent parliament member was from the excluded group and also 33 percent women was there.

Ida: Is that it?

Zalla: Umm, yeah I think we have covered all these bullet points. Do you have anything?

Jinita: Yeah I just want to elaborate on one question that you asked; what would happen the Nepal scenario if there was no caste system. Because caste system it categorized in four caste system and each caste system have their fixed professions or occupations, so every caste has to do their own occupations, like traditional occupations even though they are good at that or even though they or not.. whether they are interested or whether not. So that was the.. very

unfair kind of system that forced people to do, and follow what, you know their ancestor are doing, which also didn't allow them to be more creative and to find other kind of job where they could do even more better than they would have done, in that. So making the fixed social system never justified, no matter how.. systematic or how.. how much good they can do in their traditional profession, I.. in my personal belief, I think everybody should get one chance, if somebody good at something then they should get to do that. They shouldn't have any kind of limitations only because of their caste. For example my mom, she is very good at cooking and she loves cooking, and whenever guests comes to our house they always you know praise my mom's cooking and sometimes she was thinking to open a restaurant, and she couldn't do that because of the caste system, because if she, even though she cook fantastic she had that skill but people won't come and eat because she.. we are untouchable and people don't think they should go and eat. So lots of business like there are lots of farmers who have animals, who have cow, buffalos and they can produce lots of milk and they cannot sell the milk because that milk is.. dirty, they won't collect their milk because they are so called lower caste. So there are lots of limitations to those caste who are in the bottom of the society and they have been going through lots of lots of discriminations which is not going to be.. um going to be compensated by anything and now there is a quota system and.. trying to give some extra.. extra opportunity to those who has been excluded and now there are other caste group who are privileged and they are against of that, so there are *lots* of conflicts right now in Nepal because of the ethnicity and caste system, because people are not being able to reflect what was the history and how this people became like this and why they are not educated and why they don't have any property and why they think differently, why they think they should be treated as they have been treated, why they don't take their stand, why they don't shout for their rights, so people from the higher caste so called higher caste.. the majority – I won't say everybody, but the majority they don't reflect on that and they don't think this issue the caste system issue is the national issue of human rights, so that this has been.. we have ben fighting for 60 years and still we haven't got so much progress on it. So people should really like internalize how the human rights have been violated from *long long* time and how they can compensate and how they can uplift that community in order to develop the society, because 25 percent of the population are from the dalit community and there are some other populations who are also excluded, not castly but they are from different ethnic group and until and unless like government or the civil society or the so called power-holder so called

high caste power-holder don't realize that they should put them into the mainstream.. then this development and the peace, and the equality or the sustainability will never ever come. So people need to internalize that, not only the people who are suffering but also those who are.. being the oppressor also, because their population is the majority, now they are the majority so that's the situations now.. and I always give my example because even though it seems I'm normal girl, I'm educated, I have job and I know lots of things about human rights and I take a stand and I also share and I do the things that perhaps some other so called.. higher caste girls haven't done, but still I'm not considered as a human. I have that something that has to.. kind of taboo, or kind of tag with me that "*okay she is untouchable, no matter how educated she is, how much contribution she has made into the society and what she is thinking about the society*" so it is so depressing scenario.. And because of that people really don't want to take a stand and fight for that because ultimately there is like no achievements so people get frustrated especially youths, and they just do their own business and making money rather than shouting for their rights and equality. Yeah.

Zalla: That was actually my new question, I just thought about it, about what the viewpoint is within the youth of Nepal about the caste system.

Jinita: Actually, so far my experience with general youth, they think that this is not good idea or people shouldn't be treated differently, only because of their caste but the thing is they don't take any stand. As maybe you remember Avantika was also telling that she is against the caste system, but she never take a stand in her house because her parents believe on that, and we have a culture to respect our elders even though they are wrong so and in HRBA we say that if you don't take.. You are taking the side of the oppressor then you are also oppressor no matter.. like if you remain silent, then you are also oppressor, so that's how it's happening right now in Nepal. People even though they say.. and so many people from the other caste like so called higher caste they don't believe that caste system exists any more, which is *completely* wrong! And they just, you know there are so many judgmental from the surface rather than talking to the persons who belongs to that community, they just see the surface and they see person like me who are working in the international organization and earning money and wearing nice dress and speaking English, and they think this is how it should be but they don't think the other side of the umm coin because, even though I'm having

everything but I don't have nothing.. I have nothing in the society level, I still have the same level I had ten years ago. So people need to be more critical towards these kind of issues and they need to say no even though it's in their family if they don't say no, then even though they don't believe they are take side so of the.. you know injustice.

Zalla: That's so sad to hear. But also from what we have learned during this campaign is that to make a change takes time.

Jinita: Yeah.

Ida: Umm, but it's the same question with domestic violence you still don't stand up to the elders, you still don't tell your mother-in-law to stop hitting you, I mean –

Jinita: Yeah.

Ida: - it's still the same way, of that you respect your elders and in that way you don't take a stand as well, so why all these women don't take a stand domestic violence.

Jinita: Exactly. It's all about being educated and critical towards yourself and towards the society, and changing on your behavior, rather than getting the degrees - higher degrees, changing on your behavior and practicing what you preach.

Ida: Yeah agree.

Jinita: You can't imagine in my village it's completely difficult to talk about the caste system they say *"oh my god, now you guys are so much privileged, you got job in international organizations and now you became excluded and now I think we should change our caste or we should change our surname"* and many times they did that. There is a reservation system the phd like the doctor or the engineer, and so many people don't know about that information and some of the so called higher caste people they change like their family name and they go and get scholarship. So that's how it's manipulated even though there is a system even small system but still it cannot operated well as it's supposed to be.

Ida: You can actually fake your way out of your caste?

Jinita: Yeah yeah, people can change their surname if they think that they will get some advantage. So it's so much complex and maybe this is the transitional fase and somehow people are influenced by the global scenario but still they have the traditional mindset and the concept in their blood so they can say something and they cannot practice that, so maybe it take some few generations to umm go and be little more advanced on this levels. Yeah.

Zalla: In your life and in what you are trying to achieve like social justice and with the organization you are working with right now, do you feel that you get the support from your community beside from your family, which I think they probably support you in your work, but the community do they, would they support you; the dalit community would they support you in your fight for a casteless society?

Jinita: Uhh actually it depends on their awareness level, because where I'm from that place is very small and many of them are illiterate, and they have their own world and because of the different circumstances they are not being able to come out of that, and somehow they are happy there, and it's pretty difficult for umm people to go and just say them and tell them to just came out of that because until and unless they don't want. And in other hand there is a bigger society in the national level there are lots of organizations, women's organizations and other organizations who are fighting against this caste system and whenever I meet them they always appreciate me and they say "*if you want to do anything, then just let us know*", and basically they are the one fighting directly for these uhh issues and sometimes I go and meet them and sometimes I read their articles which is so much inspiring to me and definitely I will get support if later uhh if I leave Actionaid, if I do something independently to fight for these issues then definitely I will get support from my community who is in the national level and who is like intellectual and uhh activists. Yeah.

Zalla: That sounds positive and the illiterate part of your community how would they look at it, would they maybe feel that if you fight against it that you may loose a part of your identity or?

Jinita: Actually somehow they are pretty happy to see me fighting, or see me working in a different kind of background because I'm the perhaps one who is working in such kind of organizations, and when they see me and they somehow uhh like they feel good, but sometimes they don't express because they think that I might be like spoiled or like that so.. Maybe, but new generations who is younger than me uhh they are really inspired and they also want to read they also want to complete their educations and also want be independent before getting married or something like that, so yeah somehow I can say that they inspire me and also I somehow inspire them. They want to become something and don't know whether they want to go to the social field, or the other field, but at least they have that kind of understanding now that they should make their identity first, and take their stand and say no to the discriminations. I saw that kind of behavior in the young generations.

Zalla: So the younger generation is trying to create their own identity instead of taking that identity that the society has given them for generations and generations.

Jinita: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Zalla: You said that your mother is very good at making food and cooking, but she never.. She can't go and open her own restaurant because she is untouchable and so people won't come. Would she be able to move away from the village she is from to another place and then open a restaurant where people won't be aware of her

Jinita: caste?

Zalla: Umm.

Jinita: Yeah I think that's possible for temporarily, but once people know that she is hiding her caste and that she is trying to feed.. like impure food to their children or the people then it would have been even difficult for her, because I saw one guy who is from my community but even there is another.. He was the shoemaker first and then he opened a small restaurant and he used to make like umm noodles this chow mein and momos, and all the youngster they used to go and eat, but after a few years he like earned lots of money and he was so popular

there, and after few years people start notice that he is from this caste, and then all the society and the civil society went to him and then pressurized him to leave that place and he didn't get rented that house also. So.. and then he lost his job and uhm I mean it was really really sad for him. So that kind of scenario –

Ida: So it has a lot of consequences -

Jinita: Lots of, lots of

Ida: for hiding your cast?

Jinita: No he didn't hide because he is from the same village, but he was outside for many years and then he went back to the village and he had some cooking skill and he used to cook that which is popular among the youngsters, they used to go and eat and then their parents knew that he is from this community and then all of them they went there and they pressurized him to leave that place and to stop his business. I didn't know that.. Recently.. Last time when I went to my village – this time my dad shared that and I was so suprised.. Because we always discuss with parents and we say like “no we can fight, nobody can do anything because we have this and that” but my parents they are like always afraid that yeah you can say something but in the reality, in the practical people do it like this there are so many examples like that so yeah, and they are a bit old and they really don't save to challenge anybody, yeah.

Zalla: Because they have faced the consequences.

Jinita: Yeah lots of lots of consequences and when my grandfather he used to be a blacksmith and our economic condition was very very low everybody knew us from pre generations and people had still that mindset --- “look at that man – who is the daughter of that blacksmith?” and this and that and now they compare me and my grandfathers situation and they feel sometimes good and sometimes they feel a bit jealous their children couldn't do anything and I'm the --- doing besides having all the circumstances.

Zalla: That makes it understandable, why people lose hope if it.. if its such a big part of the society and of the people and of the religion, then standing against it..

Jinita: And my one younger brother he is now uhm not depression but ehh he has been through --- tragedy in his life and because he had a girlfriend and she was from the higher caste, and she dumped him because he is so called lower caste, and he is just twentytwo years old and he lost his confidence and he also start believing that we are from like.. the caste system has made huge impact, even though we are educated and even though we are empowered --- change people's mindset. And even sometimes we try to convince him --- but he was quite young and that was perhaps his first you know affaire and because of that uhm impact so much badly in his mentality. Also in the city, like there is some limitations; you can be a good friend, but if you are in love then people think a hundred times to become your girlfriend or boyfriend – if you are from different caste, or especially from the so called untouchable caste, because here it's like being in affair it means getting married, and people don't want to marry if somebody is from the untouchable caste, and yeah.

Zalla: And you are from the untouchable caste?

Jinita: Yeah.

Zalla: Okay. So within these four fixed groups of casts there is also another group that is the untouchable, or is the untouchable also a part of these four?

Jinita: Yeah the untouchable is part of this fixed group, the four categories and the bottom of the categories is called the untouchable and now the daily term is called dalit. It means the oppressed one by the society, so that is the terms now we call the dalit community rather than untouchable.

Zalla: Im just so choked because from where I come from, and from where we come from in Denmark aswell, there is not caste system and although there is no.. It doesn't exist like people still have difficulties with finding their identities and difficulties with their insecurities and so on, and then being a teenager, a young person and then also have the caste issue makes the life so much harder

Jinita: Yeah.. So hard.

Zalla: Yeah, and also very discouraging.

Jinita: Yeah so frustrating and discouraging, and so many people really really they hide their caste also here and so many successful people also does that, but I don't agree on that kind of things because I believe if we start hiding the things then it's never gonna be solved. If there is a problem then we should talk and we should be open and that's why I never ever like hide my second name because I want people to know who am I, and I want them to change their perceptions, and also inspire some youth – that people from our community can also be like this if they got some opportunity, and if they want.

Zalla: Yeah. Ida do you have any questions?

Ida: No, I'm just writing it down.

Zalla: Should we stop it here then?

Ida: Ehem.

Zalla: Cuz I think you gave us *a lot of* information; a lot of interesting information.

Jinita: I'm happy to share with you guys.

Ida: Can we write to you if there else anything else like when we get back to Denmark?

Jinita: Sorry?

Ida: Would it be okay if we emailed you if we have any other questions when we come back to Denmark?

Jinita: Sure sure, you can write me any time.

Zalla, Ida: Thank you, daniya bhat..

Zalla: (...) The caste system is not something you think about on a daily basis in Denmark, whereas here you are so much limited, and it's such a big part

Jinita: Yeah

Ida: Here you are also confronted with it, because you walk down the street and you see this man, and you say okay if he was from a different caste, or if there were no caste system would he still be selling bananas or would he actually be doing something he love to do

Zalla: Yeah we have talked about it.

Ida: Yeah we have.

Jinita: So being in the practical world is really different than you read it in the books.

Ida: It is, it really is.

Zalla: We see these people work so hard every day. Yeah these fruit sellers they stand the place every day and try to sell their fruit and you think if there was no caste system, if he wasn't limited by that, how much could he or she have achieved instead of having this hard life where you barely can survive.

Ida, Jinita: Yeah.

Jinita: And also because of this caste system the economic.. like economic system is also uhm being unequal, or how to say not fair because those who have high caste they were manipulating people, and they were keeping the labor and the you know.. lots of human labors took, earned lots of land and money and they became richer, they have lots of properties and those who have been the working they are still the worker and their children and many many many generations they are still labor. So this caste system has made huge

impact on the economic conditions as well. Because there was this strategy people become aware like economically independent then people won't listen to others and it would be difficult to control them because they can survive on their own and why should they be in control over others, so that was the very very strategic things and nobody could analyze how strategic this caste system has been made, and so far we cant give one answer on it to sort out the problems, because the more you think, the more it becomes complex. Even for me, it's been almost twenty nine or lets say twenty five years I have been knowing this and being a part of this but still I can't express in a simple sentence; it will be, if we do this, then it will be solved. I can't say that and there are lots of other experts they cant say that and it's not like scientific things, but what is it, it's psychological and belief which is so complex to explain and to sort out and I takes I think many many many generations to eradicate.

Zalla: Yeah, I remember from one of our morning meetings, we talked about caste system. You mentioned that it was created by a person, can you elaborate on that?

Jinita: Yeah there is a saying that there was a very intelligent guy called Manu m a n u and he was the priest of the king and on one hand he was very intelligent and had lots of knowledge about how to rule the society and every thing, and uhm. But on other hand he was very clever and he manipulated the original books, who was from the.. like religious books and then he created another versions of that book and called Manu Smrithis you can write s m r i t i and you can find it on google and in that book he mentioned and fixed so many things and practiced that, and he mentioned to the dalit people that uh if they have property and if they have money, like Brahmin like so called higher caste people, they can go and steal everything from them and they won't be uhm.. and the people who steal that, there won't be any kind of scene on them, and if somebody from dalit community's women got raped by so called higher caste guy, the girl will be punished and she will be pure because the guy touched her. And he also mentioned for the women uhm.. women and then like you know drum they are meant to be beaten, so women can be beaten and there was another statement, he wrote that if women and the people from the untouched community read, write and listen to some pure mantra, then you should melt the glasses and put it into their hair, and also if they read that mantra you should cut their thounge.. and if there is.. Like there were *lots* of physical punishments on them so that was the guy who fixed the system and before that there was a caste system

but there was no hierarchy and people could choose any kind of occupation they wanted to choose, but after his book and after him, the system was fixed, and people used to be treated according to their occupations and then it became a fixed system. If the father is a priest, then the son would be priest, if the father is blacksmith, the son also has to be blacksmith, and there is no any kind of relations between any cast. They are not allowed to marry, they are not allowed to do any kind of social activities between each other.

Zalla: It sounds crazy, I'm sorry to say it.

Jinita: It's so crazy and people especially from our caste, we are so much critics on him even though he had lots of creativity but because of that he is *so* evil person in this society, because he was insecure that the power would change to the other community and if he will die then his son won't be the priest and won't be able to rule and to be closer to the king, and then the system has been fixed. So you can also google it and read more on that.

Zalla: Sure. So he did it for his own good and for his own family.

Jinita: Yeah you can see like uhm how clever he is. And whenever it's related with your religions people get crazy on belief. So he plays with peoples emotions and the belief. If it was the economic situation people easily overcome and fulfill the gaps, but since this is nothing related with economic, it's related with psychology. And the way it has been practiced, you never knew there is no any way to overcome the system.

Zalla: It's kind of like what Hitler did during the second world war, he targeted jews and stigmatized them as not the.. correct race, cuz they didn't have the right looks and facial..

Jinita: - futures.

Zalla: futures yes.. Just in order to get power himself and to get more and more power over the world so he just targeted one group.

Jinita: Yeah.

Ida: Yeah.

Jinita: It's done?

Zalla: Yes for now.

Ida: Thank you so much

Interview finishes

13.5 Interview with Nils

Zalla: Can you tell us about yourself and your name? Just introduction.

Nils: Um... My name is Nils Amar Tegmo and I am 27 years old and I have a mixed background. I'm somewhat Swedish, somewhat Indian, somewhat Turkish, and somewhat American and I grew up in different countries but I spend my teenage years in Nepal. And I did my bachelor degree in Media and Communication – it involved a lot of graphic design work, video work, um journalism, media and law. I also studied development in politics for my bachelors and I'm finishing off my masters' degree here at Kathmandu University in Human and Natural Resources studies and similar to the concept of sustainable development.

Zalla: Interesting. I just want to ask you first what your relation is the caste system?

Nils: Well my mother's father is South-Indian from the state under Padesh, so even though I have Swedish and American citizenship somehow I also fit in the caste system because of my heritage. Um... my grandfather left India, when he was 18 or so and he has lived outside of

India since then. Um... and he himself has fought in his life against discrimination, especially against the discrimination of white South Africans against non-white South Africans, and he was very much inspired by the movement which Gandhi began, in South Africa - anti racism movement. Um... I grew up without religion, so for me... despite technically having a caste I don't believe in it, I believe that the caste system itself is a system of oppression and that it shouldn't exist. Although it is also a very sensitive issue because it's uh... in the minds of the population in South Asia. So... I feel it's important to eradicate it from the mindset but I don't suggest that that's easy; it's a process that takes time. I believe I come from a caste, which is somewhere roughly in the middle, or... roughly in the middle of the spectrum, so I'm not a high caste individual but I feel, I feel that there is a new system in Nepal, which is replacing the caste and that's the class system. And the class system in areas such as Kathmandu, which is urban, which is technically more modern than the rest of the country, despite the caste system disappearing or aspects of the caste system disappearing in this urban area, the emergence of the class system is coming and there is a lot of discrimination based on class and not caste these days – although caste is still a very serious issue.

Zalla: Interesting. Um... you say that there is a raise of a class system and the system is going away from the caste system – how would Nepal be as a country without the caste system, in your opinion?

Nils: Well, I think any place without that form of discrimination would be better. I think if overnight the caste system were to disappear um... it would open up a lot opportunities for people. Um... but there are certain interesting things related to the caste system, such as caste or families which generation to generation they teach well they the rule of their caste system play music, um... there is caste where their role is maybe producing a type of handicraft, so I would be curious to see how ... lets say these art forms could flourish or continue to exist without the caste system. That's an interesting question I don't have an answer for that. But uh... I think in terms of the caste system and as an unequal power of structure based on discrimination, based on opportunity and disadvantage that it should disappear ultimately. How would Nepal change? It's difficult to say um... and like I mentioned earlier where the caste system is to an extend disappearing in Kathmandu, and less so in rural areas. Just the disappearance of the caste system alone is not making society necessarily more free; there are

other power structures and other relationships, which are also very strong um... an interesting one would be the power within a family. Even within a family there are unequal power structures here, it is for example a society based on patriarchy but not just domination by gender or sex but there's also domination by age. Where the youth in Nepal aren't so much... they aren't given a voice or they are not allowed to believe in their ideas, because still the ideas of the elders are dominate, so... it's not to say that people who are older don't have more experience but the world is changing and young people should also have the opportunity to express their ideas, not just the older people.

Zalla: It's because of the thought that the older people are more wiser... Uh... you just said that there are a lot of different kinds of oppression in Nepal and like you said there's domestic violence within the household and at the same time the system of the caste maybe not so much in Kathmandu, according to you, maybe more in rural areas... I don't know what to say about it, but... how ... I don't know how to put it

Nils: In Danish...

Laughing

Zalla: I don't know how to put it in Danish. Um... if you say that uh... people in Kathmandu they are slowly like not focusing on caste anymore that there are other types of class uh... society starting to exist how can that be possible when from what we know is that uh... never mind I can't put it do words

Ida: I don't know what...

Zalla: This isn't going to the part of where we... uh...

Nils: Well I can add something. When Hinduism came to Nepal most of the ethnic groups in Nepal before Hinduism, were not practicing Hinduism, so a lot of the ethnic groups in Nepal were put together into one caste and um... and in each caste there are still many levels. So the caste system does not only discriminate ethnic group, but the caste system also discriminates people from the same ethnic group, so it's multi-discriminatory I suppose to you can say. So in

the Newar community for example, the caste system exist there as well and there are despite of the Newari's being one of the many ethnic groups in Nepal, there are many dimensions to the caste system even within their ethnic group. The complexity of the caste system is uh... is uh... it's very difficult to understand because... I suppose the purpose of the caste system is to organize society, but it doesn't really give society any opportunities... just forces... well... I mean if you're born into a high caste, there are also a lot of choices in your life, which you cannot make, just as if you're Daliture and forced into a low caste because of your birth. But you know, the ethnicity issue comes back in because most high caste... high caste people are Aryan. They are of indoo aryan origin, a lot of low caste people are... their ethnic group are traditionally more, or they migrated from Mongolia or from Burma or from... not from the Indian subcontinent, but from other parts of Asia. So the caste system is also just basically a racist system of indoo aryan superior over um... I don't know the technically correct word but Mongolian - Permian Mongolian kind of origin, people.

Zalla: Um... how do you think that people in Kathmandu moving away from thinking about the system or following it?

Nils: Well... a lot of people who are educated in this country go to boarding schools in urban areas um... So education can play a role in realizing the caste system is wrong, but at the same time... the education system promotes the class system through capitalism and there are only so many jobs for people in Kathmandu for example and people have to work against each other, compete with each other in order to get these jobs, so I've seen kind of the attitude amongst the people change in the last 13 years. People are much less friendly than they used to be... in Kathmandu. And it seems less open and humble and giving and... I personally believe that has to do with the compet... the competitive nature, which is being build up in this country, so I think that they learn that the caste system is wrong but I don't know if the new system is um... working well currently.

Zalla: You just said that um... the culture here is to listen to the elders and follow them and yea listen to their advice, from what I understood from our interview with Jinita was that the elders they still in a way or another follow the system and can't see a way out, so how can they then influence the youth or the people in Kathmandu in another direction as you say that people in Kathmandu aren't as focused about it

Nils: Well I think a lot of the elders as we call them, they don't live in Kathmandu; it's mainly younger people who migrate to Kathmandu. I mean you will have to check the facts but its mainly young people seeking education or employment who move, who migrate to Kathmandu. So a lot of the old mentality um... about the caste system still exists strongly in rural areas but because it's the young people who are coming to Kathmandu, maybe that's why uh... it's changing in Kathmandu. So the question is then how do we change – not how do we change – but how can their mindsets be changed and I don't necessarily think they can, I think it's just a generation gap and I think within a few generations um... although it will be tough... I think within a few generations that mentality will slowly disappear, the question is “is there employment, are there job opportunities for young people in rural area?” and the answer is largely “no” because most visible development is in urban places and... you... I mean a big part of what I see is important development in Nepal is ??? (16.33) So that means spreading the development across the country, somehow that means the government simply not being based in Kathmandu or having all the power in Kathmandu. That means that on reachable levels that people are able to maybe bring hospitals and schools to where they are rather than having to travel to the city. So until that happens then perhaps the mentality will stay the same in rural areas, although I personally don't think that the current way the development works actually has, plays any part in solving the issue um... Whenever asked – let's say I'm sitting in a taxi and I have a conversation with the taxi driver, they very often tell me that, they ask me what I think of Nepal and I say that Kathmandu sucks and the village is beautiful, and they usually agree, so it's not so much that they want to want to go to Kathmandu, they have to because there is no other opportunity for them where they are. Nepali people have survived for thousand of years as farmers because there was solidarity because the worked together, I mean who can sit 5000 meters on the top of a mountain and grow rice or grow vegetables alone... No the reason Nepal – or the reason the people of Nepal exist is because they've cooperated and because there was solidarity and help, and I think that in the urban areas it's the opposite, what's happening. People are very much working... uh... in some way against each other

Zalla: uh... Do you only think that it's the solidarity and help that made it happen back then or in the rural areas or the fact that the caste system still had an impact on that?

Nils: Well the caste system... well Hinduism has not been imposed on the people in Nepal for that long. When Nepal was unified 250 years ago, Hinduism was made official in Nepal and if you go back 50 years to the monarchy then, Hinduism was very much imposed on various ethnic groups who practiced Shamanistic religion or Paganistic religions and... and... Buddhist and others... I mean Hinduism was something very much enforced by the people in power so... if you talk about tradition... you can't really say Nepal, you can say the Himalaya. In Himalaya they go through Bhutan and India and Nepal and if you look at people from the Himalayan region, you will find historically they are not Hindus, they are mountain people. So Hinduism is something which was recorded by the people who began to rule Nepal.

Zalla: But... so if Hinduism is a newer religion in Nepal, that also makes the caste system more recent and not something that has existed for such a long time...

Nils: Maybe I can just clarify, there have been hindu elements around the Himalaya for a long time but to be... I mean Nepal was a hindu kingdom until a few years ago. Hinduism existed around hills but it wasn't... most ethnic groups didn't necessarily practice hinduism, so it has been around but it wasn't made official enforced upon people until the past couple of hundred of years. So yes go ahead...

Zalla: What I tried to say was... (laughing) What I tried to say was that... ok although hinduism has existed in parts of the country for a longer time, but if it's still a more recent religion in some parts of the country, then that makes the caste system also something new and from what I understand is that it's something that has a very big part of the culture and the society.. maybe not in Kathmandu but more in the rural areas. If it's something that is recent construction or recent part of the countries history, then fighting against it will maybe be something more easy or something or...

Nils: Yea, well when the monarchy was dissolved and the discussion of turning Nepal into a republic started to grow. The purpose of making republic, so they said, was that the power of the center and what was the power of the monarchy and the state would be spread across the country and in that time had they been trying to write this constitution, still... they didn't write

in time, so they are starting again now, and having elections for people to be in the ... to write this constitution but what is happened since the monarchy was abolished is that there is a movement now towards ethnic groups rights, which didn't exist 15 years ago to the same degree. That means that today rather than on religions lines there's often a fight for um... by minority groups, by ethnic groups on ethnic grounds. So since the monarchy was abolished.. there is a movement away from Hinduism, that is happening right now

Zalla: So also a movement away from the caste system?

Nils: Yes.. but then Nepal was also a feudal society so... where... it's a feudal society based on caste but I mean in the modern world there will be a rich Gurung and a poor Gurung and maybe the rich Gurung will manipulate the poor Gurung, I mean you will still have this issue of class even if the caste system goes away

Zalla: Which is from what you said earlier in the interview, that there is now... now that there is a raise of class system and that's... according to some people also a bad thing. So although it may be moving away from the caste system than maybe it's something...

Nils: Well yea.. I mean there is also for example a growing middle class but I mean the population in general is growing, and I think in the most places of the world you're starting to have a diminishing middle class but if the middle class is growing here is it growing faster than the lower class? I mean that is something to look into - I can't give you any facts

Zalla: I don't have any questions right no

Ida: Me either... Ok...

Nils: Was that ...??

Ida: Yes, we will ask more if we get more, before we leave

Zalla: Thank you for your time

Nils: Good luck with it

Interview finishes

13.6 Interview with ST

Zalla: Where are you from and which caste are you from?

ST: I'm from Kathmandu, Nepal. Age 26. And I belong to the Newar ethnic group.

Zalla: What does your caste mean to you? What meaning does it have for you to be a Newari?

ST: It's like more or like dividing people into groups and caste systems are actually ... like like... dividing people into the specifics working and stuff, and yep. The caste divides the work. So... that means what it means to me

Zalla: So it doesn't mean more than that to you?

ST: No... It's actually really just belief and more and like specific to like what they do. So it's more or like means what about the caste

Zalla: Ok. Can you start by telling us about your own caste?

ST: My own caste? So... I'm from the Newar Community. So... it is a belief that Newar people are one of the richest and finest ethnic groups that we have in our society. Because we have lots of feasts, festivals, and stuff and people from the Newar Community are usually associated with business. It may be of statues or gold or many things. We are the main sponsors as well, I mean like it's what is expected, with the festivals and stuff.

Zalla: Ok, one minute. Which advantages are there in your caste system?

ST: I don't know about the advantages but... advantages you know like you're born like a businessman. I mean it's in our blood, so everyone can be a good businessman and stuff, so... that might be the advantages. And we have good links of link-up since we are good business and stuff, so that might be an advantage as well beside we are rich in culture, festivals. Even that might be an advantage

Zalla: You said that a lot of the Newar are businessmen, and it's in your blood to be a businessman. So what you're saying is that if your born in the Newari caste, then you can automatically become a good businessman?

ST: Yes.

Zalla: Oh, Ok. Do you see any disadvantages being a Newari?

ST: I don't see any bad things about being a Newari. To be honest I'm not that much of practice and into our culture and stuff, so I hardly know anything about my culture. But still talking about the disadvantages, I don't think there are any. Or I haven't heard of any. I mean if you're talking about the people hating you in different way and stuff, it's not hard as well, because we are the second highest, ranking ethnic group in our society, I guess. Looking down and stuff I don't think there are any disadvantages because yea.

Zalla: Ok, you just said that you aren't that much into the caste thing. You're not that much into it and you don't focus that much on it, right? How come?

ST: Maybe it's because it's the way I've been brought up. To be honest, I still don't know how to write. We have our native tongue, it's a Newari language, but I can understand the language but I can't speak the language. Maybe it's the way I've brought up

Zalla: Ok, can you further elaborate on how you were brought up by your parents?

ST: Ok. I was... Even though I was born in a Newar family but I was like you know, always to be treated fairly. Fairly you know it's not necessary that you have to follow the culture and stuff. You have to like, speak your native language, that we do speak and stuff. So I was like taught in a Nepali tone, I mean, the Newari tone that is the cover language all over Nepal. I started speaking that before our native language. Culture practice is like; yea we do have some culture practices. I know of them but still don't know how to follow them. That is how I was brought up

Zalla: Ok, so your family didn't focus much on the Newari part of your culture, when raising you?

ST: Yep.

Zalla: Ok...

ST: Which means I was... I was treated equally between others and stuff. I've never had to any discrimination, even though we don't have any because you are the second highest, ranking ethnic caste in Nepal. So yea... I didn't face any problems and no discrimination and stuff

Zalla: Ok. I want to ask you if the caste system and your own caste have the same meaning to you as it has for your parents?

ST: Yea, it does have the same meaning for me as it has to my parents, but... yea it does have the same meaning for me and same importance as well because well we do have a community, what you call it, it's called Buthi (?). Even I'm a part of it. And you know about the practice thing, I'm still behind it because I'm into it, but I think I will be learning it soon because I think it's a must. It's because it might have been hard for me to understand the practice before, so

maybe that's the other reason why my family kept it away from me, but since after I'm grown up now, I think I will practice the religion, culture and stuff. But yes it is important for me as for my parents.

Zalla: But do you follow it as much as your parents follow it?

ST: Yes, I do.

Zalla: OK. Would you consider marrying someone who is from another caste?

ST: Yes. I do consider marrying someone from another caste. Cause like I told you, I was never brought up conservative Newar family, who think that you have to get a girl from your trip and stuff. So yes I do can marry a girl a different caste. Because you know, we're like uh... it's the way... we're called like Indo-Aryan – high Tibetan/half Burma and like Buddhist. That's the way of our ethnic group

Zalla: So considering or marrying someone from another ethnic group wouldn't be any issue for you or your caste?

ST: Yep. It won't be any issue for my parents, from my caste.

Zalla: But at the same time, you say that you are like following your caste and you're having it in mind and so on, how can you consider your caste and your ethnic group and still be ok with marrying someone from another ethnic group?

ST: No it's like if I'm following my cultures and traditions and stuff – my heritage will be about the cultures and traditions. It's like festivals and rituals that we do and stuff, and the respect and stuff, how you respect the elders, how you treat your elders and stuff. That's what I want to follow from my ethnic group not the actually practice. To be exact it's like separating the ethnic group – this is, is and this is, is. I'm not practicing that; I'm practicing the good things only

Zalla: Ok, how would the elders in your ethnic group react if you considered marrying from another ethnic group?

ST: Like... It's kind of like ok. It's not a big deal to marry a girl from a different ethnic group and stuff. Even my parents are ok with it because it's what they believe is it's my life. Whatever decision I do, I do because it's my decision

Zalla: Ok. What if it was a girl from the untouchable community? A person for example from the Dalit's?

ST: Uh... I don't know about that but how would take it about the Dalit thing but yea. It's ok like I told you before my parents aren't that much into the practice, distinguishing and separating the things from different ethnic groups. So everyone is kind of like equal – it will never be a problem for to marry a Dalit girl as well.

Zalla: Ok, that's fine. My next question is if you see a point with the system on a general level?

ST: On a general level – ok you know the Newar people have also been divided into sub-communities. So there were discriminations on the Newari people back in the past. But these days it's kind of like ok, it's totally unpolished, so there's no discrimination upon the Newari people as well.

Ida: But what about like all the caste system, like the whole caste system, do you see a point in it?

ST: There are a few discrimination between the Brahmins and Dalits and people from low tribe, low ethnic group. You can see it in colleges and universities as well, and you can see it even in the schools as well, they will discriminate others from the low ethnic group and stuff, and call them untouchable and stuff. So yea there is still the practice of untouchable and discriminating the ethnic group, but not as much as it was before. But it is still there in every ethnic group. But there is no point in having a caste system these days.

Zalla: Why not?

ST: Because you know like people are free doing anything, people are able to do anything. Like from every ethnic group people are able to do anything from another ethnic group and stuff. Let me elaborate, people from low community, low tribe and low ethnic group can perform or can do that as good as a people from the high community people, high level of ethnic groups; like Brahmins, Newars and stuff. So it doesn't even make sense of discriminating people under their caste system. It's more like separating people and like their rights and duties as well. So yea I don't think there's a point to have a caste system.

Zalla: Ok. What do you think Nepal, as a country, would be if the system didn't exist at all?

ST: I think that it would be really nice because people could live freely with their dignity and respect. And it would be a good place to live because people would be helping each other, lets say for example people from the Dalit people or people who are untouchable are in trouble and someone sees it and they just pass by and say "these are the untouchable people". So I think if there's no caste system, then I believe that everyone will be helping each other whenever needed and stuff, so I think it will be a better place to live

Zalla: Ok. You just mentioned that if somebody passed by a person from the Dalit Community he or she wouldn't help because they are untouchable – what would you do passed by such a person and they needed help?

ST: I would help them and I have done so many times. I don't know whether they are Dalit or from the untouchable community but you know, whenever people are in trouble and I can help them, then yes I will definitely try to help them out

Zalla: Earlier when we were talking you said that within the Newari community you focused on the good things; like the festivals and different events. What are the good things? What do you mean by good things?

ST: The good things are like we are very fond of foods and stuff, so we have different like different variety of foods and stuff – I think that’s good because no other ethnic groups have those kinds of foods and stuff. We have different culture and festivals and as I told you before we’re like half Hindu/half Buddhist, so we have different tantras and festivals and we have our own new year and we celebrate festivals in different ways than the others. The Kumari is also part of the Newari and stuff and the other stuff like the Mandola festivals and (some other festivals that I can’t write out) ... that we celebrate. So we are rich in traditions, cultures, clothing, foods and everything

Zalla: So when you mention the good thing that means that there are also things that are... there must be something called bad things as well? What would the bad things be?

ST: Ok, the bad things you know like, I told you before as well, I’m not that much into cultures and stuff because I haven’t been brought up in that way. But the way that I have seen it there are some sort of discrimination between the Newari people as well. Like Newaris are like a community and there are like sub-communities, you know like, ethnic group people are like different others sub-caste as well. So the one caste discriminates the other caste and stuff. So that was before and I think that it’s still there because it’s like a ???? (29.05), and I haven’t heard or seen any discrimination lately. So discrimination is the only bad thing I that we have

Zalla: I want to ask you whether people have treated you in a certain way because of your caste?

ST: Oh, not really no, but no certainties in a good or bad way because I have never seen any bad. And whenever I go like I told you before, we are the second biggest ethnic group in Nepal, so it’s not that respectful as well, it’s not discriminating as well, whenever I go it’s like “ok you’re from Newar, you must be happy because you have so many good things and stuff. You have so many festivals to celebrate and stuff, so many family times and stuff” – so yea that’s what I’ve heard from people but I don’t think any discrimination have ever happened to me so far

Zalla: Do you think that caste system will exist in the future?

ST: I'm not sure it but I got... I'm not sure about it

Zalla: ok... would you ... will the Newari group have importance to you in the future and the way you bring up your children? When you have kids in the future will you raise them with the Newari traditions and the Newari castes traditions?

ST: Oh, not really but you know the way I was brought up, I will bring up in the same way and I will let them know about the traditions and cultures and stuff, as soon as they are able to understand.

Ida: So you will tell them but not make it a big deal?

ST: Yep.

Zalla: What do you think the general viewpoint is of the youth about the caste system?

ST: General view of the youth about the caste system, I don't think even... major of the youth don't follow the caste system. I don't know about the practice but I don't think majorly of the people of youth follow the caste system. It's like... they are kind of like ok with people and stuff no matter what ethnic group they are from

Zalla: Ok. That's interesting to listen to because if that's the... if the general youth don't really think about it and don't really keep it in mind then that still has some impact on the future

ST: Which means you are like pointing out that there will be no caste system in the future. Yes they don't focus on it. But I said majorly of the youth, I mean we still have some of the youth who are still practicing the caste systems – they might be following it, I'm not sure but I just can't be confirming and say like "ok, there will be no caste system in the near future". People are not that much into practicing and stuff majorly youth practicing the caste system but there are like still few people who practices the caste system. So I'm not sure about the future, if there's going to be the caste system or not but yes I can be sure that majority of the youth doesn't follow the caste system and there's no discrimination between the ethnic groups

Zalla: Ok. I have one last question, which is whether the caste system simplifies the society because it divides people into different groups and every group has it's own work related...?

ST: Yes. It does simplify the society and it simplifies the traditional occupations and stuff

Zalla: Ok. But at the same time, would it make the society more complex?

ST: Complex about the ethnic group. Not complex actually but if the caste system are there, people does know about the traditional occupational and stuff, so if people know about the traditional occupation and stuff there will be some ... (37.23) Like people from the low ranking ethnic group can be discriminated, so it is not as complex as everyone thinks but the caste system actually does simplifies very easily you know like what ethnic group people belong to and what are their occupations and stuff, if they are touchable or untouchable and stuff. You know the last name actually defines everything. So yes it is very simplified but at times it is um... what do you call it ... uh... discriminating in nature

Zalla: You said that by the last name you would know which caste system somebody is from, which ethnic group somebody is from. Is it possible for maybe people from lower caste to hide their caste?

ST: Yes, it is possible for the people from the lower caste to hide their caste just by changing their surname, I mean the last name, but if they are caught then they might be some problems

Zalla: Problems from...? Which sector – from the government or?

ST: It could be anything you know like if people change their identity from their last name, then definitely one has to seek new citizenship and the other thing is like if the society figures it out, if peoples been lying about their caste and stuff then there will definitely be excluding her from the society and stuff

Zalla: Ok, what I know is that in the constitution of Nepal it says that everybody is equal and that Nepal is a country without any caste, so the system is only being upheld within the society but not within the law..

ST: No it's actually the government who has divided people into the ethnic groups and caste systems, so no matter what the constitution has mentioned it should be practiced if they have definitely mentioned some, then it should be practiced rather than writing it down in a piece of paper, like throwing it out somewhere and following the rules and regulations

Zalla: Ok. So what you're saying is that one thing is what they have written and another thing is implementation

ST: Yep.

Zalla: Ok thank you so much Subarna. These were the questions that we had.

Interview finishes