“To live as a Christian in India today, you have to pay a price”

An empirical approach to the Dalit Christians experiences of governmental and social discrimination in India.

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the situation for the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh, India. Due to the rise of Hindu Nationalist movements in the 20th century till today, the Dalit Christians experiences discrimination and hostilities on the grounds of their religion. This thesis emphasises to find out in what way the Dalit Christians experience this discrimination as well as how this affects them. Thus, the research question is:

How do the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh experience their situation regarding the matter of discrimination from other people, institutions and religious groups, and in what ways will the discrimination affect them socially and politically?

The empirical approach to the study has been conducted by interviewing 18 Dalit Christians including focus groups and families on the issue. I have addressed their stories and experiences and analysed this in the context of the Social Dominance Theory by Sidanius and Pratto. This theory maps the hierarchal structure, which is found in the caste system. In the findings I have discussed similarities and differences to what is presented in this theory. The subordinates are controlled by the dominants by legitimising myths that enhance the social hierarchy. In this context I find the Scheduled Caste Order to be relevant as this enhance the Hindu Dalits over the Dalit Christians who experience a double suffer by being Christians and therefore outside of this compensatory discrimination. At the same time they experience the upper caste stigma in the fact that they are Dalits in the light of the Laws of Manu. The RSS and other Hindutva groups show dominance over them by violent attacks, verbal abuse and different aspects of terror. By analysing these types of hostilities I have mapped different aspects of their experiences. Even though the Dalit Christians experience to a different degree persecution based on their religious conviction, they tend to stress the importance of being united. Instead of becoming self-fulfilling prophecies, they indicate the importance of education as a possibility to rise economically and socially. Their struggle is non-violent and their religious conviction is not changed due to this persecution. The study contributes to the understanding of subordinates in the hierarchal system. It contributes to understand their experiences and how the religious conviction can be a motivating factor even though the struggle is based on the religious conviction. Lastly it contributes to present research on the Dalit Christians struggle in the Indian context related to the rise of Hindu Nationalism.
Acknowledgments

The title of this thesis is taken from a conversation with one of the Dalits I interviewed. He told me that the Christians in India had to pay a price, sometimes even for their life. I believe this subject is important and I believe these people have the right to be heard. This is the reason for this journey, which has taken two years. I am so grateful to all of them for opening up their homes to me in Andhra Pradesh and I am so honoured that they wanted to tell me their stories.

During the process many people have helped me to finish this thesis and I want express my gratitude to all of the people involved. I would like to thank my supervisor Gunnar Heiene, for helping me and inspiring me throughout the year with long talks about the subject, about mission and politics. Kjetil Fretheim, for being my supervisor the first year when I started the process. My co-supervisor Ed Brown from Stefanusalliansen, for helping me to find the subject and getting in touch with AICC in India, as well as letting me borrow his books for two years. The informants, for telling me their stories and welcoming me to their homes. The staff at AICC for planning the schedule and driving me around to interview the informants, as well as interesting conversations about the situation for the Dalit Christians and many cups of chai. My workplace, Acta – barn og unge i Normisjon, for allowing me to take time off for the field study, as well as during the last weeks of writing this thesis. All of my good friends and family for reading my thesis, helping me by listening to me talking about the subject and giving me advice and perspective whenever I needed it. Lastly, my Lord for peace, time and focus during the entire process.

Ingrid Straume
Oslo, May 2015
## Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AICC</td>
<td>All India Christian Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Backward Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Baharatiya Janata Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Demographic and Health Surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE-LM</td>
<td>Hierarchy Enhancing Legitimizing Myths</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA-LM</td>
<td>Hierarchy Attenuating Legitimizing Myths</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Indian Christian Secular Party</td>
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<td>IDRF</td>
<td>India Development and Relief Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCAER</td>
<td>National Council of Applied Economic Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIFCON</td>
<td>Network for Inter Faith Concerns for the Anglican Communion</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSD</td>
<td>Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>Public Broadcasting Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Rashtriya Sawayamsevak Sangh</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDO</td>
<td>Social Dominance Orientation</td>
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<td>SDT</td>
<td>Social Dominance Theory</td>
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<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>United Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCIRF</td>
<td>United States Commission on International Religious Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHP</td>
<td>Vishwa Hindu Parishad</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ...........................................................................................................3

ABBREVIATIONS ......................................................................................................................4

1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................7
   1.1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION ...........................................................................7
   1.2. THEME AND RESEARCH QUESTION .................................................................. 9
   1.3. METHOD AND MATERIAL .................................................................................. 11
   1.4. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS .................................................................................. 13

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL ...............................................................................................15
   2.1. GENERAL AIM AND APPROACH ......................................................................... 15
   2.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH – VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ................................. 16
   2.3. RESEARCH METHODS ....................................................................................... 17
      2.3.1. Confidentiality and ethics ......................................................................... 17
      2.3.2. Semi-structured interviews .................................................................... 17
      2.3.3. Selection and informants ........................................................................ 18
   2.4. CIRCUMSTANCES AND LIMITATIONS ................................................................ 19
      2.4.1. Challenges during the interview ................................................................ 19
      2.4.2. Time ......................................................................................................... 21
      2.4.3. Language and translation ........................................................................ 21
      2.4.4. Setting ..................................................................................................... 22

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..........................................................................................23
   3.1. SOCIAL DOMINANCE THEORY: GROUP-BASED SOCIAL HIERARCHIES ................ 23
   3.2. THE TRIMORPHIC STRUCTURE OF GROUP-BASED SOCIAL HIERARCHY ........... 24
   3.3. LEGITIMISING MYTHS ....................................................................................... 25
   3.4. THREE PROXIMAL MECHANISMS ..................................................................... 25
      3.4.1. Aggregated institutional discrimination ...................................................... 26
      3.4.2. Aggregated individual discrimination ........................................................ 27
      3.4.3. Collaborative intergroup processes in discrimination - Behavioural asymmetry.. 28
   3.5. SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION ..................................................................30
   3.6. SUMMARY .......................................................................................................... 31

4. BACKGROUND .....................................................................................................................32
   4.1. HINDUISM - ORIGIN ............................................................................................... 32
      4.1.1. Written traditions - The Vedas ................................................................. 33
      4.1.2. The Laws of Manu and the origin of castes ............................................... 34
   4.2. DALITS – THE UNTOUCHABLES ......................................................................... 37
      4.2.1. Dalits in the 19th century ................................................................. 38
      4.2.2. Dalits in the late 19th century to the mid 20th century ............................ 40
      4.2.3. Dalits in the mid 20th century ............................................................... 41
      4.2.4. Dalits in the 21st century ..................................................................... 43
   4.3. TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT INDIA ................................................................. 44
      4.3.1. Ambedkar and Gandhi – the fight against untouchability ..................... 45
      4.3.2. The Indian Constitution ................................................................. 46
      4.3.3. Scheduled Caste Order and the Reservation system ............................... 47
      4.3.4. The Reservation system and the Dalit Christians ................................. 49
   4.4. CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA ....................................................................................... 50
      4.4.1. The rise of the Hindutva ................................................................. 52
      4.4.2. Conversion from Hinduism to Christianity and discrimination .......... 55
1. Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the scope of this thesis. First I will explain the background and motivation for writing about discrimination on Dalit Christians. Then I will present the research question before looking at the method and material used in order to present this theme. Lastly I will present the outline of this thesis.

1.1. Background and Motivation

The reason I chose to look at the situation for Dalit Christians in India today was inspired by a concern for the Christians experiencing discrimination based on their religious conviction. Joseph D’souza, president of the Dalit Freedom Network, addressed the situation in Christian Today by saying:

Attacks on Christians in India are definitely increasing. These attacks take the form of physical violence, destruction of churches, false cases and arrests. They are coordinated. (Christian Today: Petition for religious freedom in India)

Many Christians in India suffer under attacks, violence and discrimination of their rights of religious freedom. This has led me to believe the subject of addressing their experiences is important due to the fact that Christians explain their concern for their future regarding the religious situation in the largest democracy in the world. Where other religions meet the ancient Hindu religion, difficulties can occur. Hinduism that has been integrated into culture, social life and religion can be challenging for a Christian and can affect them greatly, especially with Hindu nationalists arising in the country. Due to this I want to shed a light on the situation for the Dalit Christians suffering under these circumstances. I want to tell their story as well as represent their case. The situation is severe and the discrimination is so complex that it has taken a long time and research to understand their situation, which I am now about to present in this thesis.

Father Ignatius, a priest interviewed in an article about ancient Christians in India in PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) gives a reflection on how he has adopted Christianity within a

1 The picture at the frontpage is taken by me of a house in a rural village. The people living in this house are all Christian Dalits.
country with such deep religious and cultural roots within Hinduism. He says: *We are Christians in faith and we are Indian in citizenship and we are Hindus in culture* (Public Broadcasting Service: Ancient Christians in India).

Curiosity around the theme religion and conflict and understanding how this can be expressed throughout the world and how it is being dealt with in different areas is important for this thesis. According to Joseph D’Souza *The upper castes in India welcome economic globalization (…), but avoid a globalization of faith, worldview, ideology and related subjects* (D’Souza 2005: 21). This can be the reason for a lot of the discrimination towards the Indian Christians. After the year of 2000 there have been several attacks on the Christian minority in India, and one of the best-known cases is the attack in Orissa in 2008. The Hindu extremists accused the Christian minority of converting people by force as well as killing the local Hindu leader Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati. (Human Rights Watch: India: Stop Hindu-Christian Violence in Orissa). 100 Christians were killed, several women raped and hundreds of houses were burnt, as well as orphanages and churches (Human Rights Watch: India: World Leaders Urged to Condemn Violence in Orissa). We find similar stories of persecution other places in India. My thesis is based upon the state Andhra Pradesh and areas in and around the city of Hyderabad.

Pew Research Centre informs the public about different researches around the globe. One of their studies is about the *Rising tide of restrictions on religion*. I have used this research when developing this thesis (Pew-Report: Rising Tide of Restrictions on Religion 2012). India scores *very high* on the index of social hostilities involving religions and *high* on the governmental restrictions. This means that it is one of the countries with the highest scores on discrimination of religions in the world.

As a democracy India has freedom of religion and belief. However, due to the complex history and the situation of Hindu Nationalists arising the Christian population face different types of discrimination, which I will address. The Dalits are the population, who faces the hardest consequences due to their situation with the lowest possibilities of rising from their situation both economically and socially. Later in this thesis I will explain more detailed what this means as well as why I address their situation.
1.2. Theme and Research Question

Since discrimination of Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh is my main focus and aim for this thesis it will be necessary to give a definition in this section before I continue. Chapter 4 will give a thorough explanation, however, to understand this I will briefly explain the current here.

*Dalit* means ground or broken into pieces (4.2). They were and in some cases, are described as a person who cannot be interfered with or be touched. To describe these people, *Untouchable* is also used. While the four major castes of Hinduism rages above them, the Dalits are underneath on the ground below the feet of the Hindu god Brahman. Even though there are many names for these people, I have chose to use the term Dalit in this thesis. There are exceptions where I write Untouchables, however, this is only when other books use this term. In addition to this I will sometimes use the word Scheduled Caste (SC), which is the name the government uses for the Dalits (4.3.3).

The other focus in this thesis is discrimination. The Oxford dictionary defines discrimination as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age or sex (Oxford Dictionaries: Discrimination). In this case this discrimination is set towards the Dalit Christians in India based on their religious conviction, which means that many of the Christians experience persecution. Persecution is defined as hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs (Oxford Dictionaries: Persecution). These hostilities can be executed as violence, murder, verbal abuse and displacement from homes and villages, as well as other actions. There are also cases of discrimination from the government and the governmental laws, which makes the Dalit Christians more vulnerable.

According to Dalit Solidarity, there are 165 million Dalits in India, which means 1 out of 6 of the entire population of 1.2 billion people, or above 16% of the population in this country are in this category (Dalit Solidarity: Who are the Dalits?). Dalits are born with this status; this means that a Dalit status is something that is constant, not possible to change, neither by religion nor by politics.

When Dalits convert to Christianity many of them experience several challenges.
A common belief among many people can be how Dalits convert because Christianity will give them freedom from the caste. Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim explain these views in their book *Christianity as a world religion*, on how there were mass conversions in the 19th and 20th century and that many of the Dalits used conversion as a protest (Kim 2008: 192-193). However, it is important to stress the reality how the Dalits, despite the rising of Hindutva movements, are growing in churches in India today. Another fact to mention is that Dalit Christians will experience a double suffer due to the social stigma of being a Dalit, which is unchangeable, as well as the lack of benefits to rise from poverty due to Scheduled Caste Order. This Order excludes Christians and Muslims (4.3.3-4.3.4). This is essential due to the poverty situation among many of them. I will explain their situation thoroughly in the 4th Chapter of this thesis. As we see here the Dalit Christians face discrimination on many levels. I have chose to focus on the qualitative studies of this. This means that I will use their experiences on governmental and social discrimination to explain the situation for the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh today. The research question is:

*How do the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh experience discrimination from other people, institutions and religious groups, and in what ways will the discrimination affect them socially and politically?*

In the process of answering this main question I will use the sub questions listed below. The first sub question describes the theoretical perspective of this thesis as well as laying a foundation towards my findings through the informants. This question is:

*How will dominant groups discriminate subordinate groups according to the Social Dominance Theory?*

In the next sub question I want to explain the history of the Dalits in India as well as the political history through the abolishment of Untouchability in the constitution and the Scheduled Caste Order. It is important to lay a foundational understanding of the Dalit Christians, persecution and Hindutva in the process until today. The question is:

*What is the situation for Dalit Christians in India today, and how has this developed over the years historically, socially and politically?*
The last sub question is given to understand the Informants experiences of social and governmental discrimination in India, as well as their understanding of their place in this system. The question is:

According to their status as Dalit Christians, how do the informants experience governmental and social discrimination in rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh?

By answering all the sub questions I will find the answer to the research question, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. I will look at the Dalit Christians personal experiences, which makes up the basis for the discussion. Due to limitations it will not be possible to discuss their situations with a view from Dalit Hindus, Hindutva groups or upper castes, as that would have needed more space as well as time and research. Due to the empirical approach the Dalit Christians experiences are the important scope for this thesis.

1.3. Method and Material

The method I have used for this thesis is an empirical approach to the subject. I will focus on interviews of Christian Dalits in Andhra Pradesh and have chosen a qualitative approach. Bryman gives an explanation of this approach, as it tends to be concerned with words rather than numbers. This approach stresses to understand the social world by examination of interpretation through the informants. (Bryman 2012: 380). To be able to understand and go into depth on what the Dalit Christians experience, I chose to use the semi-structured interviewing and conducted 18 interviews of individuals, families, focus group, pastors, leaders and activists. In each interview I mainly focused on their personal experiences rather than the overall perception of the situation for the Dalit Christians. However, some of the informants tended to be more concerned by this perception. Stefanusalliansen, an NGO working for the persecuted Christians around the world, helped me to get in touch with All India Christian Council (AICC) in India. AICC helped me to get in touch with the informants. In Chapter 2 I will discuss this method and how it was executed during the fieldwork in India.

Other materials for this thesis were the use of books, reports and articles. To understand the historical context for the Dalits I mainly focused on two books, however, I found the need to supplement by using other materials.
The first book is John C. B. Webster: *A history of the Dalit Christians in India* (1992). This book focuses on the origins of Caste and Untouchability and gives a thorough understanding of their history and the movements of the Dalits during the 19th and 20th century. It presents what is called a compensatory discrimination through the Scheduled Caste Order for the Dalits through the government of India.

The second book worth mentioning is the book by Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany: *The Untouchables – Subordination, poverty and the state in modern India* (1998). This book also focuses on the construction and historical background of the Untouchables in the social and political context. However, this book does not focus on the Dalit Christians in particular, but the Dalits all over India.

The book, which introduced me to the theme of discrimination of Dalits, was a book by Joseph D’souza, called: *Dalit Freedom – Now and Forever. The Epic Struggle for Dalit Emancipation* (2004). This book narrates the recent development and challenges for the Dalits as well as the situation for the Dalit Christians in India.

The PEW-report on the *Rising tide of restrictions on religion* from 2012 was used as an inspiration into the Interview guide. This report stressed the situation of religious restriction and hostilities in the world today.

While interviewing in India I came to know the differences in the understanding of conversion. Therefore I used a chapter in the book *Paradigms, Poetics and Politics of Conversion* (2006) by Jan Bremmer, Arie Molendijk and W. J. Can Bekkum, to explain passive and active conversion.

Lastly, for the theoretical framework of this thesis I mainly used the chapter *Social dominance theory and the dynamics of intergroup relations: Taking stock and looking forward* (2006), by Felicia Pratto, Jon Sidanius and Shana Levin. To supplement this chapter I used the book by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto called: *Social Dominance: A Intergroup Theory of Hierarchy and Oppression* (1999). These explore the social hierarchy and shed light on the dominant groups oppression and dominance over subordinates in the hierarchy.
To understand the situation of Dalit Christians in India today, I used several supplement materials such as books, reports and articles as seen during the thesis. I also used webpages for political parties as well as dictionaries.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

The outline of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: This is the introduction chapter where I present my background and motivations for writing this thesis. Further it presents the theme and the research question before I present the method and material used for this thesis.

Chapter 2: This is the method chapter where I will explain why these methods were chosen and what my angle is. I will also present how the interviews were conducted as well as challenges regarding this. I will explain weaknesses and strength of my thesis through the validity and reliability of this thesis.

Chapter 3: This chapter will be the theory chapter where I present the Social Dominance Theory. This chapter is used to present the theoretical framework, which will make a foundation during the discussion.

Chapter 4: This is the chapter where I present the background information of my thesis. I will present Hinduism as a religion and a cultural context as well as the caste system where my main focus will be upon the Dalits and their historical context. Further I will explain the history towards an independent nation as well as important laws for the understanding of the empirical chapter. Last I will present Hindu Nationalism and in the light of this I will look at the conversions of the Dalits to Christianity, persecution as well as reports on this matter. I will stress the fact that this chapter is quite long. That is due to the importance of the situation for the Dalits. They have a long historical context over 3000 years, and the complex matter of their situation today express the need for a thorough chapter on this theme.

Chapter 5: This chapter is the empirical chapter. I will present the material from the informants in Andhra Pradesh. This chapter is also thorough due to the need of presenting
each informant and the different thematic subjects where they experienced discrimination. I have divided this chapter into governmental discrimination and social discrimination.

Chapter 6: In this chapter I will analytically explain the situation for the informants in the light of Social Dominance Theory. I will present the findings and discuss their experiences of discrimination in the rural and urban context as well as the in-group and out-group perspective of this.

Chapter 7: In this chapter I want to bring a conclusion based on the collections and discussions I have made throughout the thesis. I will also present some suggestions for further research.
2. Methods and Material

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology of this study. I will explain the general aim and approach, validity of my research as well as give an explanation of the research methods. This chapter is very important as it describes why I have chosen to do the research as written in this thesis.

2.1. General Aim and Approach

When I started working on the thesis I had to look into what type of methods I needed to use to conduct the research. I could have written a thesis based on documents on Dalit Christians, but early in the process I wanted to look at the personal experiences and thoughts of a Dalit when facing discrimination and harassment based on the choice of being a Christian. To get these stories I needed to go to the source, the people experiencing this. Because of the aim for the thesis and the way to get these stories, I found that an empirical study of the issue would constitute the best method. As mentioned earlier, Stefanusalliansen helped me to get in touch with All Indian Christian Council (AICC) in Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, which is an NGO working on the Dalit Christian issue. Due to the connections and the fact that this is an organisation working on the freedom of religion or belief it was more accurate to ask them for help in the process.

My research question was not settled fully when I travelled to India. However, the main topic was made before I left and I was planning to conduct the interviews with a general approach on religious discrimination. I also wanted to talk to the staff at AICC in the process of settling the scope for this thesis. The first day of the interviews I found that an analysis based on religious discrimination of Dalit Christians in rural and urban areas in and around Hyderabad was the best aim for the project. As a result the research question was made in the process of the transcription of the interviews. My approach for the thesis has been abductive reasoning. According to Bryman the definition is:

A form of reasoning with strong ties with induction that grounds social scientific accounts of social worlds in the perspectives and meanings of participants in those social worlds (Bryman 2012: 709).
This means that my approach in the discussion was to analyse the discrimination of the informants and go back and forth between the theory I chose for this thesis. In that way I was to find similarities as well as differences on how the informants experienced the discrimination towards the theoretical fundament for this sort of discrimination. I chose the Social Dominance Theory as this describes social hierarchy with dominants on the top of the system and subordinates at the bottom. This approach will fit in the best way, as my aim is not to change the theory but to test this theory in the tension between the empirical findings and the theoretical foundations. I find this approach to be helpful in the mapping of the discrimination of the Dalit Christians.

2.2. Qualitative Research – Validity and Reliability

This study will be based upon a qualitative study on Dalit Christians in India. I have chosen this method because of the flexibility regarding the research and how I am able to structure the data after collection. The weakness of this study could be the amount and complexity of the data collected as it mainly studies 18 different cases. In that way I have to be careful not to generalize all the information to qualify for every similar study. Since India is one of the largest countries in the world as well as a country of diversity it can be discussed whether a study of hostilities and discrimination among Dalit Christians in and around Hyderabad could be generalised to count for all over India. However, since my study among Dalit Christians is an in-depth study on the converts in the area around and in Hyderabad I will say that this method will help me in the best way of making the conclusions, which I will come back to in the last chapter.

Since the thesis operates on the theoretical and empirical basis the problem of validity and reliability will emerge. Validity tells us something about whether what is measured is the actual result. The reliability will tell whether the study is reliable and can be done again with the same results (Bryman 2012: 168-173). Since the findings of my thesis is based on interviews this can be hard to measure. As a lot of my findings contain information on the Scheduled Caste Order, I believe a lot of the research in different places in India would lead to the same findings. However, in some states the rate of discrimination is higher than in others, which again will lead to different results. The factor of language will also play a role in reliability, since most of the interviews were translated from Telugu to English. Another aspect worth mentioning is the diversity between rural areas and urban areas; whether there
are Hindu nationalists in the area, as well as how many Christians there are in the different areas. Lastly, the aspect of time would tell whether the result would be the same. Since this thesis is based on discrimination, events over time can change the result if someone were to do the same research. Since the interviews were semi-structured the interviewee could answer differently as in the case if someone else were to conduct these interviews. Therefore it is necessary to emphasise the scope, which is among the Dalit Christians in rural and urban areas around Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh and their experiences on discrimination.

2.3. Research Methods

The method I have used to collect my data is mainly semi-structured interviews. In addition there will be conversations with the staff at AICC as well as other leaders within the Dalit Christian community. This is the main material of the dissertation.

2.3.1. Confidentiality and ethics

Before I conducted the interviews I had to get permission from Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD). This was due to the reason of fragile information from the informants. I told the informants that I would delete the recordings and information given after the thesis was written. The confidentiality was important and I was not permitted to share any information of names, places or factors, which made them transparent or the anonymity was broken. Therefore the information given will only be used in this thesis and not misused from other parts. These are the ethical standards of this thesis.

2.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

I used a lot of time getting to know the context of the Dalits as well as working on the interview guide before traveling to India. It is important to be well prepared for each interview, because a good interview depends on how much time has been spent up front working on the questions. It is important to remember the central questions and at the same time keep them written down. This is due to the fact that if the researcher knows the interview guide, the respondent easily can talk without being led by the order of the guide. This is also
why I chose to use the semi-structured form when interviewing. Bryman explain the use of this type of interviewing:

Semi-structured interviewing are used so that the researcher can keep more of an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data. This is the inductive approach to theorizing and conceptualization (Bryman 2012: 12).

As this interview form is more flexible than a structured interview, I was able to make follow-up questions. In this way it was easier to follow up the informants responses to the questions as I could go wherever the conversation led us, and at the same time keep an idea of the themes I would ask. Since the interview guide was well prepared it helped me towards leading questions. The problem with leading questions is that the researcher gives the interviewee a direction and it is harder for the informant to answer in his or her own way. In that way the respondents will often have to accept the researchers view instead of expressing their own.

2.3.3. Selection and informants

AICC chose the people for my interviews since it would have been hard or impossible for me to find the people I was looking for on my own. This is mainly due to three factors. The first is that most of the informants didn’t speak English. The second is that it would have been dangerous for me as a woman to travel on my own in an unknown place. The third is that since this is a vulnerable subject many of the informants would not have trusted me with their information. AICC is a trusted organisation among the Dalit Christians, which works for their best interest.

Due to the focus on how the Dalit Christian experience discrimination, I had to set some criteria for the people I interviewed. The first was that they had to be Christians; the second was that they had to be Dalits, and the third was that they had to have experienced some kind of discrimination based on their religious conviction. My selection consists of 18 informants. Since many of the interviews were with whole families or more than one person present, I have chosen to categorise each of them as informants, in addition to this I will write a sub category such as family or focus group where that applies. Bryman gives a definition to focus group, which is necessary to address:
A form of group interview in which: there are several participants; there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular fairly tightly defined topic; and the emphasis is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning (Bryman 2012: 712).

By categorising the informants it means that it will be possible to follow whether there are several people interviewed or only one person interviewed. In this selection 6 persons are individual common people, 1 is a focus group, 3 are families, 4 are leaders and activists and 4 are pastors. I also did some interviews with higher caste people, but I will not present these in my thesis, as the scope is the Dalit Christians. All the people interviewed were around 18 to 70 years old. In the thesis I have chosen to make all of them anonymous. Nevertheless, I wanted to present whether they are women, men, pastors and/or activists, as I believe it will be necessary for the whole understanding of their situation and also to consider similarities and differences between them. I have also presented whether they are from rural or urban areas. At the end of the time I spent in Hyderabad I had collected enough material on the subject. Even though each person experienced things in different ways much of the findings had similarities and the data collection was saturated.

2.4. Circumstances and Limitations

In the following I will present some of the challenges, circumstances and limitations during the conduction of the empirical research.

2.4.1. Challenges during the interview

I knew that one of the biggest challenges could be to make people talk to me as a stranger in India. Because of the statistics and the PEW forum on governmental restrictions and social hostilities among Christians in India, I knew that the situation for the Dalit Christians was real. Therefore I did a lot of research before conducting the fieldwork. The circumstances had a lot to say, as I could never get a grip on who would tell me what I needed for the research. A person would never open up to me fully during a one-hour interview, but I could get an understanding of their situation. One of the reasons they didn’t always opened up was because of the fear of loosing their jobs. Some had gotten their job on the reservation status as a
Hindu, but in reality he or she was a Christian. Due to this factor some kept the information hidden in case I were to go to the government with their information. Another reason was the vulnerability when talking about experiencing physical abuse. The informants accepted that I was to interview them, and I always told them for what purpose. Originally I planned on sending them a form where they could sign, however, as it turned out the limitation on language as well as a different cultural context and the fact that not all of the informants could read, made it impossible.

During the interviews I used a recorder. I let the informant know why and what was going to happen with the information. While conducting the interviews I met a lot of challenges with the noise in the background and at one point of one of the interviews I could even find all the chickens standing in front of the recorder chuckling. I was expecting some of the recordings to be ruined, and tried to write down as much as possible during the interviews, luckily all the recordings could be used.

At some point in the interviews they started talking about their situation before I got to start the recorder. In these cases I wrote down the information they gave, and asked them again during the interviews. In some of the interviews the informant already knew why I was there. The AICC had asked them if I could ask some questions regarding discrimination on their religious conviction. Since they already knew why I was there it could be a challenge to go through the themes of the interview guide, as they wanted to go straight to the core and tell of their experiences. In other cases the informants started to talk about discrimination after I turned off the recorder. In those cases I asked if I could turn it on, which they let me. However, these challenges were expected and most of the time the interviews brought new information about the experiences of a Dalit Christian.

As it is common to face challenges in the process of interviewing, the most unexpected challenge I discovered during the first interview. Later it seemed to be a natural event for the informants. I could find myself sitting and interviewing one person with one translator present. Suddenly, one by one, the entire family joined and started to answer questions. In some cases even the neighbours were present. I tried to focus on that first person I was supposed to interview, but as the cultural differences made clear, if you talk to one person, everybody has the right to hear and participate. During this process I had to be strict about whom I was talking to, and sometimes ask the questions more directly to get the story from
the informant. Before one of the interviews I thought I was expected to interview the pastor of a church. Then suddenly the entire family and the youth group from this church joined. I then decided to make this into a focus group of all the youths present, and started to ask all of them questions. During that situation I found several different stories and interesting material for the thesis. I found that this could be used for the purpose of getting the story from many different views. The experiences they talked about during this interview gave me several things to point at. At some point I put the interview guide aside to focus on the stories and meanings this group was addressing. They felt that they could talk freely and the interview gave me some new thoughts about the situation of an urban group of Dalit Christians and challenges they faced.

2.4.2. Time

The time I spent in Hyderabad was approximately two weeks in November 2013. The reason for the short period of time was due to my work situation at home. Because of the good help from AICC they had made the schedule ready up front. Even though many of the appointments were changed, it was easy to rearrange or ask someone else to be interviewed. AICC also made it clear that I didn’t have to worry if I couldn’t get enough material; since they could help me with all the questions I had after I returned to Norway. I found, however, that 18 different interviews were sufficient, and the material was saturated.

2.4.3. Language and translation

All of the interviews were conducted with a translator from the language spoken in the area, Telugu to English. If the informant spoke sufficient English the interviews were conducted accordingly. I used local translators, which were working in AICC. The informants gave me the best information since they knew the people asking the questions. However, this limited me in some ways as some of the translators had a lot of background information on the subject, which left a lot of interpretation through him during the interviews. This is also a weakness in my empirical chapter, which is important to address.

In some cases the entire family as well as the team from AICC tried to translate what was being said, and in some cases the interviewee answered for so long, which surely would make
me loose some valuable information during the translation. This means that I will present the interviews based on the stories told rather than addressing the words being said. This is also why I have chosen not to write “Eh” or other sounds in the interviews. This is not necessary since it is from the translator and not from the informant. Another reason is to make the analysis easier to read through without all the pauses. Due to the length of some quotes, I have chosen to cut some passages as follows (…). In some cases the translator said “she” or “he”. In those cases I have chose to write “I”, to make it clear from whom the experience is told. I believe however, that the use of translators from AICC helped me to get important stories. A professional translator would probably have a challenge in getting the same stories from the informants. The reason is that the subject of discrimination is sensitive, which makes it harder for the informants to trust unknown translators. When returning to Norway I started the transcription process and the thematic sorting of the interviews.

2.4.4. Setting

When arriving Hyderabad I didn’t know where the interviews were to take place. I hadn’t asked for a place to sit when interviewing. This led me to the first place where I suddenly found myself sitting on the floor in a house made of bricks with open doors and windows. The next setting was also placed on the floor in a house with one room where the dad was sleeping when we entered. But the hardest and most exciting place to interview was when I arrived at a working place where the family lived behind some tarpaulin, on the bare ground. The fireplace where they made food was right next to the bed, which was a hammock. The room was about 3x3 meter. In the background I could hear men working on the building they slept underneath. By inviting me to their homes they showed me a lot of trust and some of the Informants even asked me to pray for them after the interviews.
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I want to give a presentation of the theory in which I will base my analysis. According to Bryman, theories are the way observed regularities are explained. He gives an explanation for the importance of having a theoretical basis for the research in his book.

Theory is important to the social researcher because it provides a backcloth and rationale for the research that is being conducted. It also provides a framework within which social phenomena can be understood and the research findings can be interpreted (Bryman 2012: 20).

For the analysis I will use the Social Dominance Theory, which is formulated by psychology professors Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto. Sidanius and Pratto explain that this theory is an effort of integrating several theories on social attitudes and intergroup relations into one coherent and comprehensive theoretical model (Sidanius and Pratto 1999: 31). This theory is constructed to find out why people from one social group oppress and discriminate against people from other social groups. Due to the empirical research on how this discrimination takes place in the life of a Dalit Christian, this will be the theoretical framework for the analysis. I will then answer the first sub question, which is:

*How will dominant groups discriminate subordinate groups according to the Social Dominance Theory?*

3.1. Social Dominance Theory: Group-based Social Hierarchies

Sidanius and Pratto explain Social Dominance Theory (SDT) in their book *Social Dominance* (1999) and define that it begins with the basic observation that all human societies tend to be structured as systems of group-based social hierarchies (1999: 31). According to SDT, almost all firm societies can be considered group-based dominance hierarchies whereas one social group that tends to be ethnic, religious, national, or racial, will have relatively high power, which then have benefits unknown to the other group. Further they explain, while dominant groups possess a disproportionately large share of positive social value, subordinate groups possess a disproportionately large share of negative social value (1999: 31). For instance negative social value can be considered as lower political power or status, high risk and/or low-status occupations, limited healthcare and simple homes. In contrast, the dominant social value will be categorized in the opposite way. One well-known situation
where we will find these advantages or disadvantages would be Apartheid in the South Africa or racial discrimination in the U.S.

According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin, the purpose of this theory was originally the attempt to understand the formation and maintenance of this group-based social hierarchy. Further they explain that it would be important to understand the several levels social dominance hierarchies are maintained. This would include the relations between in-groups and out-groups as well as the ideologies and policies behind them. SDT would address the structure in a general matter contrary to theories on capitalism, gender, and empires and such (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 272).

3.2. The Trimorphic Structure of Group-based Social Hierarchy

SDT argues that societies are categorized into a trimorphic structure. I will present each category accordingly. The first is an age-system where the adults have prominent positions over the children. This system can be viewed across the world for instance when a person will step into adulthood. The second is a gender-system where men have prominent positions over the women. This will often be distinguished through leadership positions, military, or politics. The third is an arbitrary-set system where different groups are constructed in a random set and have differential access to things of positive and negative social value (Sidanius, Pratto and Levin 2006: 273). According to this system the characteristics such as religion, caste, ethnicity, and nationality will determine the hierarchy. In SDT this trimorphic structure is universal and will vary to the high or low extent. Age and gender-based hierarchies tend to exist within all societies, but will be different across the world. Arbitrary-set systems, however, will exist and emerge in invariably ways.

Despite several structural and functional similarities among the age, gender, and arbitrary-set systems of groups-based social hierarchy, social dominance theory argues that each system is qualitatively different, and hence one system cannot be regarded as merely a special case of another (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 274).

According to SDT, age and gender based systems will have some flexibility due to the different definitions of child versus adult and male versus female. The arbitrary-set system, however, will have some quality of easily being shaped. Contrary to the gender- and the age-set system, the arbitrary-set system would have cases where clans, ethnic groups or nations to
a degree have tried to annihilate the other. *Social dominance theory argues that arbitrary-set hierarchy primarily focuses on the control of subordinate males by coalitions of dominant males* (2006: 274). According to Sidanius, Pratto and Levin, this would also be the reason this system often would be associated with violence (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 274).

3.3. Legitimising Myths

Pratto, Sidanius and Levin further explain how there are different mechanisms producing and maintaining group-based social hierarchy within SDT. This happens by legitimising myths or shared ideologies, which consist of attitudes, values and beliefs. Further these legitimising myths will provide justification for the practices, both moral and intellectual. One good example would be the *white man's burden*, which legalizes the European to look at other cultures as child-like in need for help and domination from the superior power. In this way these myths will justify inequality. Contrary to this is legitimising myths, which helps seeing the universal rights of man, socialism and Christian brotherhood.

According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin these legitimising myths are distinguished between Hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths (HE-LMs) as the justification of inequality with examples of forms of racism, nationalism, Confucianism, karma and other types of discrimination and imbalance. In contrast, is legitimising myths called Hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myths (HA-LMs). These are social democracy, human rights, New Testament themes of helping the poor and other equality based rights. *Both hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating myths are tied to the cosmolgies, patterns of behaviour, and relations that constitute culture* (2006: 276). The way of determining which legitimising myth being enhancing or attenuating is based on to which degree the myth is harmonizing to both subordinate and dominant groups. The dominant groups will in most cases support the HE-LMs while the subordinate groups will support the HA-LMs. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 275-276).

3.4. Three Proximal Mechanisms

Sidanius and Pratto explain how the social hierarchy is maintained. *Social hierarchy is driven by three proximal processes: aggregated individual discrimination, aggregated institutional
discrimination, and behavioural asymmetry (Sidanius and Pratto 1999: 30). In the following I will present each category in this order according to the pages 276-280 in the chapter Social dominance theory and the dynamics of intergroup relations. These are as follows: Institutional discrimination, Individual discrimination and Collaborative intergroup processes in discrimination.

3.4.1. Aggregated institutional discrimination

In the same way the legitimising myths will be categorized into HE-LMs and HA-LMs, we will find the same classification within institutions according to SDT. Some hierarchy-enhancing institutions would promote inequality by assigning more positive social value or more negative social value to dominant groups. This is called aggregated institutional discrimination. Powerful institutions as this could be profit maximising financial institutions, transnational corporations or internal security organisations such as Gestapo, KGB or FBI. Further it is explained how criminal systems are important mechanisms of group dominance and control. This is due to the fact that subordinates usually are over-represented in prison cells, torture and execution chambers in many different societies. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 206: 276).

Contrary to these institutions we find Hierarchy-attenuating Institutions, which promotes human rights, civil rights and civil liberties. Among these are also religious organisations and welfare organisations with the aim of protecting poor, vulnerable and oppressed people and aid the subordinate groups. Criminal justice and employment sectors would usually assign dangerous work situations as well as prison terms to subordinates. Pratto, Sidanius and Levin explain that in contrary to the HE-Institutions, the HA-Institutions would seldom assign negative social value towards dominants due to the fact that they probably would experience the asymmetry according to the difference between those, which then will force them to shut down the HA Institutions. Further they explain five ways the HE-institutions are a potent cause of group hierarchy. These are as follows:

1. Institutions can mobilise and assign larger amounts of resources than individuals.
2. Large institutions, such as governments and corporations, will reach further in systematic influence across locales.
3. Due to the fact that HE-institutions are sustained by themselves the individuals trying to fight the institutional discriminatory practices won’t reach far, as the institutions engage in discrimination over generations and therefore will defend their institution by defending these practices.

4. HE-Institutions will settle their own norms in which they will coordinate the employees and homogenise individual differences.

5. Individuals in many HE-institutions are frequently released from personal blame for their institutional actions. The reason is that the institution has special legal status. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 277).

This implies that HE-Institutions are very influential in establishing social hierarchies into societies. Institutions therefore not only pattern who can obtain social value, but they would also direct patterns of violence through systemic terror. This terror is done to maintain dominant power. Sidanius and Pratto divide this systematic terror into three forms, which I will give a summary of below:

1. **Official terror** that is public and is a legally sanctioned violence. This threat and/or violence are executed through the state, which direct it toward members of subordinate groups.

2. **Semi-official terror**, which is “un-public” terror carried out by officials of the state and directed towards subordinates.

3. **Unofficial terror**, which is violence or threat of violence carried out by private individuals from dominant groups and towards members of subordinated groups. (Sidanius and Pratto 1999: 41-42).

3.4.2. **Aggregated individual discrimination**

According to SDT Aggregated Individual discrimination is discrimination carried out from one individual towards another. For instance could it be an employer not willing to hire a person applying for the job based on race, ethnicity, social status or sexual orientation. This could also be a person from a minority group or belonging to another religious practice than the employer. According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin the legitimising myths will define which groups are favoured and not favoured in such cases.
Further they explain that social structure often affords hierarchy-maintaining behaviour rather than hierarchy-attenuating behaviour. When thousands of acts of discrimination are made over time, they will eventually stabilise group-based social inequality. In a dominant hierarchal structure it would therefore be easier to enhance the inequality rather than attenuate this. According to SDT the actions of individual discrimination aren’t just determined by peoples position in the social structure. People are also associated with an identifiable psychological orientation concerning hierarchical group relations, namely social dominance orientation (SDO) (2006:278). Social Dominance Theory will be described in section 3.5. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006:278-279).

3.4.3. Collaborative intergroup processes in discrimination - Behavioural asymmetry

According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin there is collaborative activities through dominants and subordinates, which help to maintain the hierarchy. This is what they call the behavioural asymmetry. According to this the subordinates would also actively participate in their own subordination, just as the dominants would oppress and manipulate them. They would, however, sometimes resist this oppression through rebellion and revolution. This collaboration between the subordinates and dominants are attained through three types of behavioural asymmetry, which I will present in the following. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 279).

Asymmetrical in-group bias

The asymmetrical in-group bias is the first category. Most cultures are ethnocentric and would therefore favour their own in-groups versus other out-groups. Pratto, Sidanius and Levin argue that this is different with dominant groups, which tend to show more in-group bias contrary to subordinate groups. Further they explain, in its more extreme form, this asymmetrical ingroup bias is manifested as outgroup favouritism among subordinates (2006: 279). The way this favouritism is overstated is through legitimising myths in which endorsement takes place. Further they explain how if the social system is legitimate, dominants will in larger degree display in-group favouritism contrary to the subordinates. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 279).
**Self-debilitation**

The second behavioural asymmetry is out-group favouritism. In some ways subordinates actually favour dominants over their own in-groups and this can tend to be self-destructive. This process is called *self-debilitation*. According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin these behaviours are usually higher levels of criminality, in-group directed violence, harmful substance abuse and absence from school. Further they explain how legitimising myths in this type of behaviour often will be seen in the way the subordinate group stereotypes themselves to under-perform in an intellectual matter and such. These types of stereotypes have been found for women, lower social class people and other subordinate groups and as SDT explain this can be endorsed even though they are able to perform as well as members of dominant groups. HE-LMs would be important in this matter to the degree they induce weak and self-destructive behaviours among the subordinates. These stereotypes induced from the legitimising myths would lead the subordinates to become *self-fulfilling prophecies*. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 279-280).

**Ideological asymmetry**

The last behavioural asymmetry is *ideological asymmetry* and as we now understand the SDT will serve dominants better than subordinates. HE-LMs will always serve dominants better as psychological and ideological forces even though they *influence the behaviours of both dominants and subordinates* (Sidanius, Pratto and Levin 2006: 280). This is explained further in the chapter:

The hypothesis that there is generally greater compatibility between psychological processes, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that facilitate group dominance among dominant group members than among subordinate group members is called ideological asymmetry (Sidanius, Pratto and Levin 2006: 281).

This means that if the status of ones places in the hierarchy is high or increases; the more the HE-LM will be legitimised and strengthens the social hierarchy. (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 280-281)
3.5. Social Dominance Orientation

The definition of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is an individual’s psychological orientation to group-based dominance, in other words; *The construct of social dominance orientation captures the extent of individuals’ desires for group-based dominance and inequality* (2006:281). They explain how these desires of social dominance are expressed in individual acts of discrimination, which leads to better outcomes for dominants rather than to subordinates. This can be justified through legitimising myths, which explain how the dominants have superior power over the subordinates in the social hierarchy through HE-LM. According to SDO these hierarchal relationships are both a partial cause and result of these processes and such hierarchal societies tend to have larger mean differences in SDO between subordinates and dominant groups. According to Pratto, Sidanius and Levin SDO is the key measurable component of SDT. Measures of SDO is a theoretical tool that operates as levels of analysis such as levels within individual differences, social groups in context, institutions and competing ideologies within the social system. The measures are done through a scale with sets of questions to measure people’s preferences regarding how other groups of people should be treated.

One of the findings within social dominance literature refers to dominants as having higher levels of SDO than subordinates. The reason is to sustain their privileges such as access to social and economic resources. Further they found this; *According to social dominance theory, when the status gap between dominant and subordinate arbitrary-set groups varies, group differences in SDO should vary as well* (2006: 290). This is due to the fact that the hierarchal system is to be maintained by higher group status and their desires accordingly. Ideological asymmetry predicts how dominants will discriminate subordinates due to the combination of high SDO as well as high ingroup identification. The causes of high SDO are affected by many factors, such as socialization, family, war and natural disasters. The way people look at gender is an interesting factor. For instance would those people claiming men to be superior to women, cause a high SDO-level (Pratto, Sidanius and Levin 2006: 290-304). Further they explain how, *People with high SDO-level will believe the world is a zero-sum game and, because they desire power, they will use others to get ahead* (2006: 304).
3.6. Summary

I will sum up the basics through the conclusion of Pratto, Sidanius and Levin in their chapter on SDT. This broad theory addresses the hierarchical nature of societies. SDT emphasise the shared nature of cultural belief systems and their links to social structure and psychological processes in sub theory of legitimising myths. The theory implies that dynamic ideological as well as political struggles occur in all types of societies, even stable ones. Since institutions play a large role in preserving or changing the social structure, SDT would incorporate an analysis of institutional discrimination. Therefore it tries to integrate all the useful levels of analysis within societies such as individual beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Lastly, SDT has integrated theories from across the social sciences, but focuses on different outcomes or levels of analysis. Therefore it should be understood as a complement to these other theories rather than a rival. (Pratto, Sidanius, Levin 2006: 308-309).
4. Background

To get a good understanding of the challenges regarding Dalit converts and discrimination, I believe it is necessary to give a thorough introduction to specific subjects related to this issue. I will start by presenting the Indian caste system with the history and the background of this before I give a definition of the Dalits and their historical context. Further I will explain the situation today in light of the Indian constitution and the historic events that took place, and then I will finish this chapter with the situation for Dalit Christians due to the rise of Hindu Nationalism. By doing this I will answer the second sub question of my thesis which is:

What is the situation for Dalit Christians in India today, and how has this developed over the years historically, socially and politically?

4.1. Hinduism - Origin

Hinduism is one of the largest religions in the world today ranging as number three after Christianity and Islam. Even though many Hindus lives across the world, the religion is dominating in India and Nepal. Hinduism originated through a composition of many of the most important religious traditions in South Asia and according to theories, Hinduism started as an amalgamation of at least five different religious traditions (Jacobsen 2003: 9).

According to Knut A. Jacobsen these five traditions are: 1. The aborigines of India and their traditions. 2. The influence from Indus civilization. 3. The Dravidian culture and religion. 4. The culture of Veda. 5. Ascetic movements with a collective name called śramāṇa movement, which Jainism and Buddhism sprang from (Jacobsen 2003: 57). Much research will explain the Dravidians to originate from the south. Further some would say that the Hindu god, Shiva originated from the Dravidian religious tradition and according to archaeological findings Shiva seemed to have an importance of the Indus-civilization as there have been found symbols of this god in their findings (Jacobsen 2003: 61).

The identity of the Hindus is linked closely to the Veda-texts and the Vedic tradition. This tradition is the oldest variant of Hinduism (Jacobsen 2003: 57). What is disputed is its origin. There are several theories and understandings, whereas one of them claims that the Veda-tradition originated from the tradition of the Indo-Europeans, called the Aryans. They arrived
in the Indus Valley around 3000 to 1700 BC. The definition of Aryan comes from the Sanskrit word *ārya* and means *noble* (Oxford Dictionaries: Aryan). Aryans considered themselves racially superior to the already existing people of India (D’ souza 2005: 29).

According to Knut A. Jacobsen, an alternative theory of the origin of the Vedas is that this tradition was a further development of the Indus-civilization. In this theory it is considered that it was a continuation in the earlier south-Asian history, which eventually led to the Vedic tradition (Jacobsen 2003: 58). Further he explains that the Vedic tradition and the Indus-civilization have to be looked at as Hindu roots and that the origin doesn’t necessarily provide the information we look after. More often their formative period would be the most important part of understanding the religions.

The relation between the Indus civilization and the Vedic tradition has been discussed in many ways throughout the years in India and the West. According to Jacobsen the theory about the religion of the Indus civilization that evolved to the Hinduism we find supported by many Hindus today. Even in the biggest Hindu temple in England the story of the Aryans as the people living beside the river called Indus in the Indus-valley is looked upon as the beginning of the religion we call Hinduism (Jacobsen 2003: 62).

4.1.1. **Written traditions - The Vedas**

According to this theory the Aryan people had oral histories of their gods and the origin of the world. After they settled in India they created what we know as the *Vedas*. The Vedas is written between 1500 and 500 BCE, however, the oral tradition is at least from 2500 BCE. The word *Veda* origins from Sanskrit and the meaning is *sacred knowledge*. The Vedas, considered to be an aspect of Brahman, are not regarded made by man. There are four collections of Indian scriptures, called Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. These laid the basis for Hindu religion containing hymns, philosophy, and guidance on ritual (Oxford Dictionaries: Veda).

Vedic religion and tradition where concerned about keeping the orders of the nature and the order of the society. By searching through history this becomes clear as there are many rituals and sacrifices in the origin of this religion and this can be red through the liturgical writings.
of the Samhita-texts. Brahman is considered the Lord of the Universe, eternal and indestructible. From him is all life and knowledge and he is considered the highest of all the gods. Hinduism exists of millions of gods and avatars, however the Trimurthis or the Trinity consists of Brahman, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. Goddesses in the order of Saraswathi, Lakshmi and Parvathi assist all of these gods. (Hinduwebsites: Hindutrinity). According to Jacobsen, the Veda tradition would not mention any trinity specifically, however, today it is considered part of the Hinduism. He explains how in the Brahmin tradition the human life has four main goals called purusartsaer. The first is called dharma, which is the fulfilment of religious and social obligations. The second is artha, which is the economic wealth and political power. The third is kama, which is the aesthetic and erotic pleasure. And the last is moksha, which is the secession from rebirth (Jacobsen 2003: 168).

4.1.2. The Laws of Manu and the origin of castes

According to S. M. Michael, the Aryans considered non-Aryans to be non-humans or amanushya. Further he explains how the Aryans maintained a clear distance to the non-Aryans, which were considered the lowest of all (Michael 2007: 47). The laws of Manu represents one of the most ancient sources for our knowledge of early Indian social structure. It was composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE; however, the traditions presented are much older and could be dating back to the period of Aryan invasions around fifteen hundred years earlier (Sarma 2008: 222).

Manusmrti is one of the Dharmasutras that helps a human to fulfil the dharma. The dharma became a concept that kept all the laws, rules and norms as well as the cosmic and social order in the world. According to Jacobsen, the concept of dharma means that the man sustains the universe by his actions (2003: 168). Manu defines dharma by many values. In the book of Manu chapter 6.92 the tenfold laws of the men belonging to the four orders is listed:

Contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, (obedience to the rules of) purification, coercion of the organs, wisdom, knowledge (of the supreme Soul), truthfulness, and abstention from anger, (form) the tenfold law (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti).
The concept is used to structure the society and is used according to the four castes of Hinduism. The castes, which in Hinduism is referred to as jati, can be organised into four classes. Class is referred to as varna. (Jacobsen 2003:22). To define the relationship between jati and varna I have used the book by Katti Padma Rao called *Caste, an alternative culture*. According to him, the term varna was originally from the Rig Veda and were used to explain the difference between the Aryans and the Dasyus. Dasyu is from Sanskrit of *dāsa* and means *servant*. (Encyclopedia Britannica: Dasyu). The Dasyu people were aboriginal people in India, which were encountered by the Indo-European-speaking people. The Indo Europeans described them as dark-skinned and harsh spoken, according to the dictionary (Encyclopedia Britannica: Dasyu). As only four *Varnas* were mentioned in the Varna-system several sub-castes were developed. According to G.S. Ghurye in the book by Rao, the Vedic society helped the proliferation of castes in newer and newer forms in India, but made no attempt to annihilate caste and this is seen as a product of Brahinism with Aryan culture as its foundation (Rao 1995: 3).

The Vedas made the theological basis for the caste system, while Manu the lawgiver *sought to consolidate, codify and unify the prevailing laws* (Sarma 2008: 222). According to Manu, these laws are a way of maintaining the purity of the castes as to keep the *dharma*. It contains rules on how to act in every situation when it comes to bathing, eating, marrying, and so on. In addition to these there are rules on how to punish based on a crime done according to which caste the person belongs. Each part of the caste system descended from a specific part of the body of the Hindu god, Brahma, in a hierarchal manner. These are written in the *Manusmriti* 1.87:

> But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate duties and occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet. (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti).

By claiming that this was truth, the sacred law *dharma* would be preserved as well as the social order in the society. In other Hindu texts such as *Bhagavadgita* we find teachings of the caste-system, which means that not only did the laws of Manu represent this law, but also here. In chapter 4 verse 13 in the modern prose tradition is says:

> I created the four divisions of human society based on aptitude and vocation. Though I am the author of this system of the division of labour, one should know that I do nothing directly and I am eternal. (Hinduwebsite: Bhagavadgita).
These four major castes are listed as followed:

The first caste is the Brahmins. They were taken from the head of Brahma. The duty of the Brahmin is listed according to Manu as: X.75. *Teaching, studying, sacrificing for himself, sacrificing for others, making gifts and receiving them are the six acts prescribed for a brahmin*. As the priestly caste they were to study the Vedas as well as performing rites and rituals for themselves and for others. According to Manu, a Brahmin was born to protect the *dharma* since they were in the middle of gods and men. A Brahmin that doesn’t follow his duty will face harsh consequences: X.92. *By selling flesh, salt, and lac a brahmin at once becomes an outcaste; by selling milk he becomes equal to a sudra in three days.* (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti). The Brahmins comprise less than 5% of the total population, but they have maintained domination of Indian power, politics and religion for thousands of years (D’souza 2007: 40).

The second caste is the Kshatriyas, which were taken from the arms of Brahma. The law explains this duty for this caste: VII.2. *A kshatriya who has received according to the rule the sacrament prescribed by the Veda, must duly protect this whole world.* This caste is considered the warrior caste and the ruling caste. By tradition this caste was commanded to protect the people to assign gifts to the Brahmins, offer sacrifices to gods and ancestors, study the Vedas and abstain themselves from sensual pleasures (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti).

The third caste is the Vaisyas, which were taken from the belly/thigh of Brahma According to Manu, these were their duties: IX.326. *After a vaisya has received the sacraments and has taken a wife, he shall be always attentive to the business whereby he may subsist and to that of tending cattle.* The responsible of this caste is considered to be responsible for business within Hindu society and they are the merchants and peasant class (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti).

The last of the four castes is the Sudras. This caste was taken from the feet of Brahma and Manu explains their duty: IX.334. *To serve Brahmins who are learned in the Vedas, householders, and famous for virtue, is the highest duty of a sudra, which leads to beatitude.* This is the labour caste with a duty is to serve the other three castes. According to the
Hinduwebsite, they were not allowed to study the Vedas, hear the sacred chants or marry women of higher castes, but be the slave of the Brahmin, as described in the Law of Manu (Hinduwebsite: Manusmriti). These castes were thought to have a divine origin and were therefore very important for the social hierarchy.

4.2. Dalits – The Untouchables

Below the feet of Brahma and the four castes we will find the Dalits. I will use different definitions of the word Dalit to explain the meaning thoroughly. Mendelsohn explains the definition:

The word Dalit is now fast supplanting the other generic names for persons descended from the old Untouchable castes. This is a word in the Marathi language of western India, and is apparently derived from Sanskrit. In an 1831 dictionary the word is defined as “ground” or “broken” or reduced to pieces generally (Mendelsohn: 1998:4).

According to Dalit Freedom Network, the word Dalit is found both in Hebrew and Sanskrit where it refers to people who are socially, religiously, economically, and politically oppressed, deprived and exploited, they explain further:

The word Dalit is often used to describe a person who comes from any lower caste, even through technically, authentic Dalits are kept outside the caste system as unworthy to enter the social and religious life of society. They are generally considered to be polluted socially, poor economically, and powerless politically (Dalit Freedom Network: Dalit 101 – Who are the Dalits?).

The word Untouchable has also been used for the Dalits. According to the dictionary untouchable means a person that:

“Legally cannot be interfered with” (...) recorded from 1734. Meaning "too loathsome or defiling to be touched" is recorded from 1873. The noun, in reference to a hereditary low caste of India, is attested from 1909; the term and the restrictions were made illegal in India in 1947 (Dictionary: Untouchable).

To summarize, the people below the feet of Brahma have been called by many names, which refers to someone that are so polluted that no other person above them should be near them to avoid becoming unclean. This meant that they were below humans and should not be touched. As a result of their pollution they lived mostly outside the cities or villages and worked with
cremation, dead animals and as scavengers. They weren’t Dalits out of choice, but they believed that sin done in their previous life made their god punish them. This destiny is called *karma*. The only way to escape the Dalit status is to do the duty addressed to them as well as hoping to be reborn as a higher caste in the next life. According to D’Souza, the Indian Dalits are history’s longest standing oppressed people group and the caste system is the largest apartheid system in the world.

4.2.1. Dalits in the 19th century

The untouchability was different in north, south, east and west of India. Mendelsohn claims that in many parts of the south of India, Untouchables experienced a lot of stigmatising through traditional caste rules where they had to maintain prescribed distances even in the 19th century.

Should the shadow of an Untouchable fall upon a Brahmin, major pollution had taken place. Sometimes Untouchables had to ring a bell to announce their polluting arrival, and to wear spittoons (…) so as to catch any polluting spittle that might drop from their lips. (…) There was said to be a caste of “unseables”, the Purada Vannans of Tinnevelly District, who washed the clothes of other Untouchables at night and hid their polluting presence by day (Mendelsohn 1998: 37).

According to John C.B. Webster in his book *A history of the Dalit Christians in India*, there are also several jatis among the Dalits. Around the 19th century the largest jatis were the Chuhras, the Chamars, the Mahars and the Paraiyar. Each of them had different main tasks such as scavengers, leatherwork and such tasks considered unclean to higher castes. In Andhra Pradesh the main Dalit castes were Madigas and Malas and even till this day these are the main Dalit jatis in this state. Due to the fact that the Dalits are a group consisting of diversity, hierarchy has affected interaction between them. Some of the jatis looked down on each other. According to Webster, they lacked the homogeneity but still they could find some sense of common history and shared destiny. I will present some of the main reasons for that presented by Webster in his book (Webster 1992: 27-30).

First of all these jatis experienced a harsh fact of social stigma. Since they were considered polluting they were supposed to be kept at a distance. This meant that their person and even their shadow should be avoided. The jatis had to deal with dead animals, clean up after people
or eat the meat of an animal. Since they were so polluting to the upper castes, they were considered ritually unclean. Since the laws of Manu were so integrated in the society, it was inevitable not to follow these laws.

The second reason for shared characteristics, according to Webster, was their occupation. Whatever the traditional occupation they were supposed to have, the majority was engaged in agricultural labour. Even though agricultural labour was not considered polluting, Dalits almost always worked for others as slaves or by sharing cropping rather than owning their own land. Beside this, many of them worked according to the tasks assigned by the jati they belonged.

Their third characteristic, according to Webster, was poverty. As the compensation for their labour was low, many were nearly starving. Further he explains that great number left the agricultural work for the army, the factories, the railways, and tea plantations and even work overseas. The largest majority of the Dalits was under severe poverty, which meant they often were under bondage.

The fourth characteristic is that even though the Dalits originally was considered outside of the caste system, they organized and functioned like a system with different castes by the 19th century, which meant that they organized into a hierarchal system with their own councils, marrying within their own caste and so on.

The fifth shared characteristic, according to Webster, relates to the matter of life-style. The Dalits would have customs and ceremonies surrounding birth, death and marriage in great detail, and these were a lot like the higher castes. However, the Dalits would have a bride price rather than dowry and they permitted widow remarriage. Due to this it will be necessary to be aware of the fact that today it is common to pay dowry amongst the Dalits. According to the book *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values* by S.M. Micheal, this change is due to education as the higher Hindu castes usually pay dowry and among other reasons, the Dalits would imitate the higher castes (Micheal 2007: 243).

However, many of the vices were the same among all the *jatis* created by the Dalits. According to Webster, some were consequence of severe poverty as well as drunkenness, domestic violence and self-hatred. These were considered as patterns of behaviour
characteristic of large groups and accepted as mechanisms for coping with the facts of poverty and social degradation. Further Webster explains that the Dalits found ways of coping with this uncontrollable world by creating some kind of a village Hinduism, which involved the evil eye, demons, evil spirits and vicious deities. They also kept their own ancestral deities to assure stability. Kancha Ilaiah also stresses this fact in his book Why I am not a Hindu. He explains how the Dalits, who were banned from any temples, made their own gods and own religions. Due to this he criticize the upper castes for considering them as Hindus (Ilaiah 2002: 71-101).

The sixth shared characteristic among the dalits in the 19th century was that the hope of outside sympathy or support was small. According to Webster, the British government took no interest in the Dalits during the 19th century even though they claimed to be the guardians of the lower castes. They called them the depressed classes, meaning the outcasts. Only one attempt to stand up for the lower castes were made in the 19th century and that was Jotirao Phule who opened two schools for Dalits and trying to fight for their cause. However, little was done for the Dalits until the end of the 19th century (Webster 1992: 27-30).

4.2.2. Dalits in the late 19th century to the mid 20th century

According to the book The Untouchables: Subordination, poverty, and the State in Modern India by Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, there was adverse discrimination towards the Dalits in the 20th century. I will present some of their thoughts on untouchability during this period of time.

After the modern educational system was introduced to the Indian society the situation of the Untouchables was addressed. The modern education put light on the Indian situation through western values and ideas on humanity. After people saw the social evil factors the hierarchal system had evolved, reformers and humanitarians stressed the conditions of the Untouchables and eventually this led to a political movement. According to Mendelsohn and Vicziany, Untouchables played some part in the new industrialization of India as they were introduced to the least attractive positions. When railways were being built, the Untouchables were the primary source of labour. They also did work in the textile mills in the west of India as well as being heavily represented on the docks, as coal labourers and as sweepers as this had to be left
to manual methods. Further they explain that a large number of Untouchables moved towards towns and urban areas in the late 19th century and became waiters, butlers and maids to British families and clubs as well as employees in the building boom in the late 19th and 20th century (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998: 80-86).

Eventually the by the mid 1900 untouchability was banned in the Constitution of India after years of struggle. I will get into the details on the fight against untouchability by Ambedkar and Gandhi in the chapter 4.3.1.

4.2.3. Dalits in the mid 20th century

Even though the Indian Constitution banned the practice of untouchability, the ideology of untouchability have not been destroyed but rather changed character as well as lost some of its intensity. According to Mendelsohn and Vicziany, the mid 20th century had changed for the better for many of the Dalits; however, a lot of discrimination still took place, which I will come back to later in this section.

The authors explain that the most securely opened up arena for the Untouchables in India was the educational system. All the children were provided access to government schools where they mostly were treated without segregation. Untouchables gained access to public hospitals as well as the possibility to travel by bus or train with the Hindu caste people. Mendelsohn and Vicziany explain how even though untouchability appeared to have lost its grip in some arenas, the caste factor prevailed. This meant that higher caste people would have limited contact with the Dalits. This segregation has maintained the prejudice against them. In the words of Mendelsohn and Vicziany:

In the case of the Untouchables there is a whole pattern of separations that points to an underlying discrimination. To give one important example, Untouchables are scarcely ever employed in private businesses other than in a menial capacity (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998: 40).

According to Mendelsohn and Vicziany, I. P. Desai in rural Gujarat conducted one of the best surveys on rituals regarding Untouchables. Desai made a research on discrimination of Untouchables in 1976 in rural areas and found a widespread practice of untouchability in these areas. According to this research, incidence of discrimination was the highest in the
private sphere and in 90 % of the villages Untouchables were not allowed to go into houses of caste Hindus. The Untouchables were also discriminated from barbers, which were considered as a low caste, shopkeepers, who would avoid touching when conducting transactions of money, and in 89 % of the villages the Untouchables were not allowed to enter the temples.

Further Desai’s survey stress that the heart of untouchability was regarding the use of common water sources. Since untouchability is different in all the states of India a lot of the discrimination was larger in states like Gujarat compared to Bengal. According to him, the Bengali Untouchables had better access to water in 1930 than Gujarati Untouchables in 1976. In 26 % of the villages of Gujarat the Untouchables had access to common water sources. When in 10 % of the villages the Untouchables had to depend on the favour of caste Hindus to acquire water. In most of the villages, however, the problem was solved by making separate water facilities. Since this is a thorough research from Gujarat, it is not possible to use this for all of India, but it will give a picture of how some of the Dalits in India have experienced untouchability in rural areas even to the late 20th century (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998: 40-44).

According to Human Rights Watch, there were a total of 98,349 cases on crimes and atrocities against Dalits from 1994 to 1996 whereas 1160 were murders, 2814 were rapes and 13,671 Dalits were hurt. However, the actual number of crimes against Dalits is most likely a lot higher given that many of the Dalits are unable to report crimes (D’souza 2005: 36). Mark Juergensmeyer has written an article on the subject Dharma and the Rights of Untouchables. In this article he stresses the question on whether Hindu tradition embrace the human rights. Many scholars meant that caste would disappear as a result of urbanization, however, the fact is that it looks like the ties towards caste is rooted to deep to vanish in a generation. Further he explains how the Dalits look as they have a different caste scenario. As they are born with a ritual impurity, and as the largest minority in the world, they wish to change their status. Many Hindus claims that Dalits should quietly accept their situation and not reject dharma as this would lead to a better life after reincarnation. He explains how some Hindus holds the views of the earlier time in the history intercaste relations were better. He sites a Dalit leader explaining how the situation was before the independence:
The Hindus were blaming the British for the conditions of the Untouchables. Now after some fifty years of India's independence, the slavery and dependence of landless Untouchables has increased more and so have the abuses of untouchability (Juergensmeyer: Dharma and the Rights of Untouchables: 13).

This is also why many Untouchables feel that the only solution to their condition is to aiming at securing their rights.

4.2.4. Dalits in the 21st century

The Dalit Network, which is a non-governmental organization, works with human rights issues regarding Dalits in India. They explain the situation for the Dalits today:

The Dalits are among the poorest of the world’s poor; they are stripped of their basic humanity, denied their civil rights, and entrenched in a hierarchal system that denies them equality and opportunity in their society. Seventy per cent of Dalits live below the poverty line (Dalit Network: About).

Today the caste system is considered as a serious crime in the Indian system. However, the caste-system still prevails among many Hindus. According to a research done by The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), called India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2), one in four Indians admit to practicing untouchability even to this day (Indian Express: Caste Survey). One newspaper called The Political Indian list 6 revelations from this survey done by NCAER. Among these revelations three of the most shocking are that 27% of Indian household still practice untouchability, every third Hindu practices untouchability and 52% of Brahmins still practice untouchability today (The Political Indian: 6 shocking revelations from a recent survey on caste).

Human Rights Watch released a report in 2014 on august 25, called Cleaning Human Waste, “Manual Scavenging,” Caste, and Discrimination in India. According to this report, discrimination against Dalits still persists in the Indian system. Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 135 people in five different states in India. They discovered that Dalits are forced to do manual scavenging or they could face violence by higher caste people. A lot of them do not receive any salary, but rather food for the job done. According to this report, Dalits who suffer from this discrimination will also meet discrimination when it comes to water sources, education and employment benefits. On top of this, authorities such as police
fail to act complaints on this case. Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch says:

People work as manual scavengers because their caste is expected to fulfil this role, and are typically unable to get any other work. (...) This practice is considered one of the worst surviving symbols of untouchability because it reinforces the social stigma that these castes are untouchable and perpetuates discrimination and social exclusion. (Human Rights Watch: India: Caste Forced to Clean Human Waste).

Even though reservation policy exists today, it seems to be a hard work left before discrimination based on caste vanish completely from the Indian system.

4.3. Towards an Independent India

To get a grip of the historical understanding of India during the 1950s I believe it will be necessary to get a brief summary of the history of India as a colony until the independence of India and the Indian Constitution.

The first Europeans to enter India by sea arrived as early as 1498, The Portuguese formed a base in Goa and the import of spices to Europe began. By the 17th century the English and Dutch people arrived and the Portuguese left. By 1600 The English East India Company was formed with a main purpose to start trading in India. The English people established different bases in Kolkata (formerly known as Calcutta) and Mumbai (Bombay). In the end of the 17th century the French people came and replaced the Dutch people. Due to this the British and the French people became rivals and started to interfere in Indian politics. After years of quarrels and wars, Britain eventually took over more territory in India and several states had to accept British rule. On 1st September 1858 the control over India was transferred to the British government after years controlled by the East India Company. By the mid 19th century Britain was regarded the most powerful country in the world. By the First World War Britain lost a lot of strength and at the same time Indian nationalism flourished. By the struggle for independence Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) came back to India after years in South Africa. He launched a non-co-operation campaign towards the British with boycott of British interests. The British arrested him several times and at the same time the capital of India was moved from Kolkata to New Delhi. By 1935 the British came to the conclusion that
sooner or later Indian independence was inevitable. India became an independent nation after the World War II, by August 15, 1947 (Lambert, Tim: A Brief History of India).

4.3.1. Ambedkar and Gandhi – the fight against untouchability

Prior to the Independence of India two major leaders in the history of India became known. They are Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who both were fighting against untouchability. Ambedkar is known as the hero of the Dalits in India. He himself was born as a Dalit, but was able to become educated and went to USA and London where he received a Ph.D. in Law as well as other titles and even though he is quite infamous to people outside of India, he is known as the Father of the Indian Constitution (D’souza 2005: 29).

Ambedkar underlined the effects of a hierarchal system such as the caste-system. According to Katti Padma Rao in his book Caste – an alternative culture, Ambedkar called the castes a system of graded inferiority. By graded inferiority he meant how one caste superior to another keep each caste secured. Every caste would compensate his or her ego by being above someone else. Further he explains how even the lowest, the Sudras, had a feeling of superiority since an outcaste such as the Untouchables, or the Dalits would be below them (Rao 1995: xvii).

When Ambedkar devoted himself to the Untouchables back in India he met Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi spoke about the Untouchables and he wanted to give them a new name and called them Harijan. The meaning of the word Harijan means the people of Hari, which is one of the Hindu trinity and referred to the people of God (D’souza 2005: 41). For Gandhi the Untouchables were an historical corruption of Hinduism (Mendelsohn 1998: 77). By calling the Dalits Harijan, Gandhi wanted to give the Dalits a name they could identify themselves by, instead of names giving inferior statuses as Untouchable, Dalits, outcastes and other names. Ambedkar was rejecting this name and told him that this was patronizing and preferred to be called a Dalit. In the beginning the name Harijan was adopted by many people, also Dalits. However, some people asked what it would mean to call untouchables, despised by the communities, as people of God. The reason was that it would be patronizing and meaningless for a Dalit that still was being discriminated to be called by this name just as a cover up for the real situation.
Ambedkar went through different phases on the way to speak the case of the Dalits and to abolish the untouchability. At first he made a campaign on forcing the Hindu temples in Maharashtra to open up to all the Untouchables. While Gandhi wanted to appeal to caste Hindus and make them reform the Hindu society and give the Dalits a place into this society, Ambedkar found it more fruitful to change the laws and establish the rights through political power. Rudolf C. Heredia explain the difference of Ambedkar and Gandhi, which will be worth mentioning:

Ambedkar emerged as the undisputed leader of the Dalits. Gandhi was praised by mainstream nationalists for maintaining the integrationist nature of Hindu society. But he was condemned by revivalists for selling out, and blamed by the Left for distracting attention from the main anti-imperialist struggle. However, the basic tension between the two approaches remained unreconciled (Heredia 2007: 158).

Ambedkar gained an influential seat at the Round Table Conferences of 1930. And during the 1930s and 1940s Gandhi and Ambedkar fought between themselves on the Dalit issues through the Indian National Congress. However, when India became independent in 1947 Ambedkar was named India’s first Minister of Law as well as the chairman of the committee that drafted the constitution, which led to the constitutional abolition of untouchability. Through the years Ambedkar was clear on the fact that he would not die a Hindu. Finally, in 1956 he converted to Buddhism together with thousands of his followers as a protest to Hinduism. He recommended all the Dalits to convert either to Buddhism or Christianity as he underlined that these religions were two of the religions that didn’t recognized any form of hierarchical system such as the caste-system (Mendelsohn 1998: 104-114).

4.3.2. The Indian Constitution

India finally became an independent nation on August 15, 1947 and prior to that in December 1946 a Constituent Assembly gathered to write the Constitution of India. 26th of November 1949 a new constitution was adopted and by January 1950 the constitution was ready and put into effect. The constitution of India begins with the statement of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. It is worth mentioning how the UN General Assembly on 10th of December 1948 adopted the United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and many similarities are to be found in the Constitution of India. I will briefly present a few of the laws given in the constitution below, which is relevant to religious freedom, Scheduled Caste and the rights of
Dalits in India. I will present some of the laws in the light of UDHR. These laws are taken from *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN: UDHR). All the articles of the Indian constitution are from the *National Portal of India* (Indian Government: The Constitution of India).

The first important article is number 15 of the Indian constitution and I will refer to the article 7 of UDHR on equality before the law and non-discrimination. Article 15 says: *The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.* Further the practice of untouchability is referred to and the law on this practice is stressed in article 17: “*Untouchability*” is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of “Untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law. In the UDHR article 19 says that every human has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The article 19 of the Indian constitution presents that: *All citizens shall have the right – to freedom of speech and expression.* Further the UDHR article 18 stresses the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This relates to article 25 in the Indian constitution where it is written how every human has the right, *freely to profess, practise and propagate religion*. All these articles are clear to the point on discrimination, religious freedom as well as freedom of speech.

4.3.3. *Scheduled Caste Order and the Reservation system*

To give the Dalits a possibility of becoming absorbed in the community the Scheduled Caste Order of 1950 was given to them. Article 341 in the Indian Constitution states and I will quote the third act:

Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who professes a religion from the Hindu (, the Sikh or the Buddhist) religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste. (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment: The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order).

According to this Order on the Scheduled Castes, all Dalits with the religion of Hinduism, Sikh and Buddhism are to be categorised as such. This is further defined in article 366, where it is explained that:

Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purpose of this
Christians or Muslims, however, would not be categorized as such. It is therefore clear that the state will categorise Scheduled Caste on the grounds of religion. All tribal groups no matter their religion have received benefits on the grounds of Scheduled Tribes (ST). Dalits, however, are categorized on the grounds of religion. I will explain the latter regarding the Christian Dalits in 4.3.4.

The Constitution of India, article 46 explains how the weaker sections of the people would have special care as it comes to education and economic interests. In particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Further in article 243D it is explained how Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are eligible for seats in every Panchayat. It is also explained that the number of these seats is to be in the same proportion as the population of each Panchayat.

According to a recent article from the CNN, the Dalits still face troubles with jobs, even due to the reservations.

After independence from the British in 1947, India outlawed what was an age-old practice of untouchability of low-caste Hindus by those seen as superior by birth. Still, the communities are believed to be facing bias despite having being given quotas for government jobs (CNN: India’s Untouchables declare own religion).

What was considered a good thing, has taken longer time than expected. When these articles were made it was expected that the abolishment of untouchability would reach further ahead than what it has. There are still major differences between Scheduled Castes/Tribes and they are still in need for reservations of seats. As the article from the CNN describes, the Dalits still face troubles with jobs, even due to reservations (CNN: India’s Untouchables declare own religion). That is why the Ninety-fifth Amendment acts, 2009 of the Indian Constitution extended the reservation seats in article 334 to substitute the words sixty years into seventy years (India Code: Amend). The extension has been made several times and will now be extended until January 2020.

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2 “Panchayat” means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under article 243B, for the rural areas. “Panchayat area” means the territorial area of a Panchayat. – Institution of India article 243.
4.3.4. The Reservation system and the Dalit Christians

According to Marshall, the Dalit Christians face additional problems when it comes to the reservation system. This is due to the fact that the Dalits loose the reservations if they embrace Christianity or Islam (Marshall 2008: 1999). The Supreme Court claimed that converts should keep their benefits, but the governmental order from 1950 says that the Scheduled Caste would only exist for the Dalit Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. As the quotas provide government jobs and higher education the result is that Dalit Christians and Muslims will have to apply under Other Backward Classes (OBC) or Backward Classes (BC). The reason could be plentiful, some claim that it is because they do not observe any caste within their religion; therefore they shall not be listed as one of these favoured castes. According to central government, the OBC’s and BC’s are entitled for reservations, however, the population of OBC/BC in India would be much larger than the 27% of government jobs and education, which is reserved for them (India facts: What do hard numbers of minorities say about reservations?). The major problem for a Dalit considered Scheduled Caste would be that it is hard or impossible to get the jobs under the OBC and BC, when they already are facing social stigma and discrimination as a Dalit. That would leave them with no possibility to gain from the reservation system. I will address this in section 5.2.

According to the Misra Commission Report of 2009, Dalit Christians is regarded to be in the same economical position as Hindu Dalits. This report stressed the demands for amending the Constitution Scheduled Caste Order of 1950. They examined the caste system among various sections and found that this caste system was in fact a social phenomenon in almost all Indian communities. Equally facing problems of social degradation and mistreatment both by their co-religionists and the others (Bosco 2010: 181).

After converting to Christianity, the converts often gave up their names due to the fact that their previous names often were associated with Hindu and tribal gods. Many of the converts got new names, which indicated that they either were Christian because of their biblical names or that western missionaries had been “converting” them because of their “western” names. When Dalits are registered as Scheduled Caste in the reservation system they would have to register as Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh. As some of them keep new names, which are associated with Christianity, they would in some cases additionally keep their old Hindu name and use this to keep their benefits. Due to this many Christians keep a dual identity and go by
two names. Sleeva Galile, a Dalit Christian activist says *Thousands of Christians are forced to hide their Christian identity and remain Hindu in government registers* (Christianity Today: Dalit Christians debut new strategy in India elections).

Another important aspect to mention is *The Prevention of Atrocities Act*. Even though untouchability was banned by the Constitution of 1950, Dalits still face high discrimination and harassment from higher caste people. Thus the Prevention of Atrocities Act was legislated in 1989. This contains specific laws on harassment and violence commonly known for a Dalit, and therefore gives higher penalties for whoever did the offence. Since Dalit Christians can’t be registered under Scheduled Caste, this act does not apply to them and they would have to use the common laws. However, the Dalit Christians would face the same atrocities against them and therefore many would keep their identity hidden to be able to use these benefits.

### 4.4. Christianity in India

According to Rudolf C. Heredia in his book *Changing Gods*, the latest number of Christians in India in 2001 was 2.33 %, earlier it was as high as 2.8 %. According to these numbers one should believe how Christians in India are becoming less. Hindu Nationalists complains about Christians mass converting people into their religion statistics will explain the opposite. The reason for this statement could be due to the fact that no one really knows the original number of Christians in India. According to The Lausanne Global Conversation, a study was done where it was estimated to be a much larger amount of Christians in India today. The complaint on the 2.33 % came from the Indian Christian community, as they believed this number was underestimated for political reasons. The new estimated result of Christians in India today where 58.4 millions, a number of 4.8 % of the total population after checking all Christian groups for their membership figures. Atlas of Global Christianity did this research. Nevertheless, Operation World estimates the number around 71 million or a number of 5.8 % of Christians in India. There could be many reasons for undercount while estimating the size of the religions. I will give one example taken from the Lausanne Global Analysis on undercount in Andhra Pradesh:

According to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data, 6.1% of women aged 15–49 are Christian; of these, 74% identify as Scheduled Caste in DHS. In the Indian census, however, it
is not possible to simultaneously identify as Scheduled Caste and Christian. The census reports that 1.6% of Andhra Pradesh is Christian. These figures suggest the possibility of undercounting of Scheduled Caste Christians (Lausanne: Numbers of Christians in China and India).

The exact number of Christians in India remains unknown, however, we can come to the conclusion that the number is a lot more than what is estimated by the Government.

Dominic Emmanuel explains in his book *Christianity, Hindutva, Conversions*, that Christianity arrived in Kerala, India about 1960 years ago with the apostle St. Thomas. Due to this theory of arrival as early as 52 CE, Christianity came to India long before it arrived both England and America and thus it is certainly older than religions as Islam and Sikhism. Nevertheless, according to Heredia, Christianity spread mostly through the traders from the Middle East as well as though the colonial conquerors from the West. India is a combination of diversity both religious and cultural. (Heredia 2007: 57). With approximately 1652 languages whereas 17 of them are somewhat official languages according to Emmanuel, the cultures could be as different as the languages (Emmanuel 2012: 5).

Christian missionaries were some of the first to write dictionaries and grammar to several languages such as Tamil and Malayalam. Almost 200 years after the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century Lutheran missionaries arrived India. According to Heredia, William Carey and two colleagues studied the Indian languages in 1799 and the Bible was translated into many different languages. Even though the British East India Company arrived in India they did not welcome any missionaries. The reason was that *their proselytizing would antagonize the local population and compromise their commercial interests* (Heredia 2007: 63).

In 1813 the missionaries were allowed into territories. However, Heredia explains that the people of the colony of India found it difficult to distinguish the *white man who ruled* from the *white man who preached*. Thus the fact that the missionaries saw that they failed in the proselytizing, they found other ways and more indirect methods such as education and charitable works of mercy (Heredia 2007: 63). Heredia stresses the caste factor regarding conversion. *Caste was a major obstacle to religious conversion. People’s social relationships were inexorably tied into the hierarchical system that ruled their lives* (Heredia 2007: 64). This meant that even though a Dalit converted into Christianity, the caste was hard to fight even within the Christian churches. The early Orientalist missionaries focused on converting
the higher castes, as they believed that if these people converted into Christianity the lower castes would also convert, however, this was set out to fail and they shifted their strategy to proselytize towards the lower castes. In 1859 the first Dalit conversion movement began in the United Provinces. This spread to other places and to the Chudras, Parayas and other Depressed Classes. Heredia explains the situation of Andhra Pradesh: *In Andhra, the Baptist Church had begun work with the Madigas near Ongole in 1866, while the Anglicans and Methodists worked with the Malas in that state.* (2007: 69). This is also why there are many Baptist Churches in Andhra Pradesh today among the Dalit Christians. Due to the conversions to Christianity Hindutva movements arose in India in the 20th century.

4.4.1. *The rise of the Hindutva*

Because of the variety in Hinduism it is difficult to describe this religion as a specific system of belief. However, the root of the word *India and Hindu* is common, which means there is a dualism between these words.

The strong association has led many Hindus to believe that to be an authentic Indian necessarily means being Hindu. In the twentieth century several radical movements have been formed in order to promote and enforce this view (Marshall 1997: 99).

The definition of the word Hindutva is difficult to find as English language would not explain it precisely. However, if the word were to be defined it would be something like *Hindu-ness.* According to Vivek in his book *Lies, Lies and More Lies,* Hindutva is *a statement against foreign invasion* (Vivek 2007: 3). Further he states that Hindutva as a term is coined to Veer Savarkar, who was a freedom fighter against British colonialism in the 1920s. But the term originated around the seventeenth century from Shivaji, a Hindu chieftain responding to Muslim extremism. Vivek gives further explanation on how Hindutva is an *assertive ideology* protecting and addressing the Hindu community from predatory forces (Vivek 2007: 7). Hindutva had a major recruitment in the 20th century up till today and we find different groups belonging to the Hindutva ideology. I will present some of them below.

*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)* was founded in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. According to the RSS webpage Dr. Hedgewar is considered a freedom fighter devoting his life to his motherland. Further the page states that any male can be a member of
the RSS, however, upper-caste is preferred and women have their own organisation called Rastra Sevika Samiti. RSS promotes Hindu nationalism and according to their vision they use the word *Hindu* as a way of life rather than in the context of religious worship. The movement is designed to nurture the Hindu worldview as well as honour and protects the values of this country as a Hindu Nation (RSS: Basic facts on RSS). The RSS is considered the foundational core of the Hindutva, and trains their people from childhood. However, the spread of the ideology of RSS presents itself through organisations across India, from political parties to children’s centres, and all these groups and organisations are together known as the *Sangh Parivar*. RSS can’t accept charity, nevertheless, the Sangh-affiliated organisations receives funding through foreign charity. Listed below are all the major organisations of the Sangh Parivar:

- Parliamentary wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian Peoples Party).
- Cultural/political mobilization wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP – World Hindu Council).
- Paramilitary wing, the Bajrang Dal.
- Service wing, the Seva Vibhag.

(SACW: A brief outline of Hindutva)

Each of these wings have sister organisations in the US, UK and other places since Sangh Parivar has recruited Hindus living abroad. I will now give a brief understanding of each of these organisations.

The *Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)* formed in 1964 with the aim to cover social aspects of RSS activities. One of the goals of VHP was to make Dalits and other backward groups to return to Hinduism after converting to Christianity, Buddhism or Islam. VHP arrange and organize different programs to reconvert people that have converted from Hinduism.

The *Bajrang Dal*, which is considered the militant youth wing of VHP was formed in 1984. Bajrang Dal has a loose organisational structure compared to other organisations linked to the RSS. Bajrand Dal arranges training camps and stands behind a lot of different violent attacks against minority religions in India such as Christians and Muslims.

The *Baharatiya Janata Party (BJP)* of 1980, which means Indian People’s Party, is the political wing of RSS. It is a pro-Hindu political party. As the largest party in India and according to Paul Marshall in his book *Their Blood Cries Out*, the RSS will be a large
supplier of full-time activists for the BJP (1997: 99). According to the encyclopaedia this party has the major support in North of India as well as among the higher castes. Historically BJP traces back to RSS and the aim of the party is to build India on the grounds of Hindu culture and advocates *Hindutva* (Encyclopedia Britannica: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)).

One of the members of RSS allegedly stood behind the assassin of Gandhi; however, in the BJP’s timeline at their homepage it says that when Gandhi was killed January 30th 1948 RSS expressed shock and grief (BJP: About the party). In May 1996 BJP won the election and was considered the largest party in Indian Parliament. Narendra Modi was a long-time chief minister of the state of Gujarat and in 2014 he was chosen as the leader of BJP during the electoral campaign and the party’s candidate for Prime Minister. By May 2014 BJP won the election. At the same time India’s first Christian Party was formed. (SACW: Appendix A: Hindutva: The growth of violent Hindu nationalism)

RSS states in their homepage that there is no discrimination towards a Muslim or a Christian that decides to become a member of this movement, however, according to themselves they have to *take active part in Sangh’s activities towards nation building and work with full responsibility* (RSS: Basic facts on RSS).

Violence has shown to be a big aspect of the Hindutva. According to *The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva*, the reason that Hindutva-groups aren’t afraid to advocate violence is due to the goal of a Hindu Nation and therefore will address the constant threat towards Hinduism from foreign forces. This violence is seen as a sort of self-defence. Further the article claims how the violence and growth of Hindutva is displacing minority community and therefore becoming more powerful. The article give examples on pogroms like the Gujarat incident in 2002 where allegedly a Muslim mob set fire on a train carrying Hindu activists, which killed 58 of them. In extension to this incident over 2000 people were killed and 100.000 people went homeless. Muslim women were raped and burnt. The groups involved in this violence were VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS and BJP.

In 2008 a major outbreak of riots against Christians in Orissa started due to the killing of Lakshmanananda Saraswati, a leader of RSS and also one of the icons of Hindu nationalist movement. Maoists performed the assassination, however, the Sangh Parivar accused the Christians. 50 people were killed in the attack and several people lost their houses and churches as a result. (Tehelka: Hindutva’s violent history). According to NIFCON (the
Network for Inter Faith Concerns for the Anglican Communion) the reason why Bajrang Dal was attacking Christians in Orissa was due to the Maoist groups that includes Christian Tribal people, and was therefore interpreted as a Christian attack (Anglican News: Attacks on Christians and churches in Orissa and Karnataka).

The growing power of BJP has worried Christians, Muslims and other minority groups in India. Nevertheless, when in 2014 Indian Christian Secular Party (ICS) was formed, they dedicated themselves to earn seats in a new state assembly with one of the main demands to fight for the Scheduled Caste status for the Dalit Christians and Muslims (ICS: The aim of ICS).

4.4.2. Conversion from Hinduism to Christianity and discrimination

The dictionary explains the root of the word convert is from Latin with the word con, which means altogether and vertere, which means turn. The word is explained as, to turn about and was added to the old French language as convertir, which in Middle English was translated from convert into turn round or send in a different direction. The definition will be the fact of changing one’s religion or beliefs or the action of persuading someone else to change theirs (Oxford Dictionaries: Conversion).

According to Darrol M. Bryant in his book about conversion, the aspect of conversion usually is something we will find within Christianity. Further he explains that conversion is important in other universal religions where a message is given to followers with a goal of spreading this message to other people. Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha fall into this category (Bryant 1999: 2). However, Hinduism is in the opposite category whereas it is considered an ethnic religion and seems originally to be less concerned with conversion. Having said that, the more extreme Hindu nationalist movements look at conversions as a threat to their ideology of Hindu culture and through the idea that Hinduism is entered by birth into castes.

Conversion is understood differently throughout the world as well as in different religions and Bryant also stresses the factor of genuine conversion. To give an example he emphasizes the conversions from Hinduism to Neo-Buddhism in Maharashtra, India in the 1950s whereas the Dalits converted on the grounds of opposition towards the untouchability. The controversy of
conversion is a factor across the world, as it is believed that a new religion could destroy the old communities, in India there are even anti-conversional laws in some states such as Gujarat, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh. The explanation to these laws is to protect the minorities and individuals to unwillingly change their faith. According to Dominic Emmanuel the only political outfit advocating the Anti conversion laws are the BJP and its Sangh Parivar. (Emmanuel 2012: xvii).

Bryant gives an outline of conversion in a Hindu/Gandhian perspective. He explains how Gandhi believed that all people should be rooted in their traditions and how Gandhi was against proselytization. More exactly Gandhi said: Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change his religion as he changes his garments. He takes it with him beyond the grave (Bryant 1999: 141). Further he explains how Gandhi believed all religions to have the same root in the tree of truth. If all religions lead to the same truth, then conversions would not be necessary. Still, a large number of untouchables converted into different religions after Ambedkar recommended conversion as a way of liberation from the untouchability. According to Rudolf C. Heredia, conversions proceeded; nevertheless, the caste was so firm in the society that it could not be overcome by the ideology of Christianity (Heredia 2007: 69).

To get an understanding of conversion in the Indian context it is worth mentioning the paradigms of conversion as described in the book Paradigms, Poetics, and Politics of Conversion by different authors. In the article Paradigms in psychological conversion research by Hetty Zock, published in the same book, it is suggested that there are two types of paradigms within conversion. The first is the passive paradigm, which is based upon an older understanding of conversion where the convert is seen as passive. In this understanding of conversion other external powers are converting you. Here the conversion is a sudden change, which leads to transformation and an understanding of before and after conversion. The newer approach according to Hetty Zock, emerged in the 1960s and is called the active paradigm. In this understanding of conversion you have to work on your salvation. The converts seek meaning, based upon their own decisions to convert rather than the determination by external forces (Bremmer and Moledijk 2006: 41-59).

According to David Griffith in his article Communalism, anti-conversion and religious freedom he suggests that by conversion, in the light of Hindutva, the agent causes the change
of religion, not the convert to chose by themselves. This would leave the converter to be the active part, while the convert to be passive, maybe even forced upon the other religion against their will. (Griffiths 2011: 11). This is also some of the reason for the re-conversions caused by Hindutva.

It seems, as it has been a troublesome history regarding conversion to Christianity, Islam and other religions. Mendelsohn writes that the mass conversion movement began in the 1870s as the British missionaries gained a special interest for the Untouchables as *specially likely objects of conversion* (Mendelsohn 1998:24). According to Herbert Hoefer in his research on Christian persecution in India, the Hindu critique of Christian missionaries was that they were converting Indians to Western culture. He explain how the Hindu religion was so intertwined in India that the Christians would make the new converts reject all the activities, dress differently and even change their name if they had names of different Hindu-gods. Further he says that many new converts had to isolate themselves, as they were afraid of their safety towards Hindu nationalists. When the British left India after the Independence many of them feared what would come next. Hoefer explains further that these historical roots are seen today politically, socially as well as religiously, and are some of the reasons for persecution of Christians in India (Hoefer: Why are Christians persecuted in India? Roots, reasons, responses).

A lot of accusations have been made towards the western missionaries as their activities have been claimed to be directing people to convert and these accusations continue to this day. Lately from RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. While inaugurating an orphanage and a women’s home in Bharatpur run by the RSS, he said:

Here we will not provide service like that rendered by Mother Teresa. It is possible that her kind of work was good but there was a motive behind that service. It was to convert those she served to Christianity. Someone wants to convert others to Christianity, that is another thing, but to do it under the garb of social service is to devalue that service. Here, nothing like that will happen. In our country, social service is done like this, selflessly, completely selflessly (Indian Express: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat targets Mother Teresa).

All the different perceptions are necessary to understand why conversion is such a large issue in India today. The Hindu nationalists will explain one side of it, while Christians will tell another side. Nevertheless, Juergensmeyer explains how during the mass conversion in the 20th century many of the Dalits would convert out of genuine faith, while others would
convert by a desire to reject the Hindu society and to gain a change in the identity
(Juergensmeyer: Dharma and the right of Untouchables: 9). As explained in this section, there
are many different aspects of conversion in the Indian context, which will explain a lot of the
persecution in the Indian context.

4.4.3. Persecution of Christian Dalits in India today

Dominic Emmanuel addresses the situation for the Christians in India today in his book
Christianity, Hindutva, Conversion. According to him, the Hindutva groups explain how the
minorities, Christians and Muslims are a threat to the nation. Further he explains that one of
the slogans raised by the Hindutva in Gujarat was every person converted to Christianity adds
one more enemy to this country (Emmanuel 2012: xvii). Recently there has been an increase
in attacks on the Christian minority in India. India Today, one of the major newspapers, writes
on a threat regarding a Christian school in West Bengal (2015):

There has been an escalation in reports of attacks on Christian institutions over the last few
months. Last weekend, churches were attacked in Navi Mumbai, for which police arrested
four people, and Jabalpur, for which members of a right-wing fringe group have been arrested
(India Today: Shut down or face consequences).

This and other news from different newspapers explains a lot of the persecution the Christian
minority experience in India today. According to Marshall, Christians in India experience
oppression in three major forms:

1. Discrimination, especially against lower caste Christians.
2. Restrictions on changing one’s religion or talking to people about changing one’s religion.
3. Persecution and communal violence directed against Christians, who are often accused of
   undermining Hinduism.

All of these forms will be visible several places in India. However, some of them such as anti-
conversion laws will only be in effect some places (4.4.1). In the empirical chapter I will look
into some experiences of the informants, which explain some of the above. According to the
research done by PEW-research centre in 2013 India ranks on top of social hostilities
involving religion (PEW-Report: Arab Spring Adds to Global Restrictions on Religion). The
U.S. Department of State’s annual International Freedom report of 2013 explains some of the
recent incidents regarding these hostilities. Some of what they explain is how the Christian Dalits, as converts from Hinduism, experienced tensions and violent attacks as well as attempts to re-convert from Hindutva movement. Some states in India enforce anti-conversions laws and even though the country is a secular democracy these laws has made it harder for religious minorities. AICC reported 46 incidents of physical intimidation and other types of harassment through July in Andhra Pradesh the same year (US-government: International Religious Freedom Report for 2013).

Below is a picture from the PEW-report of 2013. Here the countries are divided into low, moderate, high and very high on Government Restrictions on religion in 2013. India is listed as high due to the anti-conversion laws, as well as the restrictions on Scheduled Caste:

**Government Restrictions Around the World**

*Level of government restrictions in each country as of December 2013*

Next is another picture, only of Social Hostilities in 2013. India is listed as very high due to the violent attacks, harassment and discrimination towards the religious minorities in India:

**Social Hostilities Around the World**

*Level of social hostilities in each country as of December 2013*
On the 30th of April 2015 the annual report was released from United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on the religious freedom conditions of 2014-2015. According to this report, Christian communities in India report an increase of harassment and violence in the last year. This includes physical violence, displacement from homes, property damage as well as local police refusing to accept complaints regarding this harassment (USCIRF: International Religious Freedom, Annual Report).

All India Christian Council (AICC) is one of the organisations working to help the persecuted Christians in India today, and especially the Dalit Christians. This Organisation was founded in 1998 after the increase of persecution from Hindutva groups. The organisation bases its values upon Christianity, and unites Protestant and Charismatic independent churches; Protestant mainlines as well as Catholics. Their aim and purpose is: To protect and serve the Christian community, minorities, and the oppressed castes. Today they are supported by NGO’s, mission agencies and other trusts throughout the world. The Organisation is based in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Through here they monitor and spread information on the situation for Christians in India as well as awareness towards the communities on Human Rights and has a large number of activists in almost all states in India who document on discrimination and atrocities towards Dalit Christians. The council also has a team of lawyers and works nationwide through various divisions of leadership, such as National Executive body, State District and Zonal units. Whenever atrocities or discrimination towards Christian Dalits are reported, AICC will send out investigators, which then will collect facts, information from victims, community members and authorities. After that they will report the findings back to the national office. AICC aims on building bridges beyond the cultural diversity in India as well as towards peace and harmony everywhere (NGO’s – we & others: All Indian Christian Council).

4.6. Summary

In this chapter I started by explaining the history of Hinduism and the origins of castes, which originated as four major castes through the Laws of Manu. Further I explained the Dalits situation as below the feet of Brahman, facing different types of social stigma such as untouchability. Even today Dalits face social stigma and untouchability prevails to a large or smaller extent all over India. Because of the fight on untouchability by Ambedkar and Gandhi
this was banned by the Constitution in 1950. The Scheduled Caste Order helped the poorest of the Dalits to rise economically in India; however, this law only accept Dalit Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, and therefore it discriminates the Dalit Christians and the Muslims. Due to conversions of Dalits from Hinduism to Christianity the Hindutva nationalist movement arose in the beginning of the 20th century. As a result of this minor religions in India, such as Christianity and Islam have faced a large amount of discrimination, violence and hostilities and India is one of the countries on top when it comes to the Social hostilities towards religious minorities in the world today.
5. Presentation of Empirical Findings

In this chapter I will give a presentation of the informants and the empirical findings in the interviews. My aim is to answer the third sub question, which is:

*According to their status as Dalit Christians, how do the informants experience governmental and social discrimination in rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh?*

When interviewing people about conversion and discrimination I found that a lot of their experiences where mixed between Governmental and Social discrimination. Due to this I have decided to present the interviews into two main parts, part 5.2 is the Governmental discrimination and part 5.3 is the Social discrimination. To get a grasp of the findings I have divided the different types of discrimination into categories. Since the interview guide was inspired by the PEW-report of 2012, *Rising tide of restrictions on religion*, I have used this as an inspiration to categorise the various findings in the following chapter.

5.1. The Informants

I will start with a presentation of the informants. The presentation will be made short and accurate, mainly focusing on whether they are from a rural or urban area, their gender and how they converted. I will not present any identifiable links such as names, exact places, age and other information that can be traced down to each person. A total of 18 interviews are used in the chapter and in some of the interviews there were several people present. All my informants are from Hyderabad, Secunderabad and rural places in Andhra Pradesh. I have decided to categorise the informants into four major groups as following. Individuals, focus groups and families, leaders and activists and lastly, pastors.

5.1.1. Individuals

*Informant 1* is a woman living in the suburb of Hyderabad together with her family. She is a housewife and her husband works as a labourer. She converted into Christianity after her uncle went to church because of a bad ankle. He got healed, and due to that the whole family converted into Christianity. She told me how before converting they felt disturbance in their house, further she told me that this had changed after converting.
Informant 2 is a woman living in a village outside of Hyderabad. She had been a Christian for the past 20 years. She believed that evil spirits, causing some disease, had possessed her. Her father brought her to different witchdoctors, which didn’t help. Finally, she attended a gospel meeting in the village. She made a decision to convert into Christianity as the second person in this village, and her disease was gone. Her husband opposed her and beat her, but today he considers himself a Christian.

Informant 3 is a man from Hyderabad. His parents converted and due to that he was a Christian. His whole family lived in a community of other Christians. When I interviewed him he had just received a government job as a driver on the basis of his caste certificate, which said Scheduled Caste and Hindu.

Informant 4 is a man living in the Dalit community right by a small village outside of Hyderabad. Here he lives with his family. He was named after a snake god and his former religion was to worship this snake. He worked hard and owned a shop, but after a while he started drinking, which led him to loose his shop and he was injured. He was falsely accused of stealing and had to go to the police station. Here he saw a photo of Jesus. After release he was introduced to a church and converted into Christianity. He stopped drinking and today he is working with glass in Hyderabad.

Informant 5 is a man living in a village outside of Hyderabad. He had been a Christian for ten years. Earlier he considered himself a Hindu, worshiping many different gods. He got sick and after talking to a pastor he converted into Christianity. He struggled keeping his caste certificate and his rights as a Dalit after converting.

Informant 6 is a woman living in a village outside of Hyderabad. She used to worship the snake goddess called Nagadema. Her husband got sick and went to the doctor. The doctor couldn’t help, however, some people told her that Jesus could heal her husband. They went to a meeting in the neighbour village. Her husband got a little bit better. Then one night she saw a vision of a man with white clothes. He tells her to follow him. She went back to the village where they had the meetings and there she converted into Christianity. She was the first person in her village to convert.
5.1.2. Focus groups and families

*Informant 7* is a focus group with a pastor and the youth from a church in Hyderabad. This youth group meets regularly for prayer and worship. The pastor converted into Christianity 30 years ago, and in this focus group are his family, son and daughter-in-law and a few other youths from other families. Most of these people have good educations or jobs.

*Informant 8* is a family living in Hyderabad. They have been Christians all their lives. I talked to the father, mother, grandfather and their sons. The father got a government job on S.C. Certificate. They have been living in Hyderabad for ten years. Before that they lived in a village 40 kilometres from Hyderabad. Their oldest son suddenly got sick, and they believed it was because of witchcraft from someone in the village. They believed this because the doctors couldn’t find out any other reason. After staying in the church for healing they decided to move to Hyderabad.

*Informant 9* is a family living in a village outside of Hyderabad. I interviewed a mother and her son. Before the mother converted into Christianity, she was a Hindu and worshiped stone gods and trees. Further she told me that she couldn’t have children. Nine years after she got married somebody told her that Jesus could heal her condition. She converted and after that she got pregnant. Today she and her husband have four children. This family struggled with the SC caste certificate. After the family converted into Christianity, the whole village told the government and they could not get the reservations anymore.

*Informant 10* is a family living in a village outside of Hyderabad. I interviewed the father, mother and their son. They were Hindus and the mother of the family got sick. She was healed after a pastor prayed for her. Due to this she converted into Christianity. After a while the father of the family converted and today the whole family are Christians. They face different problems with their SC certificate after converting.

5.1.3. Leaders and activists

*Informant 11* is a man living in Hyderabad. He is an activist for the Dalit Christian situation, and works towards the government to change the law as well as awareness to the people on
the discrimination from the SC Order. He grew up in a Christian family and his parents converted from Hinduism to Christianity.

*Informant 12* is a man working for the Dalit Christian situation. He is a Catholic priest as well as an activist. He lives in Hyderabad but is originally from Tamil Nadu, where he grew up in a Christian family. He is working for the Dalit Christian situation, as well as working to help the Dalits respect and love themselves as humans.

*Informant 13* is a man and a leader who works within an organization with the purpose to give a united voice to protect and serve the interests of Christians primarily, and the Dalit in particular. He lives outside of Hyderabad and he came from a Christian family. Legally he can’t claim the SC certificate since he is a Christian.

*Informant 14* is a man and a leader who works within the same organization as informant 13. He lives in Hyderabad and converted into Christianity after hearing about the gospel and hearing people talking about the love of God to all people, including the Dalit people.

5.1.4. *Pastors*

*Informant 15* is a man and a pastor who lives outside of Hyderabad in a small city. He has been living in this city for many years together with his family where he started a church. He grew up in a Christian family. In the interview he told about his struggle regarding evangelization and challenges working as a pastor in the city.

*Informant 16* is a man and a pastor living in a village outside of Hyderabad. He converted into Christianity when he was young. He started going to the Sunday school even though his parents were Hindu. After converting his father threw him and his brother out of his home for a period of time. The head of the village considered the case and recommended the father to let them come back. This informant had a good job where he earned a lot of money, but he felt the calling to work as a pastor. He married a Christian woman and started his ministry.

*Informant 17* is a man who is working as a pastor in a village outside of Hyderabad. When he was a boy he and his friends were part of a gang and they used to steal, which led him to the
police station several times. Since the Hindus didn’t allow him into the Hindu temple as a Dalit, he started going to the church. After his father died there was a practice that they had to go to a Hindu temple and stay there for some time. Since they where Dalits they couldn’t even touch the feet of a Brahmin. Due to this he regarded Christianity to be different and in the beginning of the 90’s he converted. In 2011 he was appointed as a pastor.

Informant 18 is a man who works as a pastor in a village outside of Hyderabad. When he was young he worked as a shepherd. He started going to the church when he was 16 years old. He was selected into the army, but he couldn’t continue because he had some injuries. He met his wife in the 60’s. During the 70’s he and his wife started training to work in the church and he became a pastor. His older brothers rejected him and didn’t allow him to have the heritage from his father. Today he is working as a pastor in a full time ministry.

5.2. Governmental Discrimination

Due to the huge amount of Dalits living below the poverty line, the Indian Constitution allows quotas in educational institutions and government jobs for these people. Since the Christians and Muslims are denied the status of SC on the ground that their religion does not follow caste system they will not be able keep their benefits. (Read more in the Background chapter section 4.3.3 and 4.3.4) Many of the Dalit Christians I interviewed explained that they had difficulties making a good livelihood for themselves and their families. I found that many were discriminated through the reservation system when it came to food, jobs and essential benefits. I will now present my findings and give a good understanding of what these findings explain. I will start with the issue of their names.

5.2.1. Names

When registered into the reservation-system the Dalits get an identity card with the name and religion presented. In the interviews I found that many of the Dalit Christians had two names, one Hindu and one Christian name. Some kept their old name in their identity card to be able to keep their benefits. This name is often connected to their religion, and as far as the
government knows, they are still Hindu. *Informant 1* lives in Hyderabad in a Dalit community. I asked what her name was and she responded:

(Hindu name). My present name is (Christian name). And previous name is (Hindu name).  
(Informant 1 – woman)

Then I asked if she used both her names, and found that she used her Hindu name for all official things while in the church she used her Christian name. *Informant 2* told me the same things and she lived outside the city in a village. In the government records they both were registered as SC Hindu even though *Informant 1* had been a Christian for a few years and *Informant 2* as many as 20 years. When *Informant 2* told me that she was registered as a SC Hindu, I asked her what would happen if she wrote in the records that she was a Christian:

You know the pension we won’t get, then scholarships we won’t get, we don’t get the highly subsidised food materials like rice, sugar and all these things. We will not get these things.  
(Informant 2 - woman)

My translator told me that *Informant 2* only had one general name to protect her identity. Most of the informants in need for this certificate told me that they were registered as Hindus even though they were Christians. Many of them had two names such as *Informant 1*. According to *Informant 12*, a Dalit Christian activist, there are about 5 million Christians with the Hindu certificates; he explained to me how this certificate could be given:

If they go to the Hindu temple, they can become Hindus. They’ll give you a certificate. Once you get that certificate, you will get all the privileges and rights. That also Order was made by the government. If a Christian or a Muslim becomes a Hindu again they’ll get all the benefits. So that is why they. And so it is a bit of agony for many Christians, they like to be Christians, they go to church, but they can’t tell outside that they are Christians.  
(Informant 12 – activist)

*Informant 11*, another activist, told me the same things, but explained the background of this. This informant is fighting to get equal rights for all Dalits no matter which religious belief they have:

So if I wanted to get governmental benefits, I should be only Hindu. Even if I become Muslim, even if I become Buddhist or Sikh, as Christian, I will loose all the benefits. If you are only in Hindu religion only you will be getting that one. That means we don’t have religious freedom. So that was denied by this 1950 presidential act (…) Presidential Order, we call it. Order. Then in 1956 the Sikh brothers, those who were in Sikhism, they fought and
they got this benefit extended for them also. So now it became Hindus and Sikhs. In 1990 they gave it to Neo-Buddhists.

(Informant 11 – activist)

The Christians and the Muslims had fought for their right of receiving the SC status, but still they would be denied these. The informant gave an example of Ambedkar, as the chairman of the constitution-drafting committee, fighting for equal rights for the Dalits and how he converted into Buddhism as a protest towards the caste system.

Since the majority of the Dalits are considered to live below the poverty line, these benefits are crucial for many of the Dalits. Informant 11 explained to me his frustration for this cause:

So many benefits are there for Dalits. So you can tell, everything is there for the Dalits. From the government, but if you become a Christian you loose all the benefits. So you can’t get a job in the government, on par with the SC you cannot get financial support from the government. On par with the SC you cannot stand there even panchayat to parliament in the elections in reserved seats. So there are some reserved seats. See, about 100 seats are reserved for the SCs and the STs, but clearly if persons is converted into Christianity, he cannot stand in the reserved seats.

(Informant 11 – activist)

He was concerned about the financial benefits, educational benefits, and government jobs and also about the reserved seats in elections. All of the activists and leaders told me the same things about the reservation system. They were concerned about the future for themselves, and other Christian Dalits. However, I found one exception among the informants. This was Informant 7, a girl in the focus group. They experienced another cause due to the safety of their jobs within IT. This is what she said:

We feel like changing our name does not matter, and this like nowadays, we stay in a modern world. God says that name won’t matter. And a (bordy) or what is that privilege of getting some facility through government, I think it’s not much and like into IT-world It’s like matters what you study, if you study well, if you get good percentile, if you have experience, what matters for you is to get a job. So changing a name and like people changing a name does not matter anymore.

(Informant 7 – girl in focus group)

This girl did not depend upon the SC reservations as a Dalit. I found it interesting that this group of youth had good educations and good jobs and her husband even went to USA to study. My guess is that they had a better economical situation than many other Dalit
Christians and they didn’t have to depend on the governmental reservations to find a good education or a job. They are probably among the 30 percentages above the poverty line. However, as a conclusion most of the informants kept two names if they had a Christian name in order to keep the SC certificate. The exception was the Dalits with general names, or the informants with better economical situation.

5.2.2. Educational system

The government set aside a quota of seats to higher education for the Dalits in India. I interviewed some families on this case, and found that this was a major problem amongst the Dalit Christians. I interviewed a family in a rural village outside of Hyderabad on this issue and asked them how they experienced their situation since they had trouble of getting back their SC status:

We face several problems with the education of (name). Because when he wants to do the studies. In the school it was return as SC dalits, then he went to write exam for engineering, and he wrote there as a SC so he got the seat on that basis on SC basis, but when we wanted certificate, SC certificate, these people could not give. Saying that you are a Christian and we will not give SC certificate. So then we argued with them that no we are Dalits and you should give us.

(Informant 9 – mother in a family)

In the following they explained their struggle to get the certificate so that the son of this family would be able to continue his studies. Some people suggested they should hide the cross on their house as well as their Bibles so that when the people come to verify that they are Christians they wouldn’t find any proof. His struggle continued, the family didn’t wanted to hide their identity and tried to explain to the leaders in the village that at least they could give him a OBC certification. Even though he could get the OBC certificate, there was no chance for him to continue his studies on the OBC seat since he got the seat under SC status. He explained to me his frustrations regarding his certificate in the interview:

In the process of getting my certificate and they did not, they are not giving me certificate. So I went and asked them. I studied in tenth class at some in his book that every citizen has a freedom to choose any religion. So I asked them: it is a religion that I am choosing, not the caste. Caste remains the same! I get same kind of treatment from the upper caste. My caste never changes. So you I am asking you to give me a caste certificate! Not the religion certificate. Then they told me it seems that now it is in the constitution this is how it is. And we can’t change it.

(Informant 9 – Son in a family)
The interesting about his struggle, is how he is well aware of his freedom of religion and how he explain this to his teacher. However, the rule on the SC status still remains due to his choice of religion. Informant 4 was involved in an attack from the RSS in a church outside of Hyderabad. After the attack everyone knew that he was a Christian. I asked him what would happen now that everyone knew that he was a Christian:

I will loose, I am a little bit sad, that now people know that I am a Christian and because of that I might loose the Dalit status. And will not get the government scholarships and all that government gives for you. (...) My children, both the children, in their records, they as Dalits. But now the whole village came to know that I am a Christian because of this problem. I don’t know what the future holds for me. I wish I continue as a SC so that the employment and the education scholarships and my children won’t have to suffer like me. (Informant 4 – man)

Informant 4 and most of the other Dalit Christians I interviewed had concerns for their future, especially for their children. The main reason for this concern was related to education. They told me that the hard part of changing certificate was how they had to compete with the upper castes in the seats for the education. Informant 10, a family told me the same things and explained to me what they believed was the reason for the government to hold back the reservations for the Dalit Christians:

We are very concerned about the children and their studies, their education. Because we are very poor people and we can’t compete in the mainstream with others unless we have a government hand. And unless we have subsidised facilities and we can’t because the impression is given in the school, in the village, in the government offices, that there is no place for Christians, because Christians get lot of money from the foreign from America. So you don’t need any help from the government or from India. (Informant 10 – woman and family)

According to this family and others, there are perceptions among the Hindu Nationalists that Dalit Christians will receive donations from Christian churches in the western countries and some would say this is also a reason the Dalit Christians would not need the reservations.

5.2.3. Government jobs

According to some of the informants I found that many Dalit Christians also hide their identity as a Christian to be able to keep or to get a government job. In the same way the
reservations hold on to a percentage of seats for education to the SCs they hold on to the same percentage of government jobs. I asked Informant 3 whether he experienced any sort of discrimination related to him being a Christian. He told me no. After a while I discovered that he was registered in the governmental system as a Hindu while he was a Christian. My translator explained this to me:

The discrimination that only is very visible, the area of his job. He has to make sure that he continues the status quo of his Dalit status. So there’s aspect of freedom of faith. Where he cannot actually, when he goes out to the job. He is a driver. He is a RTC driver. Recently he got the job.

(Informant 3 – translator)

Since he was a Dalit Christian he could easily loose his job if he had to change his certificate to BC. When interviewing this man I became aware that he didn’t want to tell me too many things. He was very quiet, but proud of his new government-uniform and his new job. By getting hold of the information on his certification, I understood the back-story.

I went to another Dalit family in a village outside of Hyderabad where the family struggled with the caste certificate after the whole village came to know that these people where Christians. The people in the village wouldn’t let them keep the SC status and I asked the father in the house about his job and situation regarding SC status:

I am doing contract job. It doesn’t apply in reservations. There is no chance of applying for government jobs. Under BC, but there is very less chances. We can’t, se they are already here. We are here. Dalit Christians are also here. Dalits, the Hindus, BCs are here. So these people competing with those people, its… we can’t imagine. Because they are socially, economically, culturally, they are much, much forward than the SC community. The upper caste people. So competing with them it is a challenge. Not only a challenge, it is no chance. No chance.

(Informant 10 – man in a family)

According to my findings, it is harder to hide your identity in the rural areas than in the urban areas, it seems to be a lot more pressure from the village related to keeping the SC status outside of the urban areas. This informant experienced the impossibility of having a SC certificate as well as the impossibility of competing with upper castes for the jobs entitled to the BC. Therefore he had to work under contract. This is an uncertain way of living contrary to a government job. One example was given from Informant 9, a family living in a village one hour outside of Hyderabad. After they converted into Christianity the family told me about their situation:
We feel more, we are in a very stable ground, in terms of our life, but as for the children concerned, the studies, the employment for their future seems very concerning because the authorities are not giving us the caste certificate, and they are giving a lot of trouble on that. People in the village, went and listed all the Christians and gave in the office, in the government office. That these are the people, these are the 20 families are going to church and they are Christians, so don’t issue any caste certificates to them. (Informant 9 - woman in a family)

To summarize most of the families were concerned about loosing their jobs if the government discovered that they were hiding their identity as Christian Dalits. The families that were listed Christians were concerned for their economy as some of them had unstable jobs. And even though the adults had jobs they were concerned for the future of their children in the matter of job situations.

5.2.4. Political discrimination

In this section I will look at some of the ways my informants experienced discrimination related to politics.

Voting

In India a certain number of political positions are held for specific groups. This includes SC’s. When a Dalit converts into Christianity that person has to stand in the elections as BC and compete with the other Backward Castes. Informant 10, a family in a village in the rural areas outside of Hyderabad explained to me the difficulties regarding this. I asked if they experienced any discrimination towards them as Christians:

Here in the village, when local elections, village elections takes place, we cannot stand in the elections as SC. Because we are not, we are treated as a non-SC: We are Dalit Christians. We are no more Hindu Dalits. (...) Then as a BC we cannot go and stand because the BC community is the larger one. We can’t compete there. We are not BC, we are not even considered BC there. We are considered SC. When it comes to reservation we are considered BC. So we are nowhere. We are neither here, nor there. And we are not able to do so. Recent village elections there was a very adverse situation where people want to beat one of the Dalit Christian person who wants to stand in the election using SC status. So there was little bit tension situation. (Informant 10 - Family)
The family experienced a loss of identity, as they were not eligible for SC status, while the BC would not consider them among them. Due to this they told me of a situation where things were intense. Right after interviewing this family, I interviewed Informant 5, a man who told me about his worries on the issue of voting. As it turned out this was the man that the family was telling me about. He wanted to stand in the election as SC and he explained the following to me:

From both sides the SC said you can’t contest from SC and SC quota. And BC said you can’t contest from the BC so you are nowhere if you are a Christian. And then I persisted to stand, and that’s where the tension arose. And there was a situation where people in the village was very cautious about this situation.
(Informant 5 – man)

To summarize this section, the reservation of seats for the Dalits is also an issue for the Dalit Christians who would want to stand in the elections for the seats set aside for the SC.

_Prevention of Atrocities Act_

Informant 12, one of the activists explained the Prevention of Atrocities Act, which is a harder measure of punishment for those people who do any atrocity on Tribals and Dalits. The Prevention of Atrocities act is only applicable for the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes (This is explained in section 4.3.4). When a Dalit Christian, who is not allowed a SC certificate, experience any atrocities he or she will have to follow the same law as higher caste people. One of the activists told me this:

Suppose a Hindu woman is raped, she has special privileges, but when it is a Christian they will set aside. They will come under different law.
(Informant 12 – activist)

The fact that they will not be able to use this act makes the Dalit Christians more vulnerable in the terms of justice. And in some cases the police will even make sure their case aren’t followed up.

I have now presented the empirical findings on the governmental discriminations among the informants and found that they experience discrimination from the government on the terms of their religion. I will summarize the details at the end of this chapter. But first I will
continue by thematically presenting the social discriminations I found among the informants in the next section.

5.3. Social Discrimination

In this part of the chapter I will focus on the social discriminations towards Dalit Christians. As explained in the Background Chapter section 4.4.3, the PEW-report; *Rising tide of restrictions on religion*, have made a research on Social hostilities towards religious groups and according to this, India is listed at the top on this research on social hostilities regarding religion. I have chosen to call it Social discrimination to cover all types of discrimination found when I interviewed the informants.

5.3.1. Verbal harassment and intimidation

A lot of the discrimination I found during my research happened through different kinds of harassment and intimidations through verbal words. I have chosen to start this chapter by giving a short overview of the identity of a Dalit according to one of the activists, Informant 12. This will help to understand more of the situation these people are placed into.

*Identity of a Dalit*

*Informant 12* explained several things about the identity of a Dalit and how he himself experienced this identity. He explained to me how he had a hard time accepting his own identity, even among the other Christians. Many of the other Christians were higher castes and would act towards him differently since he was considered an outcaste. When talking about his identity he explained this to me:

> The worst thing the oppressor does to the oppressed is to make him hate himself
> (Informant 12 – activist)

The Dalits experience different types of stigma connected to their identity. A Dalit is placed into this stigma where it is impossible to break out. Many people have the understanding how a Dalit will convert only to break out of this oppression. After talking to *Informant 12*, I understood that this act is not that simple:
Dalits is a Dalit. See, in India you can change your religion, you can change your place, you can change your like anything, but you cannot change your caste. Caste is the primary identity of an Indian.

(Informant 12 – activist)

Having a hard time accepting his identity, he himself experienced social discrimination and stigma ever since childhood. Even within the Christian environment in his hometown. He told me how he earlier felt about himself:

Thinking of myself as a Dalit, I always used to feel bad.

(Informant 12 – activist)

He attended a Catholic school where there were different castes and some times he experienced that the caste question was stressed. He has been working within the church and today he works as a priest and he brings awareness on the identity of a Dalit to people. He explained to me one situation when he was the chairman for a conference and everybody in the room came to know he was a Dalit. They asked him about his caste at the same time he experienced it as a good thing to tell them about him being a Dalit:

There was no difference from them. I didn't feel it. So it is sort of an affirmation for me that I was able to speak, tell them, because it was a painful thing to accept my own identity. That is always there, because we are considered like slaves. Human, sub human beings. In the Hindu system we are, we don’t have dignity. They consider us outcaste, outside the caste.

(Informant 12 – activist)

His identity had changed from an outcaste identity called a sub-human to an identity as a human being. Today he brings awareness on this issue to other Dalits through training programs. He explained to me a research he did where he placed 50 Dalit Christians into the same room and told them to write down 40 qualities they regarded as typical of a Dalit. He explained to me about the results:

At the end of it, it was a shock for me to see there were 40 qualities among them, thirty-nine negative qualities. Only one positive. They said something like: Dalit means alliterate, Dalit means a drunkard, Dalit means a quarreling fellow, Dalit means a dirty fellow. Dalit means can’t have, doesn’t have leadership qualities, like that go on negatives. One positive thing was: Dalit is a hard worker. There are the only positive. I told them, you look at these, suppose you think that somebody is like that, would you like him? Would you love him? They were all
keeping quiet. Because that is the way you considered yourself and others. So it is sort of self-hatred. Which is forced upon them because they are being treated like that for centuries. (Informant 12 – activist)

To summarize, a lot of Dalits experience the same social stigma and discrimination as well as a hard time of accepting themselves as human beings. This is also the case within the Dalit Christian communities.

**Verbal assault**

During the interviews I found that a lot of the discrimination experienced by Dalit Christians is happening through verbal assault. This could be from neighbours, family with a different religious perception or through unknown people. Some of the informants told me that they had experienced people from outside interrupting church services by shouting and using abusive words towards their god or towards the people in the church. The people doing this were not always part of the RSS or any other Hindutva groups, but regular people without any affiliation towards these groups. Informant 15, a pastor told me a story when I asked him if he had experienced any sort of discrimination:

One day we are gathered to gather for worship and meeting. And one people, one man came to here for a little work. Because the opposite house is sound house. DJ-house. So for that reason he came. So in the same time we are singing the worshipping song then he came to here. He recognized that it is a church. So what he, what he shouted you know: “Hey! Only there are four of you, four or five people, why you are doing this?” (...) They are rebuking me. (Informant 15 – pastor)

These threats came from an unknown person who entered the church. Another way that verbal assault takes place is through threatening. Informant 14, one of the leaders, told me that since he was a leader visible in the press, radio, television and many places speaking the case of the Dalit Christians, he experienced threatening calls on his cell phone. Sometimes he had to change his number due to this. Further he explained to me some of the risks Dalit Christians had to make by choosing that religion:

To live as a Christian, Ingrid, in India today, you have to pay a price. It’s a price of your life sometimes. Fourteen, fifteen pastors have been killed, murdered in the last three years in India. (Informant 14 – leader)
One example of threats I got from Informant 4. He explained that after an attack from a Hindutva group in a cottage meeting, the woman filing the complaint on these people to the police received threats from the people attacking:

You have two options, whether to tell in the court that the complaint given was false, otherwise we will not let you survive in this village
(Informant 4 – man)

Many of the informants experienced verbal assault or verbal harassment towards them for being Christians.

5.3.2. Property damage

Many of the informants, and among them all the pastors I interviewed had experienced disturbance and property damage within their churches. The RSS and other Hindutva groups were usually the responsible for attacking churches or houses where the Christian people were gathered for meetings. Informant 16, a pastor from a village outside of Hyderabad explained to me the following when I asked him to tell me of these episodes of disturbance from the RSS within the church:

Especially the RSS people, they used to disturb. They go back to the house and trying to throw stones, some kind of abuse, making some kind of a noise to disturb the prayers, and that things are happening. (...) There is around night gatherings for the prayer, night-time, everybody can’t understand who threw stones at them, but night we gathered for the prayers four years ago. And the time they purposely threw the stones and they hurt us.
(Informant 16 –pastor)

Informant 4 had recently converted into Christianity, and one day while he was attending a small cottage meeting in a rural village where he lived, the RSS interrupted the meeting:

We were only four people. They were 50 people. So it was very difficult to handle those 50 people. The instruments, they came inside, merged inside they took the instruments, the drums and everything. They pulled it though outside.
(Informant 4 - man)

This tactic is used to scare the Dalit Christians from meeting, and as I interviewed, many of them told me about similar experiences. The youth I interviewed in the focus group
Informant 7) experienced the same thing, only this incident happened in the city of Hyderabad. In this case neighbours interrupted the worship session. They were taking the drums and instruments and some of the youths even lost their cell phones. It seems, that church attacks happen both in the urban as well as the rural areas even though it is more frequent in rural areas. The people attacking will not always be the RSS or other Hindutva groups, but also neighbours.

5.3.3. Physical assaults

Many of the informants were referring to stories of themselves or people they knew being exposed to physical assault and violence. I talked to three pastors about an attack happening recently before the interview. They where gathered to pray together with some other people in a rented place in a rural village where there were no other Christian people. One day they were standing outside the house to make lunch. Then some of the poor neighbours came over and started looking. They were hungry, so they gave them food to eat. Suddenly a RSS group of 40-60 people came to that place, claiming that these Christians were trying to convert the other people to Christianity by giving them food. Informant 16, one of the pastors explained to me how this proceed:

So they closed the door, because they are rounded round. There is only one door to go to outside. So they closed the door, they are started the attack very violently. So I was beaten up. I fell unconsciously. And my wrist was broken. Then I got injury on head. There were stiches. Stitches on the head and also here (pointing).

(Informant 16 - pastor)

I gathered the three pastors involved in this attack into a focus group and they explained that the attackers didn’t seem to distinguish between men, women and children:

Three women also joined in the prayer. So they were beaten up but their children also beaten up. So there is no way of escape. Because they closed the door it is under ground.

(Informants 16, 17 and 18 - pastors)

All the people were trapped and with no possibility of escaping. They explained to me that they were afraid, as this situation was severe. I asked Informant 17, one of the pastors involved in this attack how he felt after this incident, he told me this:
After (Name of the place) incident I was beaten up badly and it was bleeding from my ear, and my wife and children have seen while I was beaten up, so it is become a nightmare for them. So after (name of the place) incident, my son used to wake up suddenly in the night and cried out because his father was beaten up. It was a kind of terrible incident, so whenever nighttime, I still you know, so they used to be afraid of what happened to me. (Informant 17 - pastor)

His whole family was affected in a way after this incident. And a total of 10 persons where hospitalized afterwards. One of them died after the attack, which you can read in section 5.3.4. This incident took place in the rural area outside of Hyderabad. In another one of the interviews I talked to the focus group (Informant 7) about the situation that happened during their worship meeting at the roof of a private house in the city of Hyderabad. Suddenly a few people stopped by and shouted: Stop it! Stop it! This happened three Sundays in a row. The third Sunday the assault became more violently and they explained this to me:

So all youth went and they gathered and they started praise and worship singing. Then immediately they all four – five people, they came and attacked. They started beating the youth. (...) It was all in a flash, it just happened in a second. We had no clue what was happening, we worshipping and suddenly someone shouts, someone enters into the church. They threw everything, the instruments, the (commoners), you know. They start hitting our youth; they pulled them out of the church. (Informant 7 - focus group)

The father of one of the youth, who is a pastor and also living in this house, called the police who arrived. However, by that time the people attacking were gone. The youths filmed the incident, but the people attacking deleted most of the videos from their cell phones, except for one video, which they were able to show me. Informant 13, one of the leaders I interviewed explained more about these types of attacks, who executed them and whom they chose to attack:

This year we documented or registered 57 cases of prosecution in Andhra Pradesh. Out of this 57 hardly we find any BC or any upper caste people. These attacks are prompted by RSS and BJP people. Hindutva political party. BJP, Hindutva political party. Hindutva agenda. They attack our Christian people. They attack Dalit Christians. Mostly independent churches and independent pastors are the victims. All the victims all are Dalit pastors, okay? I am from Dalit background, these attacks, designed by the upper caste people, upper caste and executed by the BC Sudras. (Informant 13 – leader)
According to him the victims were usually the pastors and independent churches that were unable to defend themselves, and the upper castes were responsible. Some of the pastors I interviewed told me about their experience of attacks while they had been preaching in the streets. Informant 17, one of the pastors from a rural place explained how the times had changed regarding evangelizing in his area:

First year we did not go for the street because there is a Muslim area, so much opposition. And they attack with the violently. That is a problem. We did not go, but recently I started going to the streets and all. But previous Christmas there was an attack. The people came and fought with me, and so much dispute took place. Means like some of the ladies came and trying to push us and argue with us, why are you running church?

(Informant 17 - pastor)

His experience was regarding the Muslim community. While Informant 15, another pastor from another rural area used a lot of his time evangelizing in the streets experience similar things only from the Hindu community. He explained to me that in India there is a Hindu law forbidding any evangelization close to a temple. This pastor and a group of people were standing too close to the temple when the Hindus arrived. They started beating them. Further he explained that they threatened them and they said:

Praise the Hindu gods. Otherwise you will die. We will kill you with a stone! We will break your head! So even a few minutes, policemen came and they destroyed the crowd.

(Informant 15 - pastor)

Luckily the police stopped this attack. Informant 2, a woman from a rural village told me about other types of incidents. She had heard of a pastor being beaten up on their way to a church in her village. He was going to preach in the church while RSS people attacked him on his way:

There was a pastor named (...). He is his face is red. He came over here he came by that main road, so when this RSS people saw him so they approached him beaten him very badly on Sunday. So then the same people without informing to the Christians people, they have a send him away. Send him back to his home.

(Informant 2 - woman)

Even though much of the violence happen towards pastors, or within the churches, some of the informants experienced violence in their own home, from their loved ones. This was explained from Informant 2:
My husband was a drunkard, he used to drank. Whenever I used to attend the church he totally opposed me. Then he told me that you should not attend the church. But he told me not to attend the church. But I refused. I was able to attend the church. Many times he beat. I was beaten up very badly. Though my husband went to the church and he pulled me from that church and he beaten me very badly in front of the all believers. And during the Sunday worship service.
(Informant 2 - woman)

She would not refuse to give up the church and told me about another incident that took place during a funeral service in the same church:

We were attending the funeral service and while actually while pastor is conducting funeral some RSS people came and pulled the pastor and beat him very badly. And during that time, and my husband also came there and he took beat stick and start beating.
(Informant 2 - woman)

As seen here, both RSS and her husband, who didn’t have any attachment to that group, was involved in the same attack. At the end of one of the interviews with Informant 16, I asked him whether he thought being a Christian was better or worse than earlier. He explained to me what he believed as well as telling me a story about a pastor he knew:

Actually, compared to those days, nowadays the persecution level is increased so much, and also there is incident also is increase. Numbers of incidents are happening surrounding places, in the areas place also. Three months ago pastor Stephen was beaten up badly, throw into bushes in the solitary place, and the RSS people thought that this fellow was dead, so and they put some sticks on his body and left. And the people, the shepherds who found, there is a person at the near the bushes they just took him and gave him a kind of a first aid. (…) And after that he went to the coma, because of loosing so much blood. He fell into the coma and still he did not recover.
(Informant 16 – pastor)

To summarize, almost all of the informants either were violently attacked, close to a violent attack or heard of someone being violently attacked because of their religious conviction as Christians.

5.3.4. Deaths

Some of the informants told me about deaths and murders related to their conversion. Informant 2, the woman from a rural village told me this about her son and her daughters’ son:
My son was actually murdered by some people who didn’t like us. Part of the reason also could be the faith cause we became Christians … Her son also died (Talking about her daughter) after maybe six years back. We think it is because we are Christians. People didn’t like us; they push-pushed my boy into the river. Water. Dam. Both of them.  
(Informant 2 - woman)

In some of the interviews I found that some of the attacks lead to deaths. The incident explained in 5.3.3 led to a total of 10 people hospitalized. After some time, the injuries on one victim led to death. The pastors explained to me the incident:

Recently one person already passed away. After the incident, who was badly injured. The posterity. August 10th he is the man was injured in the (name of the place) incident. Fallen sick. He was injured badly. One month back he passed away.  
(Informants 16, 17 and 18 – pastors)

Informant 7, the pastor in the focus group with the youths, told me about his concerns when people were calling him to come to houses and pray for people. Some cases had taken place earlier where Hindutva people called the pastors and the following could happen:

Sometimes they call us. They call us to come to our house and pray. So we go there also and pray for them actually. They said only our bothers to actually that when you go you should not go alone. You have to bring two three people, and there are some cases we heard where pastors, when they are called pastor, in our house there is a problem. You please come and help us and pray. Then when they went, they kidnapped and they some people have been killed actually. Some pastors.  
(Informant 7 - pastor in a focus group)

As seen here, the duality of wanting to help people when they call, as well as being afraid of an attack from the same people, is concerning him.

To summarize, some of the informants experienced deaths due to attack on Christians, mostly pastors. However, some of them were towards family members.

5.3.5. Displacement from homes

Some of the informants moved from their village or house due to discrimination and pressure based on their religious conviction. Others experienced exclusion from their village due to this situation. Informant 2, told me this story of the time after her conversion:
Then later on he informed to my parents and to he like to give diverse even. To that he, my man told me to take me to my parent’s house. He doesn’t know where to stay with me because I became a Christian. Because he thought that maybe only Christians they wear white saris they don’t put bindus’ they don’t follow Hindu culture. They don’t means a respect my husband and something like this. He has a bad, some of the bad ideas about the Christianity. So he doesn’t want to stay with me.
(Informant 2 - woman)

Her husband wanted her to move. She did not, and due to that she experienced a lot of violent attacks from him before he converted. Some years ago, before there was a church in this village, Informant 2 and a few women had to hide their faith from the other people in the village:

We used to hide our Bibles and go to the particular place where we had the service. So we were very scared of this BJP, RSS, the whole Hindutva group.
(Informant 2 – woman)

Many of the experiences where the Informants had to leave their homes were due to family members or people in communities. Informant 16, a pastor explained his situation:

So my father asked us (a man and his brother) to leave the... I was beaten badly. And throw us out of the home. So two years I was away from the home because I accepted Christ and going to the church.
(Informant 16 - pastor)

They were able to return after two years. Informant 6, a woman was the first to convert into Christianity in her community. She told me of her experience on this matter:

So two months I was excluded from the community and no one was speaking to me. And my neighbours and the village here and other people, they are not speaking to me anything. And father gave me shelter for two months and after two months father also fed up with my behaviour because he thought that I would become accepting their Hindu gods, but I still resisted and finally my father also, ok, whatever you wishes.
(Informant 6 – woman)

As it turns out, a lot of the informants who had to move out from their homes were able to return to their houses after a while. However, there were other cases where families would

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3 Bindu (बिंदु) is a Sanskrit term meaning "point" or "dot." The feminine case ending is bindi, which denotes a small ornamental, devotional, and often mystical dot that in Hinduism is applied or affixed to the forehead.
(Wisdom Library: Bindu)
move because of spiritual assault such as witchcraft. I will present one of the stories in section below.

5.3.6. Spiritual assault

Some of the informants I talked to experienced different types of discrimination and assault on the spiritual basis such as through witchcraft, temples and churches and forced conversion.

Witchcraft

When interviewing I found how the informants were more open to explain witchcraft and other types of spirituality than many other places in the world. For them this was an ordinary factor to mention during the interviews. I was interviewing Informant 8, a family in Hyderabad. This family experienced struggle with the SC certificate. I asked them if they faced any difficulties by being Christians in this area. They explained to me that they didn’t, but that they had heard of cases. At the end of the interview they finally opened up and started talking about their son. In the middle of the interview he entered the room and I saw that he had some challenges. They explained to me that these challenges happened suddenly. They brought him to the doctors and psychologist, put him through scans, tests and tried all types of medications. Nothing worked. I asked them what had happened:

We are concerned about him. And part of the reason for him to be like this is some... we feel its some kind of witchcraft might have happened. We literary went and lived in the church for years together. (...) And the pastor and the church used to pray for him. Things got better and then things again went worse, and things got better and worse, better and worse. We got really tired of it.
(Informant 8 - family)

At the end of the interview they revealed to me that this was the reason they moved to Hyderabad. Further they explained how they still felt that evil spirits were hunting them by affecting their son more than anything else. This story wasn’t unique and some of the other informants told me similar stories of witchcraft.
Churches and temples

Since a Dalit is considered outcaste he would usually not be able to attend the temple due to the untouchability. *Informant 17*, a pastor told me his story regarding this:

I was born as SC person and since I am the low caste person, the Hindu people they don’t allow the upper caste people. They don’t allow us to worship in the temples. They don’t allow us to enter the temples.
(Informant 17 – pastor)

Some of the other informants would explain the same things. And many of the Dalits experience that Christianity is different as they are able to enter a church after converting. But even among Christians some Dalits have experienced discrimination even within the churches. I however, did not ask the Informants on this matter. Nevertheless, *Informant 13*, one of the leaders explained this to me:

The stigma is there, even in churches. Even in churches there are few churches. Dalit Christian churches are separate and upper caste churches are separated.
(Informant 13 - leader)

*Informant 12*, one of the activists talked about cases where Catholic churches discriminated Dalits even after death:

Suppose a Dalit dies. The body will not be allowed inside the church. They have to go straight to the cemetery.
(Informant 12 – activist)

I talked to a pastor of a higher caste who claimed that no one was allowed to bring the caste into his church. Even though most of my Informants didn’t mention this case, a few of them explained how they where not allowed to enter the temples as Dalits.

Lastly I found that some of the informants experienced Hindus trying to re-convert them. I will present this subject next.

Re-conversion

Re-conversion is a complicated case in India. There are rituals of converting people back to the Hindu faith. When talking to *Informant 9*, a woman and her family in a rural village,
she explained to me the difficulties of being among the minorities in the religious matter:

All my siblings, brothers and sisters, even now they tell me to come back to the old tradition Hinduism. Re-convert. And even the people here in this village. I am from a different village. (…) I get a pressure from both my neighbouring village that is my place, and from here from the people from the neighbours of the siblings of my husband. So there is a pressure from both sides. But I will not move, I will not be scared and fear.

(Informant 9 – woman in a family)

Informant 6 told me how after her man died; the Hindus came to bury him in the traditional Hindu way. She opposed, because she was a Christian, but in this setting a widower has to follow these rituals for the burial. In this case it meant that she had to re-convert and hold the goddess picture of Lakshmi-Devi. She explained to me the how this proceeded:

So they are trying to bring the image of Lakshmi. The photo frame. And they are trying to keep it on my head. I resisted them and asked them to stop it. And I took the Lakshmi photo and passed on to other person. Because this is all idols and they cannot do anything to harm me. They cannot, they cannot go for nothing. They are trying to oppose me. Then finally they are telling I already held the image of the Lakshmi goddesses. Already I belonged to the Hindu fold.

(Informant 6 – woman)

They continued the burial because in their eyes she now had re-converted even though she explained that she didn’t. There is a pressure of re-conversion among some of the informants where a lot of the pressure is from families and Hindu communities. However, none of the Dalit Christians I talked to said they had experienced re-conversion by the Hindutva groups in the area, but there is a possibility of that happening.

5.4. Situation Today and Unity Among Dalit Christians

Lastly I asked some of the informants on the situation today versus before. The leaders said that the situation of persecution and hostilities were increasing. The pastors felt that the persecution-level was increasing (Such as informant 16 in 5.3.3), especially in the villages. It seems, however, as there is a difference in how young people look at the future contrary to the older people, or the people working in different leader positions. The younger informants such as the focus group (Informant 7) tend to think better of the future. Many of them seem to believe how Unity among Christians is the key for a better future.
Nevertheless, due to the election of May 2014, BJP wanted votes and therefore some would say they experienced a difference. I asked Informant 2, a woman why she felt the RSS would leave them alone now contrary to earlier:

Because the Christianity is growing as much so they thought that if we mingle with the Christians, they think that they will get vote back from Christianity, so they doesn’t want to lose the Christian votes.
(Informant 2 – woman)

People in the same village experienced that the unity among the Christians were strong and due to them doing a lot of social work, the other village people would leave them.

Christians are not harm to any people, so they are doing good, not any bad to them.
(Informant 2 – woman)

Informant 4 addressed a wish to stay united and to show everyone what he believed in:

I don’t have fear, but I want to have a bigger meeting than we had on that day. With a lot more publicity, with mics. And let them come. God is there for me.
(Informant 4)

According to some of the informants, it would seem as even though many of them will say that the persecution level is higher now than before, they will also feel a stronger connection to other Christians and the unity among them, which in some cases will keep them safe and strong.

5.5. Summary

These findings tell us about discrimination and hostilities towards Dalit Christians in urban and rural areas of Andhra Pradesh. The discrimination described is the informants experiences based on a consequence of religious belief and conversion to Christianity. I will briefly give a summary as a response to my sub question.

In the first part of the chapter I gave a presentation of how the informants experienced the discrimination from the government based on their religious belief as Christians. Due to this I
found that a lot of them had two names to cover up their religious faith and to be able to keep their Scheduled Caste certificate. For some of the informants especially in the rural areas it was impossible to keep their identity hidden due to other community people exposing their identity to the government. In some cases the informants had a common name not related to any religion. As for a few of the informants, name didn’t matter, as they weren’t dependent upon the reservations. However, most of them were dependent upon the Scheduled Caste certificate to be able to get government jobs, higher education as well as other benefits. Other consequences of not receiving Scheduled Caste certificate was not being able to use the Prevention of Atrocities Act, which makes them more vulnerable towards crimes done to them. It seems as it is harder to hide the Christian identity in rural areas than in urban areas due to the amount of people living in the places, how many Christians living in each place and due to secularisation. Therefore the rural Dalit Christians experiences a harder consequence on their religious conviction according to these findings.

In the second part of the chapter I gave a presentation of how the informants experienced the discrimination on the social areas in their life. I found that some of the informants had a hard time accepting their identity as Dalits as well as experiencing a lot of social stigma through verbal assault and harassment from Hindu Dalits, Upper caste people and Hindutva groups. Further I found that many of the Informants had experienced property damaging within their churches from Hindutva groups and even though neighbours. Some had experienced violence from family-members and three out of four pastors I talked to have been violently attacked. All of them had heard of someone being violently attacked. A few of them had to move out of the house for a period of time whereas one family had to move to another city due to spiritual attack. Two of them had lost their sons that were most likely murdered by RSS groups, and the three pastors involved in the same incident lost one of their co-pastors due to an attack from this Hindutva group. There were also cases of trying to force some of the informants back to the Hindu religion. According to the interviews, it appears that the informants living in the urban areas experience less violent attacks, whereas the informants from the rural areas were exposed to more harassment and violent attacks. It also seem like the pastors are more vulnerable towards attacks from Hindutva groups than other people.

Lastly, a lot of the informants were eager to unite with other Christians to be stronger as they felt this was one of the keys to stand up to the extremists and other people in the society. The way they wanted to unite was not to address violent riots towards Hindutva and other hostile
neighbours, but as a peaceful solution. Most of them felt as the persecution level was increasing and some were concerned about their future.
6. Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the main question of my thesis, which is:

*How do the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh experience discrimination from other people, institutions and religious groups, and in what ways will the discrimination affect them socially and politically?*

All of the informants had stories to tell as presented in chapter 5. However, some of the informants experienced more of the governmental discrimination contrary to others, who experienced more of the social discrimination. All of the informants experienced to a different degree some sort of discrimination based on their religious belief. This discussion will focus on the abovementioned discrimination as well as their experiences and their perception on their situation. During the discussion I will analyse the relationship between their experiences and the theory, which is represented in Chapter 3 of my thesis, the Social Dominance Theory by Pratto, Sidanius and Levin.

First I will address the types of discrimination, which I found during my research. I will also look at how this was executed and whether it was from individual persons, other groups or institutions. Further, I will address how the Dalit Christians can be placed in the social hierarchy according to the findings, as well as from what I could tell of the SDT. All of my findings are based on the Dalit Christians information given during the interviews. Therefore this discussion is based on their view on their own situation, and not the view from the higher castes. To do that would require a larger thesis as well as a larger amount of interviews from all the different castes, as well as a different scope.

6.1. Discrimination of the Dalit Christians Put into System

During the research I addressed several types of discrimination towards the informants. As mentioned earlier all of them had experienced some sort of discrimination regarding the religious matter as well as by being a Dalit. Some of the discrimination was from the government while other discrimination acts were from individual persons or other religious groups. The Social Dominance Theory stresses the fact that there is discrimination based on a *trimorphic structure system*. This is a system of dominance based on *gender, age and*
arbitrary set-systems (3.2). This system is a social hierarchy as explained by SDT, and in this context the Brahmins are at the top of the system as dominants, while the lowest are the Dalits as the subordinates. I will start with a brief introduction to the gender- and age-set systems in the light of the interviews before I enter the main discussion of my thesis, which I believe will look more like the arbitrary-set-system. I will, however, explain the conclusion of this below.

6.1.1. Discrimination of gender

Many of the informants were women, whom also often were the first Christians within their society. SDT claims how the gender-set system tends to exist in all societies. I found some aspects that would be worth mentioning in the findings. In India the situation for women is severe in many cases. Men are usually the dominants and several researches have been made on this issue. According to UN Women, gender based violence is high and it was reported 89,546 cases of cruelty by husband and relatives, 21,397 cases of rape and 5,650 cases of dowry harassment in the year 2009 (UN Women: Data on Women). Joseph D’souza stresses the fact that the Dalit women are at the bottom of the society, and usually an atrocity towards a Dalit woman would be very vulgar (D’souza 2004: 48).

I will give a brief presentation of a few of the cases I viewed of what I assume could be defined into the gender-based-system. When I entered a church in India I found that the women always sit on one side whereas the men always sit on the other side. In a church in the rural area I found that the side where women was sitting were full, while the side where the men were sitting was only half full. The leader of this church, however, was a man. One could explain this by addressing how in the historical context of Christianity there are mostly men having the pastoral role, while the women often are below them. Another reason for this can be how the job as a pastor is considered a male occupation in the rural Indian context, as this is somehow a more dangerous place for a woman to travel around than it is for men. It is also interesting to see that in the most places I went, the first Christians were often women such as in families and in churches. Nevertheless, this would not apply to all cases in Indian Christianity, as there are women pastors in some churches. Other cases worth mentioning is Informant 2, who experienced being beaten by her husband because of her conversion. I have categorised this type of violence due to the change of religion, but as UN Women stressed, violence towards women is severe in India. However, most of the informants didn’t seem to
stress the factor of gender during the interviews, as they were more concerned about discrimination based on their Christian conviction.

6.1.2. Discrimination of age

Social Dominance Theory also mentions the age-set-system. I interviewed over 18 people from the age of 18 to above 70 years old. Of all the Christian Dalits I interviewed, none of the informants seemed to talk about discrimination based on their age. However, I found one case, which can imply as some sort of discrimination based on age from the dominants. Informant 2 said she would loose her pension if she were to apply for other certificate than the Scheduled Caste certificate (5.2.1). In this way the age would matter to her based on Dalit Christian discrimination on religion, however this sort of discrimination is mainly on the grounds of her religious conviction.

6.1.3. Discrimination of caste and religious belief

All of the informants stressed discrimination based on their caste or their religion as Christians. Since the trimorphic structure of the group based social hierarchy gives a categorising of dominance over people from different religions, castes, and ethnicities, I will address the discrimination of the informants within the arbitrary-set system. Since the information given from the informants is quite wide and extensive, I need to give a thorough analysis of their situation and how they experience the discrimination and to which degree this discrimination is different in rural and urban areas of Andhra Pradesh. I will do this in section 6.2 and 6.3.

6.1.4. Christian Dalits as in-groups and out-groups

According to the SDT, the control by dominants over subordinates is a factor that exists to keep the social hierarchy. The informants stressed different factors in this case. While the Dalits can be considered as an in-group among themselves due to the fact that they are all Dalits and outside the other castes, they will also face the out-groups, regarding the matter of caste. The informants seemed to experience different types of in-group and out-group situations, which will be worth discussing.
Informant 9, the son in a family, expressed in the interview his concern regarding his situation of not being eligible for the Scheduled Caste certificate by saying *It is a religion that I am choosing, not the caste. Caste remains the same!* (5.2.2). He experienced a wish of belonging to the in-group as a Dalit, but at the same time it seemed as the other Dalits treated him as an out-group because of his religious situation. The higher castes and the government institutions treated him as an out-group as well. This case was not unique due to the situation of how the Dalit Christians in a larger degree experiences some kind of separation from the place in the social hierarchy.

Others of the informants explained their concerns regarding similar situations such as Informant 4, who expressed: *I will loose, I am a little bit sad, that now people know that I am a Christian and because of that I might loose the Dalit status* (5.2.2). His concern was related to his future, and especially his children’s future and the possibility of higher education. Another family, Informant 10 expressed their frustration of not being able to be treated as SC and still could not compete with the BC on the governmental jobs. They felt they were nowhere to be found within the system made for the Dalits. This was also the case for Informant 5 (5.2.4.1). The situation for the Dalit Christians was that they felt an out-group stigma, even though they at the same time were treated as Dalits in the social area within the system. I will get more into the details regarding their problems with the Scheduled Caste Order below, however, to explain in-groups and out-groups among the informants it is important to stress the factor how many of them experienced their situation as nowhere regarding this order and regarding their situation in general. The balance of belonging to the other Dalits as the castes implies, as well as the situation of loosing that status, which a conversion to Christianity will imply through different laws, seems to be a main concern for the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh. I will stress this factor, as it is important to understand their experience of belonging as well as not belonging to the group in which the history has addressed them.
6.2. Governmental Discrimination

First I want to take a look at the written texts as a foundation for the governmental discrimination. I will discuss these in the light of the SDT as well as the findings from the informants.

6.2.1. Written laws and orders

The roots to this discrimination can be explained in variably ways. The social hierarchy have existed for over 3000 years with the roots in the Laws of Manu (4.1.2). These laws maintain the power to the dominants as well as lesser power to the subordinates. According to SDT, these laws can be described as Legitimising Myths (3.3). For the Hindus these LMs have helped maintaining the group-based social hierarchy in a different matter for the Brahmans then for the Dalits. Therefore The Laws of Manu has similarities of a Hierarchy-Enhancing Legitimising Myth as it stresses the factor of social inequality through the castes. However, all these HE-LMs will be considered the same for the Dalits in a way that they justify the inequality of the upper castes versus the lower castes and Dalits. For the Dalit Christians, their roots imply that the caste factor can’t be changed and therefore these will justify the inequality among them as well. However, I will stress the factors of the Hindutva, which consider their old texts to legitimise that Christianity is a foreign religion, and that India has to be protected towards foreign forces (4.4.1). In this way the religion chosen from these Dalits is considered as an enemy towards the state. Because of the basis of these texts used by the Hindutва it will be natural to categorize these as HE-LMs due to the situation of Dalit Christians and also Dalits in general.

Another factor, which is important to discuss is whether the governmental laws and the Scheduled Caste Order will be considered as HE-LMs or HA-LMs for the informants. Since many of the informants were considered as poor, it would be necessary for them to receive the Scheduled Caste certificate (4.3.3 and 4.3.4). This certificate will help them to get higher education, better jobs through the government, better help through the Prevention of Atrocities Act if any crime was done to them, as well as seats in the government under Scheduled Caste Order. This doesn’t mean that all the Dalits will be held back in advancing in the society by the lack of this certificate. However, the poorest of the poor will experience a
hard time trying to gain advantages in the society based on their Christian conviction as well as being Dalits.

Due to the information given from the informants (5.2), the presentation of the Indian Constitution (4.3.2) as well as the presentation of the Scheduled Caste Order (4.3.3) there seems to be conflicting factors combined. On one hand the constitution claims the Freedom to freely profess, practise and propagate religion (4.3.2), while at the same time the Scheduled Caste Order stresses that no person who professes a religion from the Hindu, the Sikh or the Buddhist religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste (4.3.3). Since the reason for this order was to even out the differences in society, Webster explain this Scheduled Caste Order to be compensatory discrimination. I will quote what Webster address on this factor:

Compensatory discrimination, sometimes called protective discrimination, was a government policy and program of “preferential treatment of historically disadvantaged sections of the population,” built into the constitution and then implemented through subsequent legislation as well as judicial decisions.

(Webster 1992: 121)

According to Webster, this compensatory discrimination was made to help the poorest of the poor. In this case it would be considered a HA-LM according to the SDT as well as the main goal of these laws. However, it seems that the differences in who will get the Scheduled Caste certificate and who will not, makes it harder for the minorities in India such as Christians and Muslims. This can lead to larger differences in the society. Since the Christians and the Muslims are outside of this system I will stress the fact that this works as a HE-LM, where specifically the Dalit Christians will be considered the subordinates and in a way the Hindu Dalits will have better advantages as dominants in the matter of this order.

Another factor that was stressed through some of the informants, especially through the leaders and the activists, was the loss of the ability for the Dalit Christians to use the Prevention of Atrocities Act (4.3.4 and 5.2.4.2). Informant 12, an activist, mentions this Act in the interview. Some of the leaders of AICC mentioned their concerns regarding this matter, as the Dalit Christians saw it as hopeless to report atrocities to the police. The reason was that many of the cases would be dismissed. According to this information, I suggest the Prevention of Atrocities Act as a HE-LM in the situation for the Dalit Christians. Among the
Dalits this act, if followed, will in theory help them with atrocities from other castes within the government system and function as a HA-LM.

Among the laws and rights for the Dalits to advance in the system, the factor of voting is necessary to address. Informant 5, a man told me this prior to the situation where he wanted to contest in the election (5.2.4.1): We don’t have protections from both from Dalits and also from non-Dalits. We are in an isolated situation. By saying this he implied how everyone fought against them as Christians, which made them unsafe in many different ways than the Dalit Hindus. Later he was verbally assaulted for wanting to stand in the election.

Also here discrimination was addressed. As a Dalit Christian he wasn’t able to contest as a result of the Scheduled Caste Order. It will therefore be necessary to explain the consequences for the informants regarding their situation according to this Scheduled Caste Order and compare the similarities and differences they experienced due to this factor.

### 6.2.2. Consequences of governmental discrimination

Since the Scheduled Caste Order will give a positive discrimination of the Dalit Hindus over the Dalit Christians, many of the informants chose to carry two names as discovered during the interviews (5.2.1). After asking them about their name I found that one of their names was Hindu and one of their names usually was Christian. I addressed how it seems like many of the Dalit Christians will get a new name after conversion as a lot of them had names based on their previous god. If they didn’t they would probably benefit from keeping their name instead of choosing a new one. Herbert Hoefer refers to this change of names as a way of making a distinction from before and after conversion (4.5.1). Nevertheless, as of 1947 the tradition of keeping their old name will help the informant to keep their Scheduled Caste certificate, as it will be necessary in order to keep their benefits.

Some of the informants kept their old name without getting a new one. They explained this by referring to it as a general name (5.2.1). It seems, however, that for some who kept their old name, it was as a hidden identity. Nevertheless, there was one case where I discovered that Informant 4 hadn’t changed his name and he had a Hindu name for a snake god, which referred to his old religious conviction. This man came from a rural village where the Hindu traditions were strong. This could imply that he wanted to try to keep his certificate and since
he was from a rural village the Christians there were few of number. After an attack from RSS he was concerned of the people in the village knowing about his new identity (5.2.2).

Misra Commission Report of 2009 stresses the poverty situation for the Dalit Christians to be the same as for the Dalit Hindus (4.3.4). Due to poverty this discrimination on the grounds of religion was in some cases severe for the informants. Informant 2 was very concerned about this certificate. She had a general name in order to keep her pension as well as subsidised food such as rice and sugar (5.2.1). For other informants some kept two names in order to this situation, such as Informant 1 and 4. These informants were poor, and therefore it was necessary to have these advantages to be able to feed their family. All of these informants lived in rural villages or suburban areas.

Some of the informants were more worried about the loss of their certificate due to the fact that it meant a loss of seats in higher education and government jobs, which again implied that they would experience a hard time in the future. Informant 3 is a man who just got a government job due to his SC status (5.2.3). He wouldn’t tell me about his situation because he was afraid that the information on his religious belief would make him loose his job. Informant 10 the husband in a family told me how they had lost their Scheduled Caste certificate. He was doing a contract job. This was also the situation for the informants with children. They were often concerned about their future related to the factor of not being able to send their kids to higher education. Or in one case with Informant 9, the son in the family suddenly lost his right for the engineer education based on his SC status. The loss of his SC status came after the village found out that the family was Christians.

All of the informants who talked about how the Scheduled Caste Order affected them showed different types of emotions towards their situation. Some stressed the fact that they were concerned for their future, some where afraid that the government would find out about them being Christians and some were frustrated about their situation in the loss of being able to contest for the same benefits as other Dalits. All of these emotions were related to the loss of a possibility to advance in the society, economically, politically and socially.

However, as implied in the empirical findings I found that some of the Dalit Christians were not concerned about their certificate. I will stress this factor, as it is important to understand the economical imbalance also among the Dalit Christians. Informant 7, the focus group in
urban areas of Hyderabad wasn’t concerned about the matter of their certificate (5.2.1). These were also among the informants with the best opportunities as some of them had good education, better economical situations and opportunities of good jobs. They, however, had other concerns related to their freedom of religion, which I will emphasise in section 6.3. There were also cases where the Dalit Christians weren’t concerned for their own future, since they had safe jobs. This was especially among the activists and leaders, but they were concerned about their fellow Dalit Christians situations regarding the Scheduled Caste Order.

According to the information based on the informants, I found that in most cases the people living in the rural areas usually faced harder trouble in keeping their Scheduled Caste certificate than in urban areas. I base this upon the findings that the rural areas are much more transparent than the urban. The villages are often small, and everyone knows who is a Dalit and who is an upper caste. Therefore the Dalit Christians experience this transparency, as they don’t want to follow the Hindu rituals anymore (5.3.6.3). Instead they start to go to church. If one person converts, the others will find out and in many cases they will report this to the local government. This was the case for Informant 9 (5.2.2) where the other village people reported the new Christians to the local government and as a result they had to register as BC. Some of the other Christians suggested these families to hide their crosses on their houses if someone from the government passed by. A suggestion often the families decided not follow, as they didn’t want to hide their identity.

Since a lot of the laws are considered to help the Dalits, but also discriminate the Dalit Christians, I find some similarities of institutional discrimination as presented in the SDT (3.4.1). The institutional discrimination is visible in the way the government mobilise larger amount of resources towards the Dalit Hindus than the Dalit Christians. This can be explained by their norms and values as a Hindu nation, and would express them in the way the Hindutva group is working for a Hindu nation (4.4.1). This governmental discrimination is also why Marshall explains how the Christian Dalit carry a double burden. Not only do they experience the stigma as an Untouchable, but as a Dalit Christians they are also excluded from the help offered for them to rise in the community (Marshall 1997:101). In some way or another all the informants had to a degree some concerns of their situation as Christians either towards the governmental institutions, their other faith neighbours or Hindutva groups.
6.3. Social Discrimination

In this section I will analyse the social discrimination towards the Dalit Christians and how this is carried out in the society. I will start by analysing the consequences of social discrimination through violence and acts of terror from larger groups and institutions.

6.3.1. Consequences of institutional discrimination

To maintain the social order in the society, Pratto, Sidanius and Levin explain that the institutional discrimination would often direct patterns of violence through systemic terror. Institutions carrying out the discrimination, violence and hostilities is considered as HE-Institutions, which promotes inequality within the social hierarchy. These are often connected to the governmental discrimination. The informants explain their experiences of these inequalities and discrimination in the empirical chapter of social discrimination. According to SDT, this systemic terror is visible in three areas: official terror, semi official terror and unofficial terror (3.4.1), which again promote violence through different types of actions.

This terror is executed to maintain the dominant power over subordinates. For the informants this was visible in the way they experienced violence, attacks and murder from RSS and other Hindutva groups. I will therefore suggest these hostilities as semi-official terror after interviewing one of the informants. Informant 13 one of the leaders explained how the RSS and BJP-people prompted the attacks on Christians in Andhra Pradesh (5.3.3). He explained how these attacks were designed by the upper caste people and executed by the BC Sudras. According to this explanation, it doesn’t seem as it is a direct attack of official terror, but an un-public terror from the lower castes, still in control from the leaders and the dominant groups. Thus, I suggest calling it semi-official terror.

Several of the informants explained to me different cases of attacks directed towards them, their church or other people. I will address some of the differences and similarities among these attacks. Informant 16 explained how he felt the persecution level towards the Christians had increased the last years. He had been a pastor for several years, but felt the attacks were becoming more frequent than before (5.3.3). Informants 16,17 and 18, whom were all pastors from rural areas, had all been attacked in the same riot, and all of them witnessed a man being attacked so violently by the RSS that he died a month later (5.3.4). Informant 7, the pastor in
an urban church was afraid of visiting houses to pray for people by himself, since he recently
heard of kidnapping of pastors as well as killings (5.3.4). Still, he continued visiting people
that wanted him to pray for them, but he would always bring another person with him. Due to
this he behaved more cautious in some of the situations. Informant 2, a woman from the rural
area was afraid of the RSS and the BJP when she first converted into Christianity, since there
were few Christians in the village. Because of that they used to hide outside the village when
reading the Bible (5.3.5). Her son was murdered by the RSS and later on, the son of her
daughter was murdered by the same Hindutva group (5.3.4).

There are several similarities among what the informants experienced of attacks from the
Hindutva groups. The attacks are frequent, they are never warned before an attack, and
several of attacks are violent, which leads to fear among the informants that experienced
them. Since the attacks are executed by the lower castes it is hard to find those responsible for
these attacks. The HE-Institutions are as Pratto, Sidanius and Levin explain, frequently
released from personal blame for their institutional actions. (3.4.1). In some cases the police
doesn’t follow up the complaint as explained by Informant 4. This informant explained how a
woman after the attack from the RSS in a cottage meeting would file a complaint to the police
(5.3.2). 12 people were supposed to be arrested, but the pressure from the whole village was
to hard for her to handle and those responsible for the attack told her: You have two options,
whether to tell in the court that the complaint given was false, otherwise we will not let you
survive in this village. According to Informant 4, the result was that she withdrew the
complaint.

6.3.2. Consequences of individual discrimination

Another way in which I found the discrimination to be clear towards the informants was
regarding Individual discrimination according to the SDT (3.4.2). In this case I found most
discrimination from family members and neighbours. Informant 2 was a strong case of this
type of discrimination. She experienced that her husband, who also was a Dalit, was being
violent towards her for many years because of her conversion into Christianity (5.3.3).
Recently he converted and the violence stopped. Other acts of individual discrimination were
Informant 17, who experienced violent attacks from the Muslims in the neighbourhood
(5.3.3).
Moreover, there were cases where individual discrimination manifested itself through verbal assault (5.3.1), both by threats from neighbours as *Informant 15* experienced, or through threatening calls from unknown persons cf. *Informant 14. Informant 7*, the focus group experienced threats from the neighbours. Other types of individual discrimination acts were how the pressure from the villages or the families led to displacement from their homes (5.3.5). Some of the informants had experienced the pressure to be too hard and had to move away for some time. This was the case for *Informant 16*, a pastor and *Informant 6*, a woman, who was the first convert in her village. Due to an unbearable pressure from her neighbours she left the village for some time. Other informants even experienced some kind of spiritual assault, which they addressed as witchcraft from a neighbour (5.3.6). This was the reason they moved from the rural area to the urban area of Hyderabad. They felt some sort of release by leaving their village.

According to the SDT, thousands of acts over time will stabilise group based social inequality. In these cases the discrimination acts towards the Dalit Christians will keep them unsafe and on the bottom of the hierarchy. It can even look as they are below the other Dalits in this hierarchy. These acts of individual discrimination regarding their religion have made the condition harder for the informants. According to my findings I will suggest that the difference of rural and urban areas are somewhat clear. Also here the transparency in rural areas will make the Dalit Christians more visible. The acts of social discrimination within the cities seemed to be more of verbal sort, while the violent attacks, which the informants experienced, were mostly in the rural villages. Statistics can tell us of how the caste system and the old Hindu values are stronger in the rural areas, which also affects the discrimination.

6.3.3. The Dalit Christian identity

According to the information given from some of the informants I will suggest that they expressed to a different degree the aspect of subordination. SDT explains this as *behavioural asymmetry*, which tells how some groups actively participate in their own subordination (3.4.3). For the Dalit Christians this is something that needs to be discussed. I suggest that there are pros and cons to this part of the theory. Within this statement it is also worth
mentioning that the subordinates will sometimes resist the oppression through rebellion and revolution, which I will address later in this section.

Many of the informants, as Dalit Christians, will gather in their own places in their villages or cities. These places are safe, and the social hierarchy of the caste system is based upon how everyone has their own place in the society. This is however, not as strong as earlier (4.2. section 4.2.1-4.2.4). I asked Informant 1 if she experienced any social hostilities, and she said no. I asked her if she ever met any upper caste Hindus, and she also said no. I found that this could be due to the fact that her family usually stayed in their own area. This was the case for many of the informants and can be explained as follows.

In the historical context the Dalits stayed outside the cities, in the suburb and rural areas. They seldom would stay in the city centre or the village centre, as this was where the upper caste Hindus lived. I found this among many of the informants. They lived either in a place in the city where there were other Dalit Christians, or in the rural places outside the village centre. India can be categorised as an ethnocentric culture where the cultural identity is very strong. The Hindutva proclaims the Hindu values to be the original values of India and due to this matter the identity of the nation is very central in their proclamation (4.4). It seems, as these values to some degree play a role even today.

According to SDT, the dominant group will display ingroup favouritism in a larger degree than the subordinates (3.4.3). The subordinates will often favour out-groups such as dominants over themselves. In the Indian context there are obviously cases of this being true. However, among the Dalit Christians this can be discussed. There were cases of favouritism among the informants; at the same time the Dalit Christians would rather be discriminated by Hindu Dalits and upper castes, than re-convert back to Hinduism. Informant 4 explained that he is very happy after he converted into Christianity (5.4). It is interesting to see how he, as a Dalit, explains that he feels peace, even though he just experienced an attack and knows he is going to loose all his status as a SC. I asked him if he was afraid of the Hindutva groups and he said:

I don’t have fear, but I want to have a bigger meeting than we had on that day. With a lot more publicity, with mics. And let them come. God is there for me.

(Informant 4)
According to this quote it would seem, that he is proud of his identity as a Christian. Others would also not hide their identity, but rather show it to everybody. *Informant 9*, the family from a rural village, as previously mentioned, refused to hide the cross on the house to gain their Scheduled Caste certificate back. They were suggested to hide this as a statement of re-conversion, but they rather chose to show everybody their religious conviction (5.2.2).

According to SDT the HE-LMs favour the upper castes. In the situation for the Dalit Christians HA-LMs will favour all humans. After a change of identity these HA-LMs seemed to be considered the foundations for the Dalit Christians. According to the informants, based on this information it can seem that to a larger degree they show in-group favouritism towards their new identity and affiliation than what is described as usual for subordinates.

However, there were cases of *self-debilitation* among some Dalit Christians. *Informant 12*, an activist stressed the identity of a Dalit. He explained how he earlier tried to hide his identity even within the Christian communities where there were higher castes among the Christians. He also explained a story where a group of Dalits were to list several qualities in which they believed were typical for a Dalit (5.3.1). As a result of this these qualities Dalits and also the Dalit Christians can fit into the description of *self-fulfilling* prophesies as described in SDT (3.4.3). According to this theory, these Dalits will be described within the group of out-group favouritism where the subordinated favour dominants, in this case, the higher caste Hindus. The historical context of the Dalits can explain why this is happening (4.2: section 4.2.1-4.2.4) as it has had dominance over these people for thousands of years in many different ways.

The HE-LMs will always serve the dominants better than the subordinates. This was also the case for the informants in a way that as a Dalit Christians they couldn’t receive benefits addressed for the SC. And even though the Dalits themselves are at the bottom of the *ideological asymmetry*, the Dalit Christians will not benefit anything from this. To this matter the discrimination against them is severe.

I will suggest that there are cases where the Dalit Christians will fit into the description as self-fulfilling prophecies, but according to my findings these were usually not as strong as expected. Some of the informants stressed a factor, which indicated how their new identity as Christians gave them some sort of self worth. *Informant 4* explained, even though he was concerned of the future of his family, he didn’t want to go back to what he was before. He had
stopped drinking and started to live a new life as explained by himself. As for the out-group favouritism I found different aspects. Some of the informants favoured the out-group in the matter of not being eligible for SC status or other benefits for the other castes. However, they did not favour the other castes or Dalits in the matters of the religious conviction as they seemed content with their Christian conviction. As for the differences in the social hierarchy I will assume that they would want a change, as in the matter of HA-LMs such as the Christian values, human rights and legal rights to be applying for everybody instead of the HE-LMs, which only benefitted the upper castes. In that way the ideological asymmetry was more accurate according to SDT and the informants.

6.3.4. The Informants and the place in the social hierarchy

The caste system will be categorised as group based social hierarchy according to the SDT. The Brahmins are seated at the top of this system, while the Dalits are considered at the bottom (4.1.2). As the Brahmins have different tasks and status that helps them advance in the society, the Dalits, however, will have a different foundation and starting point in this hierarchy. According to this information, I believe it will be necessary to discuss whether the Dalit Christians will have some of the lowest possibilities of advancing in this social hierarchy, as they are considered Dalits by the community, but still outside of the Scheduled Caste Order. Joseph D’souza claims the caste system to be the largest and oldest standing apartheid system in the world (4.2). According to the historical context as well as the SDT, a large amount of negative social value will be recognised among the Dalits while the Brahmins will share a large amount of social value. As seen in 6.3.3, there are a lot of different aspects to how the informants respond regarding the behavioural asymmetry. Due to this, I will stress another factor, which I believe is important to understand the complex identity of a Dalit Christian according to them. As behavioural asymmetry explains how subordinates often will under perform intellectually (3.4.3), the cases among the informants can be viewed differently.

In the interview of informant 9, the son in the family stresses an important factor. He said: I studied in tenth class at some in his book that every citizen has a freedom to choose any religion (5.2.2). What I will focus on here is his understanding of his own rights and his intellect. What I discovered when I interviewed was how a lot of the youth expressed their
understanding of their own identity and worth, as well as their importance of their place in the society. Many of the young informants were educated, such as Informant 7, which was a focus group mainly of youth with high educations. They seemed to stress the factor of their own rights, and how they were ready to fight for the rights they had as human beings. These youth were intellectual. Other aspects worth mentioning is that four of the informants were leaders and activists. They fought for the Dalit Christians situation and as politicians as well as leaders within organisations. This indicates that a lot of the informants were resourceful as well as well aware of their rights as human beings. I will therefore suggest that the main perception of subordinates usually being self-fulfilling prophecies and also looking down on themselves is somewhat contrary in the situation for these informants. These youth as well as leaders and activists seemed to have an understanding of what they could give their society, they also seemed to understand how the education was a way out of their situation, which again would give a different starting point for themselves and their families. According to the findings, the problem was mainly in how the government excluded them from these possibilities.

Further the SDT claims that subordinates often will stereotype themselves and be absent from schools, harmful substance abuse as well as acting violently (3.4.3). According to some of the informants, the case of this seemed to show in different aspects. When Informant 4 converted he stopped drinking. When the husband of Informant 2 converted, he stopped hitting his wife. The other informants all sent their kids to school and wanted them to gain higher education. With this basis I will suggest that to some degree their situation as subordinates is different in those matters. Maybe the change of identity has a lot to explain regarding this situation. Since the HE-LMs are important to induce and maintain the subordination, the loss of these HE-LMs will also be the gain of a new identity. In a way the Dalit Christians seem to break out of the old system of subordination, even though they still were treated as Dalits.

It is important to emphasise that these informants are well aware of the hierarchal system and themselves being at the lowest place in this system. However, their perception stresses the fact that they have similar rights to education, self worth as well as a life on line with the other castes and other religions. I will therefore address their perception as complex due to the fact that their identity as Dalits are something they are well aware of, at the same time they seem to consider themselves outside of this system as Christians and their will to break out of old hierarchal structures are strong. The collaborative action between the subordinates and the
dominants, which exists to maintain the social hierarchy, seems to be lesser regarding the Dalit Christians.

6.5. Possible Remedies

When I interviewed, I found that there were some of the informants who were working on the Dalit Christian situation. These were connected to institutions or NGOs, which were trying to mobilise to get equal rights for them as well as addressing discrimination and atrocities towards Dalit Christians. One of these organisations is called All India Christian Council (AICC) (4.4.3). According to SDT this can be considered a Hierarchy-Attenuating Institution as they promotes equal rights, civil rights and civil liberties (3.4.1). Informant 4 explains how AICC mobilised prayer and support after the attack from the RSS group during their cottage meeting. All of the Dalit Christians I interviewed were connected to AICC in one or another way and they were usually the first to address a situation connected to any discrimination related to Dalit Christians.

When I asked some of the informants what they believed was the solution to the discrimination many of them highlighted the change of laws, in particular the Scheduled Caste Order. They also stressed the need for police and other instances to take action in violent cases of Hindutva and people attacking Dalit Christians. Later on some of the activists I interviewed were involved in the Indian Christian Secular Party, which started up in 2014 with a focus on including the Christians and the Muslims into the Scheduled Caste Order and to promote the rights of the religious minorities in India (4.4.1).

According to the SDT, some of the subordination will lead to riots and violence towards the dominants. However, these informants address unity as a factor for change, as some of them believed that if all the Christians would stand together it would be harder for the Hindutva forces to gain power over them (5.4). Informant 7, the focus group mobilised with other Christian groups after the attack and named them United. Informant 4 wanted to break the power from the dominants by arranging larger meetings to show everyone who the Christians were. These findings show other aspects than what I have found in the SDT. Whereas subordinates often will I believe this can be open for further research, which I will address in 7.3.
6.6. Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the main research question of my thesis. I have done this by dividing the different chapters systematically by placing the discrimination into a system according to SDT. Then I discussed the Governmental Discrimination and Social Discrimination. Further I saw it necessary to explain the informant’s understanding of their Dalit identity in the light of their Christian belief, as well as describing their perception of their place in the social hierarchy. The last thing I discussed was the possible remedy on the discrimination according to them.

As a result there are different perceptions on the discrimination towards them. I will summarise the conclusion to the research question in the next chapter. However, due to the information given it is necessary to understand how these are the main tendencies of the informants, with some exceptions. Most of the informants experienced the governmental discrimination, through different laws not viable to them as Christians, and most of my informants had either experienced social hostilities through violence, verbal abuse, attacks or heard about Dalit Christians experiencing this in their area.
7. Conclusion

I will now briefly explain the order of this thesis before concluding with answering the research question, and suggestion for further research.

7.1. Towards a Conclusion

The main focus of this thesis has been to depict the Dalit Christians experiences of discrimination regarding their religious conviction, as well as analysing the findings to see if there are deviations or similarities in relation to the theoretical framework of SDT. I have done this in the following way.

In the introduction I explained my motivation for focusing on this topic. The research question was addressed and the sub questions, which served the purpose to lead towards the answer to the research question. I chose to do a qualitative research through empirical findings by interviewing Dalit Christians in India on the issue. I explained why I wanted to go to the source of the people affected by discrimination and why I saw it necessary to conduct a fieldwork. To interview I used the semi-structured method where I could follow the conversation as well as leading it through the questions and thematic I had chosen for the interview guide. I found it very useful and ended up with many stories of discrimination based on the informants’ experiences. Since I chose to interview it is important that the question of reliability and validity is stressed. I believe many of the stories could be collected again, at the same time there is a possibility to receive other answers if someone was to conduct the same research. To be able to discuss these findings I found the Social Dominance Theory, which made up the theoretical framework for my thesis. This theory describes discrimination and dominance in a social hierarchal towards subordinates. This theory was the answer to sub question one, and laid the foundational understanding of the discrimination.

Then I presented the background and history of the Christian Dalits in India. I explained in the introduction why I believed this chapter needed to be thorough. The history of the caste system is over 3000 years, and the situation has changed while at the same time much of the history and traditions lays a foundation for what the Dalit Christians in India experience today. This affects the informants socially and politically. By the end of this chapter I had
answered the second sub question. In the empirical chapter I presented the findings from the informants. It was conducted by thematically presenting their experiences inspired by the thematic from the Pew-report on the Rising tide of restrictions on religion. The main categories were governmental discrimination and social discrimination as well as sub categories below the main categories. This answered the sub question three. In Chapter Six I discussed the main research of my thesis. The discussion was made into different parts, which I will now conclude. The abductive reasoning to the discussion was selected. In that way I was able to find similarities as well as differences on how the informants experienced the discrimination towards the theoretical fundament in the thesis.

7.2. Conclusion to the Research Question

Through the material I collected in India I found many stories of discrimination, which was depicted through this thesis. I found that all of the informants experienced some sort of discrimination, however, many of them were experiencing more from the government, while others experienced more on a social level. I will not be able to repeat all the findings here, however, to answer the main findings I discussed these in the light of the research question:

*How do the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh experience discrimination from other people, institutions and religious groups, and in what ways will the discrimination affect them socially and politically?*

7.2.1. Experience of discrimination

First I will answer part one in the question. This is related to their experiences on discrimination on several levels. The findings are strongly connected to the theory of Social Dominance. I will sum up the basic findings accordingly.

The first thing I did in the discussion was to address this type of discrimination into the arbitrary-set system due to the hierarchal structure of ethnicity and caste. The religious conviction didn’t seem to exclude them from this hierarchal system, as they still were considered Dalits by birth. They will face the consequences of being at the bottom of this hierarchy as such. According to the findings, many of the Dalit Christians emphasises their frustration of not being and in-group among the other Dalits, due to the SC status that they
lack. This discrimination was religiously based, however, since they were Dalits they also suffered by being under the caste system. The connection of discrimination from other groups or other castes is related to what is presented in the SDT. Since the dominants have the strongest authority, this is shown by how a group such as Dalit Christians will experience discrimination. This discrimination is related to the in-group factor as well as the out-group factor. The Dalit Christians are considered an out-group in the Indian context of Hindu culture and values, and therefore will be affected by the in-group in the country, which in this case are the Hindus. The Dalit Christians themselves are an in-group and also considered subordinates in this case, whereas dominants are the other Hindus and especially upper castes.

They explain that socially they are treated as Dalits and politically they are not.

The informants experienced discrimination based on their religious conviction from other people, institutions as well as religious groups. I mapped these experiences into SDT. I found that a lot of the reasons for this discrimination was rooted in HE-LMs such as Laws of Manu, and other Hindu texts, but not only in the old roots. Also today there are laws discriminating these Dalit Christians in a political and social matter through the Scheduled Caste Order. I categorised these laws as HE-LMs in the matter for Dalit Christians, even though they are supposed to help the situation for the Dalits. When the informants experiences discrimination from the Hindutva groups, the discrimination is based on this foundation. As Christians they are seen as strangers in the country. They are however Dalits, which means that some of the Dalits had experienced people around them or the society trying to re-convert them, back to Hinduism.

Many of the informants experienced discrimination from other people or family. Usually this discrimination was based on threat, rejection or violence. This is also connected to SDT in the way which the HE-LMs will support the dominant values such as the Laws of Manu. The other castes will for the sake of the hierarchal system, oppress them in a way of holding the system together. This is unique when a Dalit Hindu oppresses a Dalit Christian. And I believe the conclusion connected to this can be settled by explaining how these Dalits even keep their own caste system within them. As for the Dalit Christians they will experience being pushed out of this system, at the same time having to depend on it.

All the Dalit Christians will face trouble receiving the Scheduled Caste certificate, which means that HE institutions will oppress this group. This is connected to a belief that the
Christians don’t have castes; nevertheless, this affects the Dalit Christians as they still have the label of being a Dalit in the society since this is unchangeable.

7.2.2. Consequences of discrimination

The discrimination affected the informants in many ways. Many of the Dalits were concerned about their future based on education, jobs and economy. This was mostly due to the loss of SC status. Some were frustrated as this gave a feeling of belonging nowhere in the system. Many of the informants experiencing social hostilities were concerned about their situation as Christians. Some were afraid of Hindutva groups or worried that the attacks would happen again. Some were more cautious regarding their situation, especially the pastors, who were going to different villages to preach or serve the Christians. This is often explained by the semi-official terror, which can be conducted by RSS and lower castes, but prompted by institutions.

Overall the discrimination seemed to be stronger in the villages and rural areas. This can be related to transparency and how everybody knows who the Christians are in these places. It is also related to the Hindu culture, which tend to be stronger in rural areas than in urban areas.

Socially and politically the Christian Dalits are affected in many ways by the discrimination. As individuals I will address how their perception of their place in the social hierarchy is somewhat different from what is expected from a subordinate group. The informants, whom I presented, seemed to value education and the human rights according to the HA-LMs. Even though some struggled with their identity as Dalits, the understanding of their new identity as Christians seemed to have affected them socially and politically. They were not giving up their religious conviction due to the consequences or their concern for their future. Most of them didn’t seem to become self-fulfilling prophecies as described in SDT. Due to this they seemed to carry a higher amount of in-group bias than what is common for subordinates. Nevertheless, this was most visible in the matter of religious conviction, as all the Dalit Christians tend to strongly hold the Christian religion and oppose the dominants in their values. For some this was visible even though they didn’t have the Scheduled Caste certificate and knew they would receive benefits by re-converting. Because of these consequences many of the Dalit Christians have two names in order to keep their identity hidden.
Due to the persecution and discrimination on the grounds of their religious matter, they face violence, verbal abuse and hard consequences. This however, seemed not to affect them in the matter of re-conversion. Some wanted to oppose the persecution by making Christianity even more visible. In other cases, the situation was unbearable and the informants moved into safer areas together with other in-group members of their group. Some of them explain a concern for their future as the dominant groups will not change the laws and the persecution level is increasing in the social area.

Other places which the Dalit Christians deviate from what is typical for subordinates within behavioural asymmetry, is how they don’t see violence as a solution. The informants didn’t riot through violence. This could be due to the religious situation and the relation between this and the HA-LMs. Even though thousands of individual acts of discrimination stabilise the group hierarchy, the Dalit Christians don’t seem to actively participate in their own subordination, but show to larger degree in-group favouritism. This leads me to the last theme, which I have addressed as possible remedies.

7.2.3. Possible solutions to discrimination

All this does not imply that the Dalit Christians do not fight for their case. They will however stress the need for change. They were not settled with the HE-LMs, but addressed the HA-LMs on self worth. Many of the informants were affected by the discrimination in the way that they tried to fight the system by using laws, gathering as Christians and also find other solutions to their struggle. It seems that a lot of the informants find comfort in AICC, and their work as well as other Christians. They have made their own in-group and through this they will try to change their situation for the future generation. This is also something I find important to emphasise regarding the younger generations, as they seem to be address the importance of education or trying to fight for their rights through education. None of them saw the solution of re-conversion or violence, but some however, tried to keep their dual identity to be able to keep their benefits. Thus, I will stress how this could be a factor of change as they will rise economically, politically, as well as educationally through jobs and education. The solution for the persecution as unity is also stressed by some of the Dalit Christians. They explain how they want to oppose the Hindutva and other instances and people. Nevertheless, this is not through riots or violence, but through unity among
themselves, political strength, as well as fighting for their education and jobs through
government. They also stress the need for the world to understand their situation.

7.3. Outlook

Due to limitations and time I have not been able to look into depth on all the areas of their
experiences. This leaves a lot of possibilities for further research.

After starting writing this thesis, India has a new government after the election of May 2014.
The new Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP is in lead. The Dalit Christians
expressed a concern over the election if BJP were to be the winners. According to different
articles on the subject, Christians in India have seen an increase in attacks. All the information
given from the informants in this thesis are experiences of discrimination up until 2013. It
could have been interesting to study the Christians in India and their view on the situation
after 2014. This includes terror attacks as well as the rise of Hindutva nationalism after the
election. This scope could include Dalit Christians and upper caste Christians with their
differences as well as similarities in their experiences. It would have been necessary to study
some informants in depth on their experiences and perception on the situation before and after
2014.

The second possibility for further research is to study how BJP address their concern for
discrimination on minorities in India. What is communicated from BJP through media, and
what is expressed in actions from this government to lift these minorities in the social level?
A mapping of BJPs concern for the persecuted minorities, which is expressed through media
and whether this is executed into actions, could be the scope for further research.

The third research is on the identity of a Christian Dalit. In this case a study in line with what
the SDT explain as self-fulfilling prophecies and to what degree this is different among Dalits
Hindus and Dalit Christians. It is a possibility to study their perception on their place in the
hierarchy, as well as their perception on their identity in the Indian context. In this case it
could have been possible to study both youth and older people to look after similarities as
well as differences in their understanding of their identity. This would lead to an
understanding on whether there are deviation from Dalit Hindus and Dalit Christians. Further
the research could have to map the unity among the Dalit Christians as a factor of change and look after deviations and similarities on how this unity is executed among Dalit Christians and Dalit Hindus.

I let these suggestions be open for further discussion.
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Appendix

Interview-guide/Themes

*How does Christian Dalits experience discrimination based on their religious conviction?*

1. Background questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Do you have a family?
3. What is your occupation? Education?
4. What kind of church/denomination do you belong to?
5. What is your caste varna?

2. Conversion:

6. How long have you been a Christian? What does it mean to you to be a Christian?
7. Can you tell me about how you became a Christian? (*Were there people talking about their faith?*)
8. Can you describe your life before you became a Christian? (*Religious conviction, if any, Hindu activities, puja and festivals, daily life etc.*)

3. Christian Activities:

9. Are there activities you have stopped doing after becoming a Christian? (*Giving to the temple, puja f.ex.*)
10. Are there actions you have continued doing after becoming a Christian? (*Explain*)
11. Are there any new activities you engage in after becoming a Christian that you didn’t engage in before becoming a Christian? (*Talking about your faith – how? Actions? Through your church*)
4. Reactions:

12. How did people react when you became a Christian? (Friends, colleagues, family, community, Hindutva)

Do you have any examples? (Any social hostilities: harassment, property damage, physical assault, killings etc.)

Any reactions based on your Christian activities?

Why do you believe they reacted this way?

How did you react to this? (Flee, go to the police, retaliate)

What do you feel about their reaction? (Afraid, more careful etc.)

If nothing has been said before I can ask these questions:

14. Over the last ten years have you seen a change in the way Christians are treated by the community?

15. There have been incidents of discrimination and violence towards Dalit converts the last years. What are your thoughts on this? Any experiences?

16. How can this come to an end? What can be done?

Anything else?