

Forced Religious Conversion of Hindus in Sindh

(Myth or Reality)

A Case Study of Shahdadpur City



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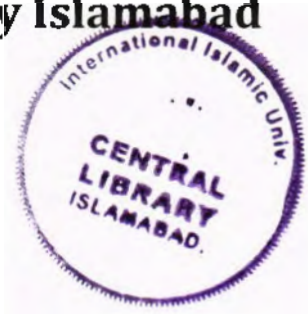
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Contents

Abstract	8
Declaration	9
Acknowledgements.....	10
Chapter One: Introduction to Study	11
1.1 Introduction	12
1.2 Research Question	16
1.3 Objectives of this Study.....	17
1.4 Rationale for this work	18
1.5 Important Aspects of this study.....	19
1.6 Methodology and fieldwork.....	20
1.6.1 Sampling Methods and Participant Observation	20
1.6.2 Primary Methods Fieldwork	22
1.6.3 In-depth Interviews Design.....	22
1.6.4 Selection Method.....	23
1.6.5 Interview Process.....	23
1.6.6 Problems Encountered with Interviews.....	24
1.6.7 The Subjects	24
1.7 Literature Review	25
1.7.1 Introduction	25
1.7.2 Literature Review.....	26
1.8 Organization of Thesis	32
Chapter Two: Forced Religious Conversion	34
2.1 Introduction	35
2.2 Religious Conversion	35
2.2 .1 Religious Canversion and Quran.....	37
2.3 Forced Religious Conversion or Religious Coercion.....	38
2.4 Forced religious Conversion and Islam	40

<i>2.5 Forced Religious Conversion and Pakistan.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>2.6.1 Misinterpreted and Misunderstood Concept of Jihad.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>2.6.2 Misinterpretation of Jihad</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>2.6.3 Misrepresentation by West</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>2.7 Overall Impacts of 9/11 on Islam and Muslim World</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>2.8 Presentation of the issue by media.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>2.9.1 Forced Conversion and Quran.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>2.9.3 Verses of Holy Quran Negating Use of Force in Matters of Religion</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>2.9.3.1 No Compulsion in Religion.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>2.9.3.3 Prohibition from transgression and violence</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>2.9.3.4 Sanctity of Human Life</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>2.9.3.5 Concept of Tolerance in Quran</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>2.9.3.6 Concept of Human Unity in Quran.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>2.9.3.7 Messenger are Warners.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>2.9.3.8 Messengers are reminders not imposers or guardians</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>2.9.3.9 Gentleness in speech</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>2.9.3.9 Patience</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>2.9.3.10 Forbearance</i>	<i>55</i>
Chapter Three: Introduction to Study Area and Status of Hindus	56
<i>3.1Introduction</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>3.2.1 Introduction to the study Area.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>3.2.2 A brief introduction to Sanghar</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>3.2.3 Map of District Sanghar.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>3.2.5.1 Brief introduction to Shahdadpur</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>3.2.5.3 City Map</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>3.3.1 Status of Hindus in the area.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>3.3.2 Definition of Scheduled Caste</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>3.3.3 History of Scheduled caste</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>3.3.4 Number of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Pakistan</i>	<i>62</i>

3.3.5 Number of Scheduled castes in Sindh	62
3.3.6 List of Scheduled Castes in Pakistan	63
3.4 .1 Current Status of Hindus in the area.....	63
3.4.1.1 Constitutional Status.....	64
3.4.3 Political Status.....	66
3.4.4 Educational Status	68
3.4.5 Economic Status.....	69
3.4.6 Social Status	70
3.4.7 Religious Status.....	70
Chapter Four: Bait Ussalam Matli.....	72
(The Centre of conversion and training for new converts).....	72
4.1 Introduction	73
4.2 Introduction to Bait Ussalam	73
4.3.1 Information provided by the management	75
4.3.2 How Scheduled Castes are converted	75
4.4 Experiences of three new Converts	80
Chapter Five: Fieldwork Incorporated into Lewis R. Rambo's Seven Stage Model	82
5.1 Introduction	83
5.2 Four Basic Categories of Converts	84
5.2.2 Converts of Convenience	86
5.2.3 Converts of Compulsion.....	86
5.2.4 Converts of Assimilation	87
5.3 Socio-Psychological Factors	89
5.3.1 Assimilation.....	90
5.3.2 Marginalization	92
5.4 Context.....	94
5.4.1 Social Background.....	95
5.4.2 Educational Background	96
5.4.3 Financial back Ground or Occupational Structure	96
5.4.4 Religious Back Ground	97

5.5 Crisis.....	98
5.5.1 Tyeps of crises that face converts in Shahdadpur	99
5.6 Quest & Encounter.....	100
5.6.1 Quest.....	101
5.6.2 Encounter.....	101
5.6.3 Converts behavior at Quest and Encounter Stage.....	102
5.6.4 Quest Resulted into Encounter.....	103
5.7 Interaction	103
5.7.1 Attitude of Converts at Interaction Stage	104
5.8 Commitment.....	104
5.8.1 Commitment towards Religion in Converts.....	105
5.9 Outcomes or Consequences.....	105
5.9.1 Consequences for Converts in Shahdadpur.....	106
5.10 Public Opinion.....	107
5.10.1 The response from participants:.....	109
Chapter Six: Analysis, Conclusion and Recommendations	116
6.1 Introduction	117
6.2 Analysis.....	117
6.2.1 Post 9/11 Phenomenon	117
6.2.2 Historical Process	117
6.2.4 Marginality.....	118
6.2.5 Cultural Crises	119
6.2.6. Intensification of the same status.....	119
6.2.7 Socialization or Assimilation	120
6.2.8 Factor Acting like Physical Force.....	120
6.2.9 Politics of Religious Conversion	120
6.2.10 Negligance on part of Government	121
6.2.11 Negligance of Religious Organization	121
6.2.13 Motivations.....	122
6.2.14 Importance of Relations	122
6.2.15 Islam as a Shelter	124

6.2.16 Encapsulation.....	124
6.2.17 Conversion or Inversion	125
6.2.18 Problem of Hindu Girls Marriages	126
6.2.19 Steps Taken by the Government	126
6.3 Conclusion.....	127
6.4 Recommendations	129
Bibliography.....	130

Abstract

The issues regarding Islam and Muslims have become hot debated specially after 9/11. Not only the coverage of such issues has increased in news but the style of framing these issues has changed as well. The issue of conversion of Hindus to Islam in Sindh is not the new matter, however the kind of importance, attention and coverage it got after 9/11 is uncommon. Until now media has projected it as matter of forced religious conversion and enthusiastic Muslims have been viewing the phenomenon from the other aspect.

As the matter of conversion to Islam in Sindh is a complicated issue, it requires the best possible efforts and method to investigate it. This ethnographic study has been conducted through semi-structured interviews and personal observations. Snowball sampling and purposive sampling methods have been applied to get the best possible results.

The researcher has changed the narrative of force as he has included those factors as well that are acting like physical force and compelling Scheduled Castes Hindus to change religion, these factors are social, political, psychological, financial, and spiritual.

The issue of religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh is more complicated than it is considered. It is recent and historical, it is religious and human, and it is multifaceted and multidimensional. It is more than the oversimplified projection of media. It is deep rooted in the history of low caste Hindus. This thesis is an effort to know the reality of this mass conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Sindh.

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my personal efforts and presentation of research work. Wherever other contributions have been mentioned, every possible effort has been made to show precise references. According to my information, no other thesis or the part of thesis has been produced so far on the topic. The work was done under the guidance of honourable Dr. Abdul Fareed Brohi.

Muhammad Wajid

Supervisor's Statement

As a Supervisor I confirm that this work is the result of efforts of this candidate and meets the criteria for submission to the best of my knowledge .

Dr Abdul Fareed Brohi

Date:

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Many individuals deserve my gratitude, but first of all I would like to thank to Allah Almighty Who blessed me with the power and persistence to complete this work.

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Chapter One: Introduction to Study

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation discusses the issue of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh and aims to know the real motives behind the nature of conversion. This issue changed to particularly Scheduled Castes issue when I started my field work and came to know that phenomenon of religious conversion is mostly related to Scheduled Caste Hindus and mass conversion among Scheduled Castes is being ignored, moreover issue is being oversimplified by merely projecting it as forced religious conversion. This study is delimited to Shahdadpur city, District Sanghar.

The issue of religious conversion of Hindus and specially Scheduled Castes, is not new. It finds its roots back in the history of sub-continent. Under British rule Christian missionaries converted large number of Scheduled Castes. These mass conversions of oppressed and indentured Hindus raised many moral questions not only about the intension of converts but on the approach of Christian missionaries as well.

The mass conversion of low caste Hindus to Christianity according to many scholars was due to their poor financial condition, their inhumane status in society, their absence in political sphere and their illiteracy. There was nothing to do with religion the way these oppressed people were accepting Christianity without clear understanding. Christopher Harding in his book **Religious Transformation in South Asia: The meaning of Conversion in Colonial Punjab** describes the conversion of poor rural people cynical and inappropriate when they were accepting Christianity for material gain.

“It is inappropriate to describe the conversion of these poor rural people labeled as rice Christian as religious at the time of mass conversion movement.”¹

¹ Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia: The Meaning of Conversion in Colonial Punjab* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

The history is repeating itself in Sindh, but this time we do not find any missionary activity behind it, however their social, financial and political status compelling them to find shelter . There is found in them a great desire to upgrade their social status, to get rid from the clutches of landlords, to educate their children and to get political, social, financial rights. They are trying to find the solution of all their problems in religious conversion. But the question is, do they get all what they aspire for.

Although the phenomenon of conversion is not new but the importance and attention this issue has gotten after 9/11 as a forced religious conversion is uncommon. Till now the issue of forced religious conversion is being discussed in the media but no one tried to know the phenomenon in real. On the bases of few cases of upper caste girls that attracted the media attention, the term of forced religious conversion was generalized that might be not true.

No one bothered to investigate the matter as it was related to the most oppressed section of society. Instead the media started coverage after some Hindu girls belonging to upper castes like (Rinkle Kumari), Faryal (Dr Lata) Hafsa Bibi and (Asha Kumari) Haleema Bibi accepted Islam and their cases were filed in the court by affected families. "Dr Ramesh Kumar president Pakistan Hindu Council filed a petition for the recovery of these Hindus girls."² As the these cases got the attention of media, other large number of cases of Hindu girls marriages to Muslims came on the surface. In this context provincial government not only amended the Hindu Marriage Act but also Passed the bill to stop forced religious conversion."³

There are two types of elements involved in the debate of conversion of Hindus in Sindh. On the one hand there is national and international media that is

² Azam Khan, "Rinkle, Dr Lata Chose to Live with Their Husbands," *Express Tribune*, April 18 2012.

³ Hafeez Tunio, "Sindh Assembly Passes Bill against Forced Religious Conversion," *The Express Tribune*, November 24 2016.

trying to prove these conversions as forced or coercive or at least the result of proselytisation and on the other hand there are enthusiastic Muslims who are seeing these conversion as spread of Islam being a true religion. The real issues and sub issues related to this phenomenon have been neglected.

Conversion to Islam is a rarely pen downned topic, the few works that have been done in this regard have been done mostly by the western scholars. Unfortunately the share of Muslim scholar on this topic is nominal. The Muslim scholars who have written regarding this issue can be counted on the fingertips. Moreover these few Muslim scholars have done their work in Western universities and their works are affected by more or less by the Western environment.

They have tried to apply all those sciences to the phenomenon that have been invented by modern social scientists. Although we can not deny outrightly the effectiveness and importance of sociological, psychological, theological, approaches while discussing the phenomenon of conversion. Yet each approach deal the phenomenon from a particular perspective and does not cover the whole. Moreover application of particular model or theory that is cultural specific Westerinize or Christianize it.

In this present work the researcher did not apply any scientific approach because any formulated model would be a hurdle rather than helpful to know the nature of conversions. Moreover the aim is to know the phenomenon in its true perspective instead of complicating it by applying any kind of approach.

However the researcher has felt it necessary to organise the complicated phenomenon of religious conversion. For this purpose a stage model can work as an organiser of work. The only model that the researcher found most appropriate for this purpose was Lewis.R.Rambo's stage model. This model is holistic and heuristic as well.

This model is flexible as it allows the writer to incorporate his work into it. The seven stages are more or less compatible with the process of every phenomenon of conversion.

Before conducting the fieldwork the researcher had a very simple idea about the phenomenon of conversion in Sindh. Yet when he started working he came to know the difficulties that were awaiting.

Primarily the plan was to cover the whole Sanghar district as mentioned in the proposal but later when the researcher realized the complicity of phenomenon, shortage of sources and time, he changed his mind and selected only one city of Sanghar (that is Shahdadpur) as a case study after approval of the supervisor and consultation with related researchers and the head of department .

As the phenomenon of conversion is mostly related to scheduled cast Hindus that is why the researcher has included a complete chapter about Scheduled Caste Hindus in Sindh. Because without knowing their macro context and current status in the area we will not be able to comprehend the reality behind their religious conversion.

the researcher has also taken liberty to Mention briefly the Bait Us Salam training centre Maatli. Although Maatli is a different district of Sindh and it does not fall in the field work area yet 1500 people converted through this centre and trained there can not be overlooked as this is the only centre that is working for teaching and training of the new converts.

Although the researcher could not get as much information as he wanted to, as the management of the centre were reluctant to provide any kind of data. However , whatever the management , people of the area and some converted families trained there and through news paper the researcher came to know about the process of conversion and training he made it the part of his thesis.

This is the humble effort from researcher to draw the attention of national and international media, people and authorities concerned to take this issu not

mare as a matter of religious conversion but as a human issue. The researcher can not claim to be comprehensive and inclusive on this issue as this is the multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon, however this work can be a first step to think for other religious scholars to write on this issue.

This ethnographic study consists of personal observations and semi-structured interviews. In the opinion of the researcher qualitative approach seems to be a better approach to deal with this phenomenon. It is holistic and heuristic approach. The phenomenon of conversion specially in the areas like Sindh where other social, financial, and political issues are involved can not be described through tables and diagrams. Quantitative method leaves a little room for researcher to cover the issue as a whole.

1.2 Research Question

The issue of Hindu religious conversion in Sindh is more complicated than it is considered. This phenomenon is mainly related to low caste Hindus. This thesis aims to investigate the matter of forced conversion of Hindus in Sanghar District (Shahdadpur City). However, after investigation the researcher has reached on the conclusion based on evidence and reasoning that it is not just the matter of forced or voluntary conversion. Investigation of this issue does not mean to get answer in yes or no but to know the nature of conversion. The current study aimed to find out the answers of the following statements :

If not physical force then at least other factors are working as a force and as motivation for conversion that follow as:

Phenomenon of religious conversion of Hindus in the area is deep rooted in their history.

Their disassociation from Hindu religion for long period

Dissatisfaction from Hindu religion

Disowning of low caste Hindus by the upper castes

Socialization of Hindu minority

Impacts of majority religion

Their earnest desire to upgrade their status

Considering Islam their ultimate shelter

While bringing on the surface the other causes of conversion the human issues related to this phenomenon like social, financial, and moral impacts of conversion on new converts are also the focus of this dissertation.

1.3 Objectives of this Study

There are many objectives for conducting this research:

The first one is to bring on the surface the real causes of conversion of Hindus to Islam in the area. There is not a single reason for conversion from one religion to another. Apart from this, the issue is related to our country and society and it needs much attention and right approach.

Secondly, to draw the attention of scholars who are writing about religious conversion to write about this matter too, so that the more aspects of this phenomenon could be brought on the surface.

Thirdly, to draw the attention of society and concerned authorities to take steps to improve the status of these oppressed and depressed, people.

Moreover, Researcher's aim is to know the experiences of converts before and after conversion. How do they look the society and think about the religion they converted to and what society thinks about the new convert and how it deals with them.

1.4 Rationale for this work

Although the matters regarding Islam and Muslims were there in the media since 9/11 and matter of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh was also being raised in this context. However, my interest in this topic (Forced Religious Conversion of Hindus in Sindh) arose in 2012 when the case of three Hindu girls Rinkle Kumari, (Faryal) Dr Lata (Hafsa Bibi) and Asha Kumari (Haleema Bibi) was filed in the court. According to petitioners, these girls were abducted and forcedly married and later forced to accept Islam. This case got unusual attention of the national and international media, later forced religious conversions of Hindus, abduction of Hindu girls and their forced marriages became the hot debated issues.

In 2013, more cases were reported and print and electronic media claimed that cases of forced religious conversion are in large number most of them going unreported. Afterwards Sindh Assembly passed a resolution regarding forced religious conversion and amended Hindu marriage act on November 24, 2016.

A report was published in Dawn March 20th, 2015 in which reporter claimed "last year 265 Hindu girls were forcibly converted to Islam, while Indian embassy received 3000 applications for migration."⁴ The news like this and many others inspired the researcher to probe the real matter regarding the phenomenon of conversion in Sindh.

On the one hand, media, NGOs, and affected families were claiming that every single conversion in Sindh is forced while on the other end enthusiastic Muslims were considering this entire situation an attraction towards Islam's eternal truth.

However, the researcher was looking this entire situation from another perspective because the researcher had already some knowledge about the Hindus

⁴ Faiza Ilyas, "265 Cases of Forced Conversion Were Reported Last Year Moot Told," *Dawn*, 20 March 2015.

living in the area that were mostly Scheduled Caste Hindus. Apart from this, the researcher had studied some books regarding their history of conversion to Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam.

Therefore, putting aside claims and formal judgements about the issue, the researcher decided to investigate the matter of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh in depth. the researcher tried to change the narrative of forced religious conversion. In his opinion, other factors working as force behind their conversion should also be considered as compelling force.

1.5 Important Aspects of this study

The matters related to religion have been important throughout human history. The first important aspect of this study is that it is current issue. Moreover, this topic is not only related to our country and society but to millions of Muslims. In wider context, this issue is a global issue.

This study is unique in the sense that according to researcher's information no other research has been conducted on this issue so far. Until now, the source of our knowledge regarding forced religious conversions of Hindus in Sindh was media. No scientific study has been conducted so far to know the reality. Apart from this in this dissertation the researcher not only tried to determine the nature of conversion but tried to bring on the surface all those human issues that are related to it.

This study has been done in the area, where Hindus belong mostly to low castes. It is very necessary to know the history of scheduled caste Hindus and their present status in the area.

The issue of religious conversion in Sindh is a complicated and multifaceted issue for this reason a qualitative ethnographic study has been conducted to collect the data. Any scientific approach with calculated results cannot deal with the issues like this. To reach out the coverts snowball-sampling

method has been adopted and to get deep knowledge of the phenomenon purposive sampling method has been applied.

Although no stage model or formulated model can describe the complicated phenomenon of religious conversion yet such model help researcher to organise the complicated phenomenon. Rambo's seven stages model has been incorporated into this work just to organise it.

1.6 Methodology and fieldwork

1.6.1 Sampling Methods and Participant Observation

The popular methods that have been mostly used in the past to know the phenomenon of religious conversion is to administer the prepared questionnaire and study of autobiographical documentries and personal experiences of conversions, sometime combined with interviews. Most often results were shown statistically showing person's background.

As the phenomenon of religious conversion increased and also number of religious groups the new studies came in this field, that tried to discuss the issue from psychological, socialological, and anthropological perspective. Most of the data produced has been analysed according to these theories. It simply mean that converts are catagorized according to these theories regardless of real phenomenon. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine the nature of conversion in Sindh and specially in the fieldwork area. The approach of the researcher is different in the sense, that he not only tried to know the nature of conversions but tried to bring on the surface human issues attached to the phenomenon.

When the researcher started his field work he realized that applying any formulated model or approach to this phenomenon will hide many aspects and real issues. For example psychological approach deals only with a perticular individual, socialogist try to find connection between conversion and social institutions, theoligions see only influence of God in the process. In the present

work the researcher kept in his mind all these limitations. However it is imperative to organise the complicated process of conversion and models work as an organiser, for this reason the researcher has selected the Lewis R.Rambo's Model to give his work order and organized structure.

Lewis R.Rambo's model has been created in Western environment and applied to inter-religious conversion. the researcher has tried to apply the model in non-Western and non-Christian environment and tried to make it compatible with the research work.

the researcher did not use any prepared questionnaire by realizing that it could be a hurdle rather than useful. As the majority of the converts in fieldwork area was uneducated. By realizing the complexity of the issue semi-structured indepth interviews combined with deep personal observations that are mostly used in qualitative research have been conducted to know the phenomenon. Unfortunately the researcher could not find secondary works regarding this issue so he depended completely on the primary sources, in depth interviews and personal observations.

By looking at the nature of conversions and converts researcher felt that mere snowball sampling and conversations with converts will not be sufficient to know this phenomenon because there were many informations regarding this issue that were impossible for converts to provide. For this purpose purposive sampling strategy was adopted.

Only those sections of the society were included in purposive sampling that were supposed to provide exact informations regarding the issue, for example journalists, advocates, religious scholars and educationists.

In the first stage only in depth interviews were conducted and questions arising in this phase were put before the participants of second stage.

The work is descriptive just to determine what actually happens in the conversion process, what change occurs regarding the behaviour of convert, his belief, and what is his experiences and what is his expectations.

Descriptive approach is the best approach to discuss the dynamic and multifaceted process of conversion. Theological and sociological debates are held to know about conversion. The nature of conversion can not be determined through these debates. But in actual the conversion is what convert says about it.

1.6.2 Primary Methods Fieldwork

The basic source of information in this thesis is semi-structured interviews as the other secondary sources of information were almost unavailable.

1.6.3 In-depth Interviews Design

Before conducting in depth interviews in order to make the study more meaningful the researcher studied many books on the topic and scholarly works in which in depth interviews were conducted. In depth interviews were designed in a way that they cover all the aspects of phenomenon. Standard research ethics and protocols were observed in the process. The interviews started by asking the participants about their previous life before Islam and what they feel after accepting Islam.

Each interviewee was given 30 minutes to 45 minutes to express his experiences regarding his conversion. Each person was informed that their interviews are being recorded and later these interviews will be transcribed for the thesis.

Permission was taken from each interviewee to mention his real name in the thesis. While exercising some control over the interview each interviewee was given freedom to express his ideas. Where needed the questions were put to keep interviewee focused and to the point. At some places interviewee was asked to go into more detail.

Through out the process open ended and non directive interviews were conducted just to give each interviewee an opportunity to relate his story in his own terms. The new question was put before interviewee untill it was assured that he has nothing to say more about the previous question.

1.6.4 Selection Method

Snowball sampling and purposive sampling methods were used to reach the participants. Fourty two participants participated in the process. Thirty two of them were converts to islam and other ten belonged to different spheres of life.

Converts were contacted through different channels. First of all religious scholars of the area were contacted and their help was sought to get informations about new converts. Secondly converts were requested to point out other converts.

Moreover some converts were contacted through mobile and their permission was gotton for interview. These contact numbers were gotton from those few Mosques and centeres where mostly people do get convert. Converts were asked to tell the place and time of their convenience and interviews were conducted there.

1.6.5 Interview Process

During the whole process the researcher remained objective and it was made sure to avoid personal comments and judgements. The researcher tried his best to present all his findings in truthful manner. The interviewee were valued as a person instead of considering them as source of data.

They were not forced to tell more than what they wanted to. Participants felt at home while interviewing. They were considering the researcher not mere a researcher but a person who is sympathetic and well wisher to them.

Subjects were interviewed at their work places and homes. If any participant was busy in something and not ready to give interview for the time being then appointment was taken for any other time. The whole process was facilitated by friends in the area and local clerics and some volunteers from

converts. It all helped in filling communication gap and to make converts more familiar.

1.6.6 Problems Encountered with Interviews

The main problem that encountered throughout the process was that majority of the participants belong to scheduled caste Hindus. These schedule castes mostly work in farms and fields of landlords. They make there temporary houses in the fields and shift their homes and work of places frequently. It was really hard to go behind each single convert and family.

Secondly the researcher was unable to approach any female convert because male family members did not allow it. Being scheduled caste most of the converts were shying to tell their caste. Later their casts were confirmed through other converts and sources. Many converts were not ready to reveal their past as well.

Many of the converts were not able to even understand the questions regarding religion as they had no basic human needs like food, dress and shelter.

1.6.7 The Subjects

The study consists of the interviews of 32 male members 27 of them were head of families and five others were single. Access of the researcher was only upto head of the family members. Total number of converts under the head of family members including females and children are 200.

As mentioned earlier that the whole interview process was consist of two phases, in first phase researcher conducted interviews through snowball sampling method. In the second phase interviews were conducted through purposive sampling method. The only purpose to conduct interviews with selected people was to get deep understanding of the issue. Many questions raised in the first phase that needed to be answer. Number of participant in this phase are 10.

In this part the researcher did not remain limited to Shehdadpur Taluka. Most participants were selected from Sanghar city. As the cases regarding forced

religious conversion and other minorities matter go to district court that is why people belonging to court were in a better position and able to give their assessment.

Like wise journalists and educationists both classes can understand and give their opinion regarding this matter better than any other class. I included only those religious scholars that were acquainted with the matter and were involved in converting many people and were facilitating converts and conversion process one or the other way.

1.7 Literature Review

As well as phenomenon of religious conversion is concerned one can find many literary works. Most of them have been done by Western Scholars and are cultural Specific and mostly deal with Christianity. The share of Muslim scholars in this regards is nominal and if someone has written on this topic his approach more or less is Western.

Phenomenon of religious conversion in different areas have different nature and requires different approach. If it is tried to bring in framed model or theory it definitely gets change. The phenomenon of religious conversion in the researcher,s field work area is also cultural specific. We can find the examples of such phenomenon in past. We can find many examples of Scheduled Caste conversion to Islam and Christianity for one or the other reason. Although we find some documented works regarding their conversion to Christianity but researcher could not find any documented work regarding conversion to Islam.

1.7.1 Introduction

This literature review has been divided into three sections: .

In the first section two books have been included that show how different writers have approached the religious conversion.

In the second section two books have been included that present the pathetic conditions of low-caste Hindus and their conversion to other religions.

In third section two book regarding conversion to islam have been included, but their relevance to this work is also due to application of Lewis Rambo's model in them.

1.7.2 Literature Review

After brief description of different approaches to religion the book that the researcher has selected for review is Lewis Rambo's Understanding of Religious Conversion. This book is considered the most comprehensive book ever written on the topic of religious conversion. This book includes every possible situation that a convert can pass through. His approach to religious conversion and conversion literature is inclusive comprehensive and dynamic and wide ranging.

He divided the whole process of conversion into seven stages. These stages are context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and outcomes. These stages are also heading of chapters. Advocates and their approaches have been described in two separate chapters. These chapters have been brought between two stages quest and encounter. Instead of applying different sort of sciences to religious conversion process he is in a favour of to see everything in his proper context.

Before Lewis Rambo the writers writing on the topic of religious conversion were describing the same thing with little bit difference and were unaware of the traversal. Lewis Rambo organised the whole literature and tried to include every possible dimension and aspect.

Despite this, that we are introduced with the summary of dynamic literature in his work. But still he has the shortcomings and limitations in his work. Actually the Lewis Rambo has organised and systemized the process conversion that has been very complicated throughout the ages, and the writers

writing on this topic have been trying to organise it but they did not succeed. The very first question that one can pose after reading this book is, can we enclose the process of conversion in a systematic procedure. Does the process of conversion happens in stages like described? The answer is, it happens very rarely or never.

Conversion process never goes smoothly and organised manner as described by Lewis Rambo, however some stages randomly fit to the process sometime. Religious Conversion of Hindus in Sind is the example of it.

But despite this his described model has been very helpful for scholars in this field to describe the complicated phenomenon of conversion. Many scholars have fitted their work or theory in the model of Lewis Rambo. The same I did in this dissertation, I used this model to organise the complicated phenomenon of religious conversion in my fieldwork area.

The second book that the researcher found most comprehensive and inclusive is Religious Conversion, Contemporary Practices and Controversies edited by Christopher Lamb and M. Darrol. This book is composed of many volumes. Different volumes describe religious conversion from different perspectives, different religions and different settings, written by renowned scholars of the field.

The purpose of this volume is to explore the different aspects and experiences of conversion, and its importance with in religious tradition. The volume has been divided into three different parts. The first part deals with the theories of Lewis Rambo, Charles E Farhadian, Donald Taylor, and Frank K Flinn.

Second part of this book examines conversion to different religions of the world like Buddhism, Chinese religion, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Islam and from Sikh tradition. Scholars and experts belonging to each religion present their point of views and describe their experiences about religious conversion.

Part Three contains four chapters that describe conversion within Christianity. In this part M. Darrol describes history of Christianity, Karla Poewe discusses St Augustine experience of conversion, Irvin Hexham describes development of South African churches and spread of Christianity in different cultures. Marcina Zitsai sees the conversion from Benedictine Vow. Part four contains seven chapters in this section writer discuss phenomenon of conversion in different religions in Western environment, the impacts of Western environment on these religions, adopting and adapting.

The efforts have been made by the editors of this volume to make it comprehensive and inclusive by including writings of scholars belonging to different religions and traditions. However the overall impression that leaves this volume in the minds of readers is, it is loosely constructed, collection of different experiences and point of views. Instead of reaching on certain conclusion, reader gets weird and confused.

Although this book helped, the researcher lot to understand the phenomenon of conversion discussed from different aspects. However, it seems that each writers intentionally or unintentionally have westernised the phenomenon. This aspect of this volume and other works leave a room for the researcher to explore the topic out of western environment. As the religious conversion of Hindus in Sind has its own specific context and the society and environment is, quite different from the western countries that is why it needs to be discussed from a different aspect.

The other books that commonly shares with this work the description of dilapidated situation of low caste Hindus is written *Religious Transformation in South Asia the Meaning of Conversion in Colonial Punjab* by Christopher Harding. This book focuses mainly on religious conversion of oppressed Hindus in North West India. The writer presents the comparative study of the approach of two Christian missions one belonging Belgian Catholic the other one Evanglical British Church. The writer sees the conversion of Hindus in large number the result of their social position and financial situation in the area.

TH: 18331

The writer criticizes the role of Christian missionaries, their way of propagating the religion and their dealing with these low caste oppressed Hindus, and giving them the title of Rice Christians instead of recognizing them as true Christians. In writer's point of view where the acceptance of Christianity by low caste Hindus is formal, the approach of missionaries towards these people is also formal. As these missions are interested just in increasing the number of converts and have no plan for their spiritual growth and converts are interested in raising their status and getting financial aid from missionaries.

The stories of Hindu converts in Sind are not different than these converts to Christianity. The only difference is that there is no agency or organisation is working to convert these Hindus, but their financial, social, and political position compells them to accept Islam. No one has bothered yet to investigate the matter objectively. Instead the national media presented the matter that is deep rooted in the history under the influence of international media as matter of forced religious conversion.

The other book that presents the same issue is, The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity (Conversion Story of South African Anglican Indian Christians) written by Arun Andrew Jhon. The book is about those indentured Hindus, who reached South Africa for labour work and became the target of Christian missionaries. Their plight was not different than as described by Christopher Harding in his book: Religious Transformation in South Asia the Meaning of Conversion in Colonial Punjab.

In this book the writer raises the moral questions regarding Church approach towards these oppressed and depressed Hindus. In writers views instead of taking these low caste Hindus into Christianity, Missionaries have uprooted them from their society. They are still in search of their identity. They are neither Christians nor Hindus. Moreover the discrimination that Missionaries show toward upper and lower caste Hindu is pathetic.

Along with this pathetic picture that writer presents, he is also hopeful for betterment in future. He finishes his work on hopeful end. He is of the view that low caste hindus should use their position and conversion as an opportunity not only to raise their status and heal their wounds but they should also become ambassidor for all depressed people in the world.

According to writer's view black depressed community in South Africa and these low caste Hindus share common fate, that is why they should cooperate with each other for better future. As the writer himself is a Canon and member of church that is why he avoided sharp criticism and despite bitter realities he tried to minimise the level of bitterness by including hopeful notes and wishes for future.

Christopher Harding's and Arun Andrew John's works clearly show that there is dire need to work in this field. Till now only low caste hindus conversion to Christianity has been brought on the surface. The space to bring low caste hindus conversion to Islam on the surface is still empty.

The other book that drew attention for review is Conversion to Islam the case of Dusun Ethnic Group in Brunei Darussalam written by Asiyah Az Zahra Ahmed. This work is her thesis for the degree of PhD. The book has been divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter includes, introduction, rationale for study, main themes, objectives, research question, importance, and chapter organization.

Second chapter contains introduction to Brunei Darussalam and Dusuns tribe the whom writer is writing about. The demographic details of country and tribes area are also the part of this chapter. Dawah activities and its effects on ethnic tribes and religion have been described.

Third Chapter describes literature review and Fourth chapter is about methodology and research design.

In Fifth chapter writer has incorporated the process of conversion in Rambo's seven-stage model. She has tried to formulate the model in her own way

by presenting it out of Christian and western environment. She has described the model according to specific environment of the country and requirement of conversion process.

In chapter Six, she has made the analysis of sequence of all stages. According to writer sequence of stages, vary country to country and religion to religion. Each stage has been discussed separately in the context of proselytising-religion and majority- religion.

The last chapter contains conclusion and analysis. This work is relevant to my thesis is only in this regard that it also deals with the converts to Islam, and writer has also used the model of Lewis Rambo to organise the thesis and to use it out of Christian and western context. However, in the environment and context this model has been used is quite different than in which I am going to apply it.

Another work regarding conversion to Islam in which writer Maha Al-Qawidi has applied the seven-stage model of Lewis Rambo with some modifications is, Understanding the stages of conversion to Islam. In this work writer has incorporated the Concept of Hidayah, Fitrah, and has included Quran as factor to accept Islam.

The book has eight chapters. The first chapter presents the Background Information, Research Question, Objectives, Main Features of the work, and Organisation of Thesis.

Second chapter covers the topics like, Muslim Population, Younger Generation, Role of Mosques, Dawa Activities, Problems with Dawa, and Response to Modernity.

Third chapter studies the Literature Review and Fourth chapter studies Methodological Approach. In Fifth chapter writer applies Context, Crises, and Quest stages to conversion process.

In chapter six, writer applies two more stages of Rambo's model, Interaction and Commitment and describes, Role of Islamic Missionaries, Role of

Quran in Conversion, Key Attractions to Islam, Conversion Motifs, Overview of the Conversion Experiences of the Current Convert Sample and Convert's Perception of Islam.

Chapter Seven studies the next stage, Consequences. Writer describes Variety of Consequences, Discontinuation or Socialization, Media's effects on the reaction of families and friends , Problems the Converts Share, and Wider Horizons for the Converts.

Chapter 8 discusses Major Themes and Issues, Finding Related to Rambo's Stage Model, Comparison with Kose's work, Role of Quran, Relations with Established Muslim Community and suggestions for further research.

The work has been done on the converts who have converted from Christianity to Islam. They have spent most part of their lives in British society. The type of questions, their way of answering, their educational background, their family background and environment in which they live make the whole work Anglo Centric, while the Hindu community in Sind has different educational, social, financial, and historical background.

1.8 Organization of Thesis

The researcher has organised the thesis in the following manner.

The body of work contain chapter 1 to 6. These chapter are followed by abstract, and acknowledgements. In the end bibliography appendices and bibliography have been given.

Chapter one contains following topic, Back ground Information, Statement of the Problem, Research Objectives, Rational for this study, Important Aspects of this study, Methodology and fieldwork, Literature Review, Organisation of Thesis.

Second Chapter Forced Religious conversion starts with the definition of religious conversion and whether the primary source of Islam Quran has

mentioned it or not. After defining forced religious conversion I have described under next two cosecutive headings that why Islam and Pakistan have specially been attached to this phenomenon. Then the real concept of Jihad, and impacts of 9/11 on the issue of forced religious conversion have been presented, afterwards presentation of this issue by media has been described. I have also included in this chapter the standpoint of Quran (The first and basic Islamic source) about forced religious conversion

Chapter three contains introduction to study area, demographic details and the current status of Hindus in the area. The chapter starts with introduction to the fieldwork area and its demographic details

The current status of Hindus in Sindh and Sanghar contains their constitutional, political, educational, financial and social background.

Chapter Four discusses Bait Ussalam (Centre of Training for New Hindu Converts). How this centre is working and what is the common in strategy of this Centre with Christian Missionarie worked in India under British Rule. Moreover the experiences of some converts trained in the Center have been described in the end.

In Chapter Five the researcher has incorporated his work in Rambo's Seven stages Model. the researcher has used this model just as an organizer. the researcher has I completed first part of my field work through snow ball sampling. The second part of this chapter contains the interviews through purposive sampling.

The last chapter includes Analysis conclusion and recommendations. The work has been analysed through most popular approach in this type of research that is called thematic analysis. In the end apendices and bibliography have been given.

Chapter Two: Forced Religious Conversion

2.1 Introduction

Scholars describe many motives of religious conversion, forced religious conversion is one of them. This chapter aims to provide insight regarding recently raised issue of forced religious conversion in Sindh. Definitely the forced conversion of Hindus in Sindh (not necessarily physical) traces its roots back in the history. But the recent projection of the issue by media has its specific context and that is mostly related to 9/11 and its overall impacts. That is why it is very much necessary to know the circumstances in which this issue arose.

Before the researcher proceeds to discuss this issue, he would like to give a brief description of definition of religious conversion, religious conversion in the Quran, afterwards he shall define forced religious conversion and why this issue is specific to Islam and Pakistan. Moreover impacts of 9/11 on the issue. Apart from this the misunderstood and misinterpreted concept of Jihad and presentation of the issue by media and the Quran's (the first and basic Islamic source) standpoint on the issue of forced religious conversion. All the topics mentioned above will definitely give the reader an insight into the issue.

2.2 Religious Conversion

Religious conversion has many aspects. Sometime it is experienced within the same religion through increased religious devotion, and sometime it is experienced by replacing one religion by the other. Religious conversion occurs in different circumstances in different ways with different results. From the early decades of 20th century religious conversion has been a hotly debated issue. Social scientists built their own theories about the phenomenon, and religious scholars present their own views about it.

Social scientists were of the view that religious conversion has nothing to do with God or divine, it has human origin, they sought the social and psychological reasons behind the phenomenon, while religious scholars were opposing empirical science's arguments to deal with the non-empirical realities.

In the result of these debates many theories about religious conversion presented from both sides, and many definitions of religious conversion were introduced. But here in this dissertation my purpose is not to present the theories neither it is possible to include all definitions about it. Only those few definitions are being included that are close to general understanding of phenomenon.

According to Marriam Webster Dictionary, religious Conversion means:

“The act or process of changing from one religion, belief, political party etc., to another.”⁵

Maha Al Qawidi quotes in her book *Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam: The Voices British Converts* the following views of Rosemary Goring about religious conversion.

“A change in affiliation from one religion to another, or transition from non-involvement to belief in a religion.”⁶

Further she quotes the views of Jhon Strachan regarding religious conversion in which he narrates that “as all the nations have same blood in their veins and breath in nostril like wise the same spirit in souls. “God has made all men with a capacity of conversion, with possibilities of response to highest call.”⁷

Lewis R. Rambo regards religious conversion “from non involvement to belief and changing of affiliation from one religion to another or changing position from one orientation to another within religion”⁸

⁵ Definition of Conversion for English Language Learners , Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conversion> accessed date August 15, 2016

⁶Maha Al-Qawidi, "Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam: The Voices of British Converts" (Leeds, 2002), 42.

⁷ibid., 43.

⁸Lewis.R.Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2.

2.2 .1 Religious Conversion and Quran

As the thesis is discussing the issue of conversion to Islam, it is essential to know, whether the basic source of Islam, Quran mentions the religious conversion.

Quran uses the word *Aslama* for accepting Islam which simply means to submit, this word is also the origin of word Muslim. Maha Al-Qawidi is of the view that "to understand Islam well we only need to understand the meaning of this word, the word Islam has a power behind it unlike other religions, the word Islam demonstrate an action of heart and limbs as well." ⁹

Apart from the usage of the term submission in the Quran, the submission is not specific to Muslims, but Quran uses this word for all prophets. Especially the word submission has been used many times for prophet Ibrahim, as the following verses indicates.

"When his Lord said to him Submit, He said, I submit to the Lord of all the worlds"¹⁰

At another place Quran says

"Struggle for seeking (the pleasure of Allah), a struggle that is owed to Him. He has chosen you and did not impose any hardship on you in the religion, the faith of your father Ibrahim. He (Allah) named you as Muslims earlier and also in this (Quran), so that messenger become witness to you and you become witness to other people"¹¹

In another verse Quran says

⁹Al-Qawidi, "Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam: The Voices of British Converts," 64,65.

¹⁰ 2:131

¹¹ 22:78

“Of course who so ever submit his face to Allah and is good in deeds will have his reward with his Lord.”¹²

Above mentioned verses show that submission does not mean to adopt a particular religion, rather it means the acceptance of Devine orders embodied in the lives of all Prophets.

2.3 Forced Religious Conversion or Religious Coercion

Forced religious conversion and religious coercion, are the terms that are used interchangeably. These two terms show the negative use of force against the people of other religions or within religion.

The very common definitions of forced religious conversion, Religious coercion, and aggressive proselytization are given below.

According to one of the definition

“Forced Conversion mean to adopt a different belief system due to some threat. The convert may freely accept the new religion or may seceretly continue old belief and practices, apperantly following this religion”¹³

According to another definition

“A forced conversion is adoption of belief system to avoid punishment and harm. These may be job loss social isolation or imprisonment physical harm or death.”¹⁴

The term religious coercion denotes the imposing of religious practices on other people within or out of religion.

¹² 2:112

¹³ Forced Conversion, Retrieved from <http://aus.libguides.com/apa/apa-no-author-date> (accessed August 18, 2016)

¹⁴ Forced Conversion, Retrieved from www.gutenberg.us/article/eng/Forced-Conversion accessed date June August 2, 2016

T. Gerny Gunn in his Report "The Complexity of Religion in Determining Refugee Status" presents two types of religious coercion.

The most common form of religious coercion is that is directed towards one or many religions. The target of this coercion may be believers of faith, community or group of communities. It also may be the efforts to interrupt worship or destroy worship places or symbols.

The second form of religious coercion that is mostly ignored is, that is imposing the rules and religious acts by the state or group on the public under them.¹⁵

After making definition of forced religious conversion now, we look what is special connection between Islam and forced religious conversion and why only Islam is attached to forced conversion more than any other religion.

Likewise, attachment of Islam with forced religious conversion should be seen in current situation. Because while discussing the historical background of any issue we cannot ignore the way, it is being projected in the recent world. As Beril Dideoglu in her article, *Fighting Terrorism and Intervention: Paradoxes and Misunderstandings* writes.

"The current global system developed in the result of failure of bio-polar structure. The new situation can not be explained in the light of previous system."¹⁶

¹⁵ T.Gerny Gunn, "The Complexity of Religion in Determining Refugee Status," (New York: UNHCR, 2002).

¹⁶ Beril Dedeoglu, "Fighting Terrorism and Intervention:Paradoxes and Misunderstandings," (Istanbul: Glatasaray University, 2005), 1.

We need to assess the recent issue in the context of current international environment.

2.4 Forced religious Conversion and Islam

The sword theory according to which Islam spread by force and sword existed until the end of nineteenth century. After Arnold wrote the book, *Preaching of Islam*, this theory replaced by many other theories like, convenience theory, social economic and political factors behind spread of Islam, relief from Jizyah (poll tax), Interaction of Muslim immigrants with native people, taking benefits from ruling class and Islam as a social liberator force.

The scene changed once again after 9/11, Islam and Muslims are at the target of media. The negative projection of Islam and Muslims has created among in West Islamophobia. According to study published in a journal the main features of Islamophobia are following.

1. Islam is seen rigid, static, unresponsive to new realities.
2. Islam is seen as other not effecting any and nor effected by any other culture.
3. Islam is seen as low grade brutal, ridiculous, oboriginal and incouraging begotry.
4. Islam is seen as voilent, hostile supporter of terrorism, promoter of clash of civilizations.
5. Islam is seen as imposer of political ideology on others.
6. Criticism by Islam is rejected and unconsidered.
7. Hostility towards Islam is justification of hotility towards Muslims even their exclusion from mainstream society.

8. Hostilities towards Muslims are seen as natural and normal.¹⁷

This report published in 1997. The intensity came in Islamophobia after 9/11 is immeasurable. This phenomenon of Islamophobia presented Islam and Muslims as promoter of forced religious conversion.

2.5 Forced Religious Conversion and Pakistan

As Pakistan was focus of world media during all these years, incidents related to religion were minutely being observed and hysteria was on the peak, some incidents of religious conversion of Hindu girls in Sindh got attention of media. Although the issue of conversion is not new in Sindh but it is mostly related to indentured, oppressed and ignored class (Scheduled Castes) that is why it could not get attention in the past. However, after coverage of upper caste Hindu girls conversion by media the overall issue of religious conversion came in limelight.

2.6.1 Misinterpreted and Misunderstood Concept of Jihad

The sword theory of spread of Islam is totally based on the notion that Islam spread by force. Critics consider jihad a tool of forced religious conversion. Sometime it is misunderstood and sometime it is misinterpreted purposely. This misrepresentation is not only on the part of Western media but ignorant fanatics misrepresent Jihad as well.

2.6.2 Misinterpretation of Jihad

Misinterpretation by ignorant Muslims is not less than misrepresentation by West. As Louay Fatoohi, rightly says in the introduction to his book Jihad in Quran in chapter six.

¹⁷Zahra Alizadeh, "Analysis of the Phenomenon of Islamophobia and Ways to Deal with It," no. 2016 (2016).

The misinterpretation of armed Jihad reflects the misunderstanding and ignorance of the rules that are key to fighting in Islam. The concept of Jihad has been misinterpreted by some as a means to establish Islamic State and by some to retaliate against aggression. This term is also used by various groups to elaborate their own role in armed struggle. Many have failed to understand the situation in which armed Jihad is compulsory.¹⁸

2.6.3 Misrepresentation by West

Western media has not only misrepresented or misunderstood Jihad but they have made these misunderstandings and misrepresentations the essence of Islam. This essentialist view of Islam has created Islamophobia in the society. As it has been mentioned in one of the reports published by Monash University of Melbourne, "This static depiction of Islam and Muslims shows them as immature even backward, racial or foreign groups who need to be coped or endured."¹⁹

This presentation of Islam, Muslim, and Jihad has created the notion especially in the West that Islam has spread through sword and people are being forced to accept it.

2.7 Overall Impacts of 9/11 on Islam and Muslim World

Recent debate of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh is the continuation of the media campaign that has engulfed the whole world and especially the West in the shape of Islamophobia. The notion of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh is one of the impacts and after-effects of 9/11.

¹⁸ Jihad Between Misunderstanding and Misrepresentation, Retrieved from <http://www.quranicstudies.com/jihad/jihad-between-misunderstanding-and-misrepresentation> accessed date 31 August 2016

¹⁹Dr. Bianca Smith Dr. Shahrem Akbar Zadeh, "The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media," (Melbourne: Monash University, 2005), 4.

Following Report of BBC shows the intensity of islamophobia after 9/11.

“According to FBI hate crimes against Muslims in US have increased upto 1700% in 2001. In 2000 hate crime were 28 that increased upto 481 in 2001”²⁰

This islamophobia is not specific to any country or region; it exists everywhere with the difference of level. The overall impacts of this Islamophobia are not limited for the Muslims to any specific field; it is affecting them in social, political, and financial spheres. Media is the driving force behind this Islamophobia. The recent issue of forced religious conversion of Hinds in Sindh and media campaign in wider context is the part of ISlamophobia run by international media. Our national media not free and sovereign enough, it cannot detach itself from the world media and issues raised on it.

2.8 Presentation of the issue by media

Under the topic, the role of media will be discussed that how media presented the issue of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh. In the following lines, different news, reports, editorials of National, and International newspapers regarding forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh will be presented. As well as the projection of matters regarding Islam and Muslim is concerned both national and International media are depicting the same picture .

Dr Basem Al Atom truely said in one of Conference about Media.

“The media’s problem is operatinal one. Only that material is published that attracts the attention and get sells. The physical conflicts are given priority over politicla confilicts. When discussing Muslims and Islam media focuses on extremism. Extremism is indeed importanat and

²⁰ Retrieved from <http://new.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3154170.stm> accessed 2 May 2016

dangerous and exists in many religions but its existence in Islam is very rare. ”²¹

Following reports of different national and international newspapers show that the issue of forced religious conversion came on the surface only after 9/11. Although the issue has its deep roots in the history. This presentation of the issue by media not only presents the way media projected this issue but also demands investigation of the issue.

In the following some of the news, Reports, editorials are being presented.

In Express Tribune 13 December 2011 Under the Heading 37 Hindus Converted to Islam in Matli report published.

In the last 22 month 93 families from different districts reached Bait-us-Salam(Madrassa in Matli). They belong to Bheel community Dalits or untouchables. Most of them are farmers and belong to Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Mirpur Khas and Sanghar. A new convert Abdullah Shaikh told that we were neither Muslims nor Hindus We had no knowledge of Hinduism he told that he has not seen his sacred book yet and he does not know what it is called. He further added that both Hindus and Muslims attitude towards them is humiliating.²²

From the Express Tribune 1st January 2012 under the heading, Perils of Faith Human Rights Commission of Pakistan warn of Rise in forced conversion. The news paper reported that,

Younger girls and women are being kidnapped and converted to Islam. The girls even younger than 15 years are kidnapped and claimed that

²¹ Basem Al Atom, "The Phenomenon of Islamophobia in Modern European Cultures" (paper presented at the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities, Turkey Istanbul, 2014).

²² Sameer Mandhro, "Mass Conversion for Matli, S Poor Hindus, Lakshmi Lies in Another Religion," *The Express Tribune*, January 21 2012.

they are adults and have converted with their free will. It also reported that Hindu community is helpless on this issue.²³

From the Express Tribune 15 March 2012 under the heading Hindu girls are being kept forcibly in madrassahs, the news paper reported.

“Pakistan Peoples Party’s MNA Dr Azra Fazl claimed that after forced marriage with Muslim men, young girls are kept in religious seminaries.”²⁴

From the Indian Express August 23 2012, under the heading Pakistan told of India’s concerns over abduction of Hindu girls “India expressed her serious concerns over the issue of abduction of Hindu girls and their marriage to Muslim men”.²⁵

From the Dawn 13 May 2014 Under the heading Five Thousand Hindus are migrating to India every year. “Dr Ramesh Kumar Wankvani told in National Assembly that among many reasons of migration to India, forced conversion is one of them.”²⁶

From the Dawn 17 February 2014 Under the headline, Hindu Community Irked by Forced Conversion reported

Rinkle Kumari’s Uncle Raj Kumar in a seminar held in Karachi press club under the topic Hindus in Pakistan issues and resolutions. While presenting a little six year old girl Jumna on the stage he claimed that she

²³ "Perils of Faith: Hrcp Warns of Rise in Forced Conversion of Hindus," *Express Tribune*, 1st January 2012.

²⁴ Zahid Gishkori, "Hindu Girls Being Forcibly Kept in Sind Madrassas" *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2012.

²⁵ "Pakistan Told of India's Concern over Abduction of Hindu Girls," *Indian Express*, August 23 2012.

²⁶ Shazia Hassan, "Hindu Community Irked by Forced Conversion," *Dawn*, 13 May 2014.

along with her ten year old sister Pooja was also being forced to change their religion.²⁷

From the Dawn 25 January 2015 Under the heading Migration Caused by Forced Conversion May Jolt Sindh's Agro Economy, reported that "From 2000 to 2012 729 Hindus, 617 Christians, 385 Ahmadis, 3 Sikhs, 2 Kalash and 33 others belonging to other religion converted to Islam forcibly."²⁸

From the Dawn 20 March 2015 under the headline 265 Cases of Forced Conversion reported last year Moot told, the newspaper reported that "265 cases of forced conversion were reported in the country last year, while Indian Embassy received 3000 applications for migration to India."²⁹

From International The News 15 July 2015, under the headline Thousand girls converted to Islam by force every year, the newspaper reported that "1000 girls are converted to Islam every year most of them belong to Hindu or Christian community."³⁰

From the Express Tribune 6 June 2016, under the headline MP says that More Forced Conversion are going on than reported, the newspaper reported that, "There are no authentic figures of forced conversion in the country. However according to media reports near about 1000 girls are converted forcibly every year."³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hassan Mansoor, "Migration Caused by Forced Conversion May Jolt Sindh's Agro Economy," *ibid.*, 25 January 2015.

²⁹ Faiza Ilyas, "265 Cases of Forced Conversion Were Reported Last Year Moot Told," *ibid.*, 20 March.

³⁰ Shahid Husain, "1000 Girls Forcibly Converted to Islam in Pakistan Every Year," *International the News*, 15 July 2015.

³¹ Irfan Ghauri, "More Forced Conversions Are Going on Than Reported Says Mp," *The Express Tribune*, 6 June 2016.

Al Jazeera on 18 August 2014 reported that Forced conversions torment Pakistan's Hindus. It presented number of stories of forced conversion of Hindu girls after their abduction. One of them follows as:

“About two months ago a Muslim buisness man approached Dharmo Soochi and demanded from him the hand of his daughter on gun point.”³²

Voice of America 18 March 2016 reported that “Hindu community complains that there is abduction of Hindus girls under the legal cover of marriages and conversions who and their families are threatened to give false statements in courts.”³³

The Express Tribune 6th February 2016 under the heading Plight of Hindus the MP of Ruling party claims that forced conversion continue in Sindh.

“A law maker from the ruling party PMLN claimed that teen agers and women are being forced to change their religion despite clear instructions of Prime Minister.”³⁴

These are some of the reports that show how the issue of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sind is being presented.

2.9.1 Forced Conversion and Quran

It would definitely raise a question in the minds of readers that why do researcher presenting forced conversion and Quran while he has already discussed the forced conversion. Being a Muslim researcher I think it is very important to present the stance of Quran, the basic Islamic source about terrorism and forced

³² Forced Conversion Torment Pakistan's Hindus <http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2014/08-201479815524630505.html> accessed August 25 2016

³³ Pakistani Hindus Complain of Forced Conversion of Teen Age Girls
<http://www.voanews.com/3243234.html> accessed August 25, 2016

³⁴ Qadeer Tanoli, "Plight of Hindus: Ruling Party Mp Says Forced Conversions Continue in Sindh," *The Express Tribune*, 6 February 2016.

religious conversion regardless of misrepresentation of and misinterpretation by fanatics inside and outside of Islam. I think it necessary for every Muslim researcher and scholars to present the real and undistorted face of Islam regardless of fears of biasness.

Quran is not the only source to know Islam, the life of Prophet Muhammad and History of Islam are also two other main sources to know how Islam spread and what is Islam's stand point regarding preaching and forced conversion but these two sources are so broad and vast in there magnitude that they require separate books to describe them. It is almost impossible for researcher to describe these both sources in the present thesis. There brief mentioning will be injustice and confusing for the readers. That is why I have selected only one source, that is first basic and most important.

It is the first and primary source for every Muslim to practice religion. It is the basic and direct source to know Islam. The Muslims throughout the world belong to different sects and schools of thought. They have difference of opinion on different aspects of religion. But as well as basic beliefs and Quran and Hadith are concerned these are agreed upon. Although some people question the authority of Hadith, but such people are very few. And they have their own point of view about hadith. But no one questions the authority of Quran.

Where Quran is primary source for muslims to practice religion it is also primary source for those who present islam as violent religion. They qoute many verses from quran out of context to show that terrorist get inspiration from these verses, but ignore those large number of verses that clearly give the message of peace, non-violence, forbearance, patience, gentleness in preaching the religion.

2.9.3 Verses of Holy Quran Negating Use of Force in Matters of Religion

Selected verses from the Holy Quran negating forced religious conversion are being presented. These verses clearly indicate that Quran clearly negates use of force in matter of religion directly or indirectly.

2.9.3.1 No Compulsion in Religion

“There is no compulsion in faith. The correct way has become distinct from erroneous. Now whoever rejects Taghut (the rebel the Satan) and believes in Allah has a firm grasp on strongest ring that never breaks. Allah is all hearing all knowing.”³⁵

“Had your lord willed all those on earth will have believed altogether, would you then compel people so that they become believers.”³⁶

The first verse is very clear in words in second verse the prophet has been told that different beliefs have been decreed by God. And to compel the people for religion and or to become too much worry about their disbelief is against the wisdom of God.

2.9.3.2 Preaching with Wisdom

Following verses show that prophet have been asked to preach with wisdom and argue with them in best manners. The verse says that preaching with wisdom is not only for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but for followers as well.

“Say this is my way, I call people to Allah with full perception, both I and my followers. Pure is Allah and I am not among those who associate partners with Allah.”³⁷

“Invite people to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel and argue with them in best manners. Surely your Lord knows best the one who deviate from His way and He knows best the one who are on right path.”³⁸

³⁵ 2:256

³⁶ 10:99

³⁷ 12:108

³⁸ 16:125

2.9.3.3 Prohibition from transgression and violence

Following verses clearly prohibit all Prophets and their followers from transgression and violence in matter of religion. It has been told that patience is the best option.

“So when anyone commits aggression against you, be aggressive against him in the like manner, as he did against you and fear Allah and be sure that Allah is with the God fearing.”³⁹

“And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to measure you were harmed. But if you opt for patience it is definitely much better for those who are patient.”⁴⁰

“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, and do not transgress and Allah does not like transgressors.”⁴¹

“The recompense of evil is evil like it. Then who forgives and opt for compromise has his reward with Allah. Surely Allah does not like unjust.”⁴²

2.9.3.4 Sanctity of Human Life

Following verses indicate that Quran puts stress on the sanctity of human life regardless of religion. There is no room for violence, aggression and intolerance.

“For this reason we decreed for the children of Israel, that who ever killed a person not in retaliation for a person killed nor for (as punishment) spreading disorder on the earth is as he has killed the whole humankind. And whosoever saves a life of a person is as he has saved all human kind.”⁴³

“Do not kill any person the life of whome is sanctified by Allah except for a just reason”⁴⁴

³⁹ 2:194

⁴⁰ 16:126

⁴¹ 2:190

⁴² 42:40

⁴³ 5:32

⁴⁴ 17:33

“And do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity except for right cause”⁴⁵

2.9.3.5 Concept of Tolerance in Quran

The following verses that there is no place for intolerance in Islam and in matters of religion.

“Say o people of the book, come to a word that common between us and you. That we worship none but Allah and we should associate nothing with Him”⁴⁶

“We make no division between any of His Messenger.”⁴⁷

“If the tilt toward peace you too should also tilt towards it”⁴⁸

“O you who believe be steadfast (obeying the commands) of Allah and witness for justice. Malice against people should not prompt you to avoid doing justice.”⁴⁹

2.9.3.6 Concept of Human Unity in Quran

“O mankind we have created you from a male and female and made you into races and tribes so that you may identify one another.”⁵⁰

2.9.3.7 Messenger are Warners

The following verses show that all the prophets are just warners they did not come to impose their religion on others.

“And if you reject me then many nations have rejected their prophets before you. The messenger has no more obligation than to convey his message clearly.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ 6:151

⁴⁶ 3:64

⁴⁷ 2:285

⁴⁸ 8:61

⁴⁹ 5:8

⁵⁰ 49:13

“If you will obey him (Prophet) you will get the right path. The duty of Messenger is no more than to convey his message clearly.”⁵²

“If they submit they will be on the right path. Yet if they turn back then you have only to convey the message.”⁵³

2.9.3.8 Messengers are reminders not imposers or guardians

In the following verses it has been clearly told that the purpose of all messengers and prophet Muhammad PBUH is just to remind humanity the message of God.

“We know all well what they say and you are not sent as one who compels them. So exhort, through the Quran the one who fears my warning.”⁵⁴

“Your people have rejected it (the Quran) while it the whole truth. Say I am not appointed as a taskmaster over you.”⁵⁵

“So (o Prophet) keep on preaching. You are only a preacher.”⁵⁶

“You are not a taskmaster setup over them.”⁵⁷

“The duty of Our Messenger is only to convey the message.”⁵⁸

“And say the truth is from your Lord. Now who ever so wills may believe and who ever so wills may deny.”⁵⁹

⁵¹ 29:18

⁵² 24:54

⁵³ 3:20

⁵⁴ 50:45

⁵⁵ 6:66

⁵⁶ 88:21

⁵⁷ 88:22

⁵⁸ 5:99

⁵⁹ 18:29

Prophet Noah addresses to his people that has been mentioned in the following verse in which it has been told that Messenger's duty is to make the truth clear not to impose it.

"He said O my people tell me if am on clear path from my Lord and he has bestowed mercy upon me fro Himself, which is hidden from your sight, shall we then impose it upon you by force, while you are averse to it."⁶⁰

"If Allah willed they would not have associated. We have not appointed you (O Muhammad) as a guard over them. Nor are you a taskmaster over them"⁶¹

"Your Lord knows you best. If He so wills He will have mercy on you, and if He so will He will punish you, and We did not send you (o Prophet) to become responsible for them."⁶²

"If the turn away then We did not send you (O Prophet) supervisor over them. You are not responsible but for conveying the message."⁶³

2.9.3.9 Gentleness in speech

In Quran Allah has commanded all prophets to speak with others even with their enemies gently.

"So speak to him (Pharoh) in soft words. May be he accept advice and fears (Allah)."⁶⁴

"Invite people to the way of Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them with the best of manners."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ 11:28

⁶¹ 6:107

⁶² 17:54

⁶³ 42:48

⁶⁴ 20:44

⁶⁵ 16:125

A graceful word and forgiving is better than charity followed by causing hurt.”⁶⁶

So (O prophet) it is through mercy from Allah that you are gentle to them (to your companion). Had you been rough and hard hearted they would have dispersed from around you.”⁶⁷

2.9.3.9 Patience

In Quran there are 90 verses that order prophets and their followers to have patience through thick and thin. Some of the verses have been presented here. These verses clearly show that instead of imposing or forcing others or intolerance impatience believers should observe patience.

“And seek assistance through patience and prayers.”⁶⁸

“And be patient and your patience is bestowed by none but Allah, do not be grieve over them and do not be in distress what they devise.”⁶⁹

“O prophet be patient about the decision of your Lord, because you are in front of our eyes.”⁷⁰

“So o prophet observe patience and resolute messengers observed patience and be not in haste about them.”⁷¹

“So remain patient with your Lords judgement.”⁷²

“And if one observes patience and forgiveness, it is of course one of the courageous conduct.”⁷³

⁶⁶ 2:263

⁶⁷ 3:159

⁶⁸ 2:153

⁶⁹ 17:127

⁷⁰ 52:48

⁷¹ 46:35

⁷² 68:48

“O my son establish Salah and bid fair and forbid the unfair and observe patience on what befalls you. Surely this is among the matters of determination.”⁷⁴

2.9.3.10 Forbearance

These verses of Quran teach forbearance and tolerance. There are lot of verse that enjoin forbearance on believers only some of them are being presented.

“And the servants of Rehman (All merciful Allah) are those who walk on earth humbly and when ignorant people speak to them they reply peacefully.”⁷⁵

“Good and evil are not equal, repel evil with what is best.”⁷⁶

“Surely Ibrahim is forbearing very patient, very turning to Allah.”⁷⁷

“Repel Evil with that which is best.”⁷⁸

“the one who spends for Allah’s sake in prosperity and in adversity. And those who control anger and forgive people.”⁷⁹

⁷³ 42:43

⁷⁴ 31:17

⁷⁵ 25:63

⁷⁶ 41:34

⁷⁷ 11:75

⁷⁸ 23:96

⁷⁹ 3:134

Chapter Three: Introduction to Study Area and Status of Hindus

3.1Introduction

This chapter includes introduction to study area, demographic details and status of Hindus in the area. The inclusion of specifically scheduled caste Hindus has many reasons. First of all the large number of Hindus in my fieldwork area belong to Scheduled Castes. Secondly the phenomenon of religious conversion exists mostly in Scheduled Castes all over the Sindh and in my fieldwork area as well. All 32 converts under study belong to scheduled castes. Moreover after visiting Bait Ussalm (the only Center in Matli District working to convert people and later to train and educate them) and after seeing the profile of 300 families and 1495 converts I have come to conclusion that 98% converts belong to scheduled castes.

The only purpose to make the status of Scheduled Caste Hindus part of this chapter is to make the reader well aware of the context these converts have come from and the background they belong to. Without knowing the context of converts we can not understand the phenomenon of conversion

3.2.1 Introduction to the study Area

Primarily my program was to cover the whole Sanghar district. However when I started my fieldwork I realized difficulties of the task, insufficient sources, limited time period and complexities of the nature of phenomenon of conversion in the area I decided to change my program. With the suggestion of my supervisor and other senior teachers I decided to conduct my study in one main city (Taluqa) of the district Shahdadpur. I selected Shahdadpur due to many reasons for my fieldwork.

It is most populated city of Sanghar district, even it has more population than the sanghar city. It has large number of Hindus population and considerable number of converts to Islam.. It is multicultural and dynamic in various aspects. Moreover it is the most ancient and historical city of Sanghar.

As well as the part of interviews with converts to Islam is concerned I remained limited to Shahdadpur, but for my second part of field work in which I applied purposive sampling method I had to include Sanghar city as well.

In the second part of my interviews I included only those people that in my opinion were much acquainted with phenomenon of conversion and could be able to give exact information. As I have conducted my fieldwork in Sanghar city and Shahdadpur Taaluqa, it seems appropriate to present the introduction of sanghar district as a whole and Shahdad pur city.

3.2.2 A brief introduction to Sanghar

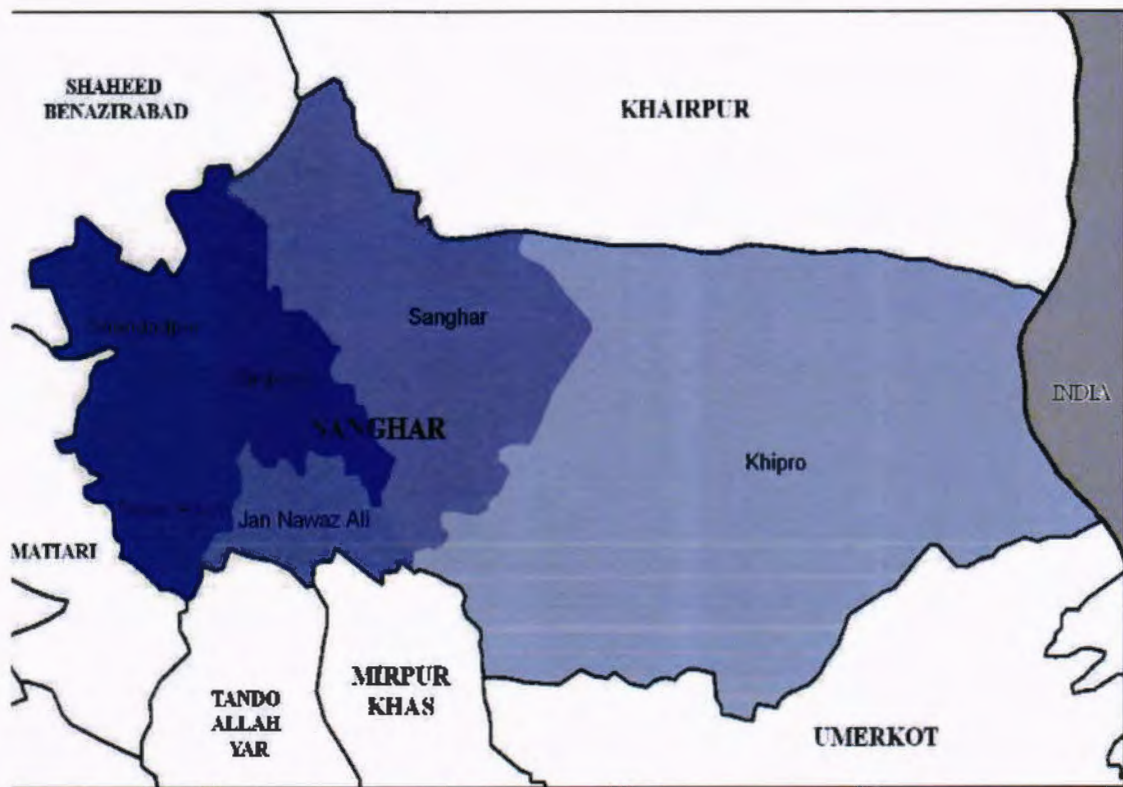
Sanghar is historical city. Area of this city is 10728 square Km. Its Population is 2,62,050⁸⁰ Indus valley has the most ancient civilization as the ancient Mansoor city located in its one of Taluqa (Jam Nawaz Ali). Mansoor has been remained the most important place of business and culture for centuries. The tombs of Sohni and Mahinwal are there in Shahdadpur in one of its Taluqa. These two folk characters are very popular.

Sanghar is said to have very important part in Pakistan movement as the followers of Syed Sibghatullah Shah the head of Hur Tehrik (Movement) started campaign to drive Britishers out of Sub-Continent. To crush this movement Britishers made this city district head quarter. But when they left Sanghar was again merged with Mirpur Khas and Nawab Shah in 1953. It was again restored as District and District Head Quarter 1954. This District is largest in area in Sindh.⁸¹

⁸⁰ According to the census of 1998

⁸¹ Sanghar District: <http://www.pwdsindh.gov.pk/district/sanghar.htm> accessed July 15 2016

3.2.3 Map of District Sanghar



3.2.5.1 Brief introduction to Shahdadpur

Shahdadpur is also historical like district Sanghar. It is one of the largest city of Sanghar in population. It is the most developed city of the district as well. It is dynamic in this sense that people belonging to different races religions and communities live in the city.

60% people are Sindhi an Urdu speaking while Punjabies are 30% other 5% speak different languages. Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's tomb is near this city in Bhit Shah. The population according to the census 1998 is 3,27,408 .⁸²

⁸² Shahdadpur The Magnificent city of Sindh <http://www.sindhidunya.com/shahdadpur> accessed 28 August 2016

3.2.5.3 City Map



3.3.1 Status of Hindus in the area

As I mentioned earlier that large number of Hindus living in the area are Scheduled Castes. They are large number in Shahdadpur because in this populated and comparatively developed city they had more opportunities of getting labor and other menial works. Under this heading I will mention only Scheduled Castes.

3.3.2 Definition of Scheduled Caste

Some of the definitions that describe Scheduled Caste Hindus.

“The official name of low castes in India, called untouchables in ancient Hindu books and scriptures, socially disadvantaged.”⁸³

“The lowest castes in traditional Hinduism who are given special aid by the government.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Scheduled Castes <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/schedule-caste> accessed 29 August 2016

“The official name given in India to the lowest caste, considered ‘untouchable’ in orthodox Hindu scriptures and practice, officially regarded as socially disadvantaged.”⁸⁵

3.3.3 History of Scheduled caste

There is difference of opinion about the history of untouchability. Some say that it is special feature of traditional Indian Society. Others are of the view that it came in the area with Aryan invaders in 3rd Century BC.

Manusimirty a sacred Hindu book contains the philosophy of untouchability which is related to concept of rebirth and duty. Untouchables from the very beginning used to keep away from normal social life and they used to do menial tasks like slaughtering and leather work. It continued till British Rule. The change that came regarding low castes in after this period is constitutional and very little to do with their daily life.

They tried to give facilities to all public on equal basis but it had little effects. Till 1950 Indian government started taking interest in their matters and to ensure them their due rights they were given the special name Scheduled Castes. Gaandhi and Dr. Ambedkar were the two personalities who tried to bring change in the lives of low castes. Gandhi used the term Harijan for them which means children of God.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had a different approach. He was in favour of total destruction of caste system. He was in favor of making untouchables a separate entity like Hindus, Muslims and Sikhis. Later he totally rejected Hindus values in 1956 with his 3 million follower he joined Buddhism.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Scheduled Castes <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/scheduled-castes> accessed 29 August 2016

⁸⁵ Definition of Scheduled Caste <http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/scheduled-caste> accessed 29 August 2016

⁸⁶ Scheduled Castes of India <http://www.faqsg.org/minorities/South-Asia/Scheduled--Caste-of-India.html> accessed 29 August 2016

3.3.4 Number of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Pakistan

No census has been conducted in the country from last 18 years. I could not find the exact figures regarding recent Hindu population that is why to know the number of scheduled castes are almost impossible. The first reason is that they are mixed up with overall Hindu population and are not differentiated. Secondly they are mostly vagabonds. They work in farms under landlords and live at their work places without permanent homes.

According to census 1998 the Number of Hindus in Pakistan were following.

Hindu Jaties	21, 11,171	1.6%
Low Castes	3,32,343	0.25%

⁸⁷

“According to official statistics claims that population of Scheduled Castes is .25% which ammounts to 3,30000 persons.”⁸⁸

3.3.5 Number of Scheduled castes in Sindh

According to the census of 1998 their population is mostly in 9 districts of Sindh. Tharparkar, Umar kot, Mirpur Khas, Badin, Tando Allah Yar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sanghar, Mityari, Hyderabad in Southern Sindh and Ghotki, Sukker and Khairpur Districts in Northe Sindh. In Punjab Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan Districts have majority population. It is said the 89% of total population lives in above mentioned districts.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Zulfiqar Shah, *Long Behind Schedule* (Karachi: Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research Karachi, 2007), 13.

⁸⁸ Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network, "Scheduled Caste Women in Pakistan," (2013), 2.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

3.3.6 List of Scheduled Castes in Pakistan⁹⁰

1	Ad.Dharmi	9	Chamar	17	Gagra	25	Kuchria	33	Ramdasi
2	Bangali	10	Chandal	18	Gandhila	26	Mareja	34	Sansi
	Barar	11	Charan	19	Halal-Khor	27	Megh (war)	35	Sapela
4	Bawaria	12	Balmiki	20	Jatia	28	Menghwar	36	Sarera
5	Bazigar	13	Dagi or Kolhi	21	Kalal	29	Nat	37	Shikari
6	Bhangi	14	Dhanak	22	Khatik	30	Odh	38	Sirkiband
7	Bhanjara	15	Dhed	23	Kolhi	31	Pasi	39	Sochi
8	Bheel	16	Dumna	24	Kori	32	Perna	40	Wagri

3.4.1 Current Status of Hindus in the area

The description of current status of Hindus in the area is very much important because it will not only provide us informations about the condition of Hindus but it will also enable us to understand the context and the background the new converts belong to. Describing importance of context in the overall process of conversion Lewis R. Rambo says

Context is not just a stage through which a person passes. Rather it is the total environment in which conversion occurs. Its effects continue in other stages of conversion as well.⁹¹

Lewis R. Rambo divides context into two forms, Macro context and Micro context. According to Rambo "Macro context includes political system, religious organizations, relevant ecological considerations, and economic system. These

⁹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/PakistanDalitSolidarityNetwork/posts/459514080828277> accessed 29 August 2016

⁹¹ Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 20.

forces can facilitate or obstruct conversion or may have individual or broad societal impacts.”⁹²

As scheduled caste Hindus commonly share their history, their present mass conversion traces its roots in their history, like wise their present condition is not different in any area of Pakistan. They commonly share their problems, difficulties, and status. Moreover when we talk about Macro Context of any community we see the overall status of the population. That is why while describing Macro Context we need not to focus on the Scheduled Castes of particular area.

Here researcher is going to describe the Macro Context of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the area. Unfortunately there is no primary data on the topic. I had to rely on few documented works having facts and figures about the status of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the area or Sindh. The main work among them is Long Behind Schedule written by Zulfiqar Shah. This is the only documented work I have found so far on the condition of Scheduled Caste Hindus, other works are in form of reports prepared by Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network and other NGO's.

3.4.1.1 Constitutional Status

First of all we try to know whether Scheduled Castes have constitutional provisions or what status they have in Constitution of Pakistan. According to one of the report

So far, the Ordinance of 1957 is the only one that explicitly identifies Scheduled Castes in Pakistan. The Constitution of 1973 mentions Scheduled Castes when specifying groups that constitute non-Muslims, but does not otherwise define the term, or make any other reference to it. Racial discrimination, or discrimination against groups based on a perception of their ethnic origin or descent, is not explicitly dealt with in criminal law.⁹³

⁹² Ibid., 21,22.

⁹³ Safya Aftab, "Hindus in South Punjab," (2016), 4.

The following articles of Part 12 of Constitution of Pakistan 1957 mention the matters regarding Scheduled Castes.

Article 204

This article mentions that castes races and tribes and parts and groups of these races and tribes shall be considered Scheduled Castes and will be dealt under act of 1935 of Indian government untill new law is formed and applied by Assembly.

Article 205

Says that Federal and provincial governments are responsible for promotion of educational and economical interests of scheduled castes and other backward classes.

Article 206

The first clause of this article mentions that President of Pakistan will appoint a commission that will investigate the condition of backward classes and scheduled castes and will gives its recommendations to Federeal and provincial governments.

The second clause of this article mentions that commission will present the recommendations to president that it thinks fit and these recommendation will be submitted to national and provincial assemblies for further action.

Article 207

The first clause of this article says that president of pakistan will appoint a officer that will care for the matters of scheduled castes and backward classes.

The second clause of this article says that this officer will see the safeguards provided by article 205 and also observe whether commission under article 206 recommended appropriately and whether these recommendations are being acted upon. Further he will report to president so that he may direct national and provincial assemblies.⁹⁴

To what extent all this has been implemented in letter and spirit, one can know by observing their overall status in society.

3.4.3 Political Status

Political position of any nation, party, group shapes the destiny of them. Unfortunately Scheduled Caste Hindus due to their adverse status in other spheres of life have insignificant position in political sphere as well. Their political misfortune starts with their miscounting in the census and inconsideration by the Government. The census that was conducted almost 19 years ago shows the number of Scheduled Castes as follows.

“According to census of 1998 the population of Hindus in Pakistan is 24,43,514 out of which 21,11,171 are Hindu Jaties and 3,32,343 are scheduled caste Hindus.”⁹⁵

However these figures are challenged by the leaders of Scheduled Castes movements and organizations. They claim that situation is versa.

“However the figures are challenged by Scheduled Castes and they claim that they have never been counted correctly in any census.”⁹⁶

Zulfiqar Shah says in Long Behind Schedule

⁹⁴ <http://pakistanspace.tripod.com/archive/56-12.htm> accessed 2 September 2016

⁹⁵ Shah, *Long Behind Schedule*, 16.

⁹⁶ I.A.Rehman, "The Miserable Scheduled Castes," *Dawb*, June 18 2015.

This miscalculation has caused a great loss to scheduled castes in political system. They lose weight in political process. They are also ignored in development scheme and power sharing due to this miscalculation. They are also marginalized in voting registration process.”⁹⁷

Further he writes that “They live in rural areas and migrate often, this is also one of the reason that they miss registration.”⁹⁸

They are hardly approached by registration teams. According to the survey conducted only 40% respondent said that registration teams approached them other 60% belonging to Sindh and Punjab majority areas told that any such team never visited them. Situation was worst in Tharparker where 74% respondents told that registration teams did not approach them.”⁹⁹

Neither separate nor the joint electoral system could benefit Scheduled Caste Hindus as the political structure of the country does not allow poor and depressed people to contest or win. The presentation of Scheduled Cost Hindus in legislative bodies according to Zulfiqar Shah as follows.

“In Senate out of 100 there is not a singel seat for them. In National Assembly they have one seat out of 342, in Provincial Assembly of Sind they have only one member in the house of 168, in Provincial Assembly of Punjab they have not a singel member out of 200.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Shah, *Long Behind Schedule*, 52.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 55.

3.4.4 Educational Status

Poverty and illiteracy are part and parcel of each other, they go hand in hand. Scheduled Caste Hindus are poorest of poor that is why they are most illiterate population of Sindh district. There are three types of education system in Sindh and Scheduled Caste Hindus concentrated districts.

Privat Schools, Government Schools and Madrassah Schools. As well as private schools are concerned, they are out of the reach of these poor Scheduled Caste Hindus, they can not afford even the lowest ranked private school. The second type of Schools are Madrassah Schools. Many religious semenories (Madrassahs) provide school education also. But their doors are also closed for the children of Scheduled Caste Hindus. The only option left for them is Government Schools.

Their enrolment in government schools is also nominal as the parents of children prefer it to send them on labor work or help them in their work. Moreover in the presence of thousands of ghost schools in Sindh and specially in the areas where Scheduled Caste Hindus live, we can not expect much from government schools.

Over all literacy rate among Scheduled Caste Hindus can be imagined from the official reports about literacy in two Scheduled Caste Hindus concentrated districts Umer Kot and Tharparker.

“Tharparkar and Umer Kot have lowest literacy rate that is 30%”¹⁰¹

The report further says

“Tharparker which has the 45% Scheduled Castes population of total population is worst in education only 13% children go to schools that is lowest in Pakistan.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰² Ibid.

In the same report it has been mentioned.

“The literacy rate in Tharparkar is 16%. Female literacy rate is 6.91% while male literacy rate is 28.33. Rural literacy rate is 16% compared to Urban that is 57% of total. Scheduled Castes mostly live in rural areas and less literate.”¹⁰³

About the Umerkot the Second largest Scheduled Caste concentrated district figure are not much better. “The situation in Umerkot is not much different than Tharparkar. Though figures show Umerkot slightly better, however it falls in category of lower literacy rate.”¹⁰⁴

3.4.5 Economic Status

As poverty and illiteracy go hand in hand, the like wise poverty, caste and bonded labour go hand in hand. Scheduled Caste Hindu in Sidh are trapped in bonded labour more than any other caste or community. Most of them are trapped in bonded labour due to their poverty and Caste. The first reason for bonded labour is the worst kind of poverty. Zulfiqar Shah relates this in the following words.

Economic marginalization compels them to become the prey of landlords and brick kiln owners and to work on their conditions. Once trapped in debt then they become unable to come out of it due to their poverty and lack of power of negotiation.¹⁰⁵

The caste is another and main reason for bonded labour.

“Caste is another reason for bonded labour. Poverty is also one of it. Bondage and caste are part and parcel of each other. A sample survey

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 66.

revealed that 843 released Haris out of 1000 were scheduled castes that make up 84%.¹⁰⁶

Majority of Scheduled Caste Hindus is compelled to work mostly under landlords, brick kiln owner. When brick kilns stop working and landlord collect their crop in this period they have nothing to do and neither can they find other work in this situation they have no other option but to get loan from landlords and brick kiln's owners. These loans keep them under bonded labour for generations.

3.4.6 Social Status

At social front Scheduled Caste Hindus are facing worst kind of discrimination. They face discriminatory attitude in all spheres of life. In hospitals, schools, bus stops, barber shops, hotels and at all public places they face discrimination. They are not invited to social gatherings. Even those people among Scheduled Caste who have accepted Islam in hope to upgrade their social status are still segregated in society and they are called Shaikh Muslims. They do not feel any change regarding their social status.

They are facing discrimination by both Muslims and upper caste Hindus equally. They are not considered Hindus by upper caste Hindus. They are not allowed to inter in Hindu temples for worship.

3.4.7 Religious Status

Scheduled Castes condition is not much different in religious matters as well. In the first place due to their worst poverty and migrant nature they very rarely practice religion. Secondly they are not allowed at all by upper caste Hindus to inter their temples. The upper caste Hindus even do not consider them Hindus. Researcher confirmed this when he visited Gopal Das (President Hindus Council Shahdadpur).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

The figures he presented of Hindu population were only related to upper castes. No scheduled castes are considered are counted when Hindu population or the matter of their rights come. The same situation confirmed by one of the convert to Islam when he was approached by news reporter.

In the last 22 month 93 families from different districts reached Bait-us-Salam(Madrassa in Matli). They belong to Bheel community Dalits or untouchables. Most of them are farmers and belong to Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Mirpur Khas and Sangharr. A new convert Abdullah Shaikh told that we were neither Muslims nor Hindus We had no knowledge of Hinduism he told that he has not seen his sacred book yet and he does not know what it is called. He further added that both Hindus and Muslims attitude towards them is humiliating.¹⁰⁷

This was a brief overview of their over all status in society. The only prupose of description of their status is to let reader know the context and background the Scheduled Caste converts belong to.

¹⁰⁷ Mandhro, "Mass Conversion for Matli,S Poor Hindus, Lakshami Lies in Another Religion."

Chapter Four: Bait Ussalam Matli
(The Centre of conversion and training for new converts)

4.1 Introduction

As I mentioned in my abstract and introduction that nature of conversion of Scheduled Castes in Sindh is much different than the mere oversimplified projection of Media. Its roots needs to be traced back in the history. The approach, techniques, the response from converts, the consequences, each and every aspect of this phenomenon of conversion is very much similar to the mass conversion that occurred under Church Missions before and after British Rule.

The case study of Bait Ussalam, the center working for conversion of Hindus is the best example of this historical process. Process of approaching to potential converts from the Center, response from converts, their motivations, the type of commitment to religion and consequences they face after conversion are not different than the Scheduled Castes accepted christianity through missions under British Rule. Other factors behind this mass conversion like socio-psychological factors, socialization, acculturation, have been discussed in the next chapter.

The description of this Center consists of three parts, in the first part researcher shall give introduction to this Center, the second part will describe the informations provided by Management, third part consists of the experiences of three converts.

4.2 Introduction to Bait Ussalam

Although Matli is a separate District far away from Shahdadpur and does not fall in my field work area but the centre working for conversion of Hindus to Islam and their training is not ignorable. It would be unjust not to mention this center as this is the only center in Sindh and in the country that is working in a unique way to convert the Hindus and later to train them. This center has the largest figure of converts that reach upto 1500¹⁰⁸. As the Scheduled Caste Hindus

¹⁰⁸ Till December 2016

belonging to different parts of Sindh come to this center so it will also be helpful to understand the overall phenomenon of conversion.

This center first time attracted my attention and interest when I was there in Karachi for my MA Islamic Studies from Karachi University. On 13 December 2011, I read the news in English newspaper regarding conversion of 37 Hindus in the mentioned center. The News paper reported "On Saturday thirty seven people belonging to different Hindu families converted to Islam in Matli. They claimed that more families will accept Islam in coming weeks."¹⁰⁹ Once again on 21 January 2012, the same news paper published the news report about Bait uss Salam under the heading, "Mass conversion of Matlis poor Hindus."¹¹⁰

I remained curious about the center and its way of working. In 2015 this dream seemed turn into reality when my topic for thesis got approved regarding conversion of Hindus in Sindh.

This center started working in 2009 and till 2016, 300 Families containing 1495 persons including males, females and mostly children have accepted Islam and later got 4 month's training in the center. 1420 converts out of 1495 belong to Scheduled Castes that make up 95% of the total.¹¹¹

These people are poor and belong to segregated section of society. These people are marginalized not only by government and society but upper castes Hindus as well. Due to worst kind of poverty and shelterlessness they rarely practice religion or even know about their religion. They mostly work under landlords, at brickkilns and in local industries. Most of them are trapped in so heavy debts that they are unable to pay.

¹⁰⁹ Sameer Mandhro, "37 Hindus Converted to Islam in Matli," *The Express Tribune*, 13 December 2011.

¹¹⁰ "Mass Conversion for Matli, S Poor Hindus, Lakshmi Lies in Another Religion."

¹¹¹ These informations were provided by management during the visit

4.3.1 Information provided by the management

The management of this center provided researcher the informations verbally and carefully but was reluctant to provide any record or photocopy. So researcher had to depend on the iformation provided by management.

Researcher noticed in the record that few converts belong to upper classes and they accepted Islam individually other Almost 95 percent were from lower Castes and they converted in groups. It is not much different than the situation that Arun Andrew Jhon Describes in his work regarding Christian Missions in India, as he says

“However large portion of the converts were coming from the upper castes as compared to the lower castes. Mass conversion from depressed classes to Christianity were taking place through out India.”¹¹²

4.3.2 How Scheduled Castes are converted

The survey team of this Center visits the sites where potential converts work and meet the heads of the families ;although they convey them the message of Islam (as it is required when some one is invited towards religion) they also offer them to pay all their debts in case they accept islam. As reported in the same news article “One of the donor of Bait us Salam Haji Basbir Kamboh said that they had paid 3,11,000 for 7 families .”¹¹³

Mostly the families get ready to get rid from the debts,clunches of landlords and their prosecution. Then buisnessmen and other wealthy people in Karachi and other parts of the country are contacted and told that so many people want to accept Islam in case their debts are paid. People with religious zeal give donations. They are also promised to help in getting Watan Cards, National Identification Cards, and other assistance in Case they accept Islam.

¹¹² Arun Andrew Jhon, "The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity: Conversion Story of South African Anglican Chrisitan" (University of South Africa, 2007), 16.

¹¹³ Mandhro, "37 Hindus Converted to Islam in Matli."

At the stage when potential convert families get ready for conversion the Land lords or Brickklin owner resist. They do not allow these families to get convert. They think that by accepting Islam these people will get alevate and will be no more their worker. First these families are threatened with sever consequences in case they accept Islam and when these families resist by having only chance of getting rid of this worst kind of slavery then it is demanded from land owners to pay debts. As the patron of this Center told News Paper.

“He told that landlords refused to let them go without paying debts. He agreed that some of the families converted due to their debts.”¹¹⁴

If not completely then somehow partially we can apply the term of Deconversion or Deprogramming to the conversion that is resisted by Landlords. Lewis Rambo has mentioned the terms of Deprogramming or Forced Deconversion in his work *Understanding Religious Conversion*. “Deprogramming, an intensive method sometimes used to remove people from religious movements viewed as cults, may be seen as a form of forced deconversion, or apostasy.”¹¹⁵

In the past same efforts have been made by Hindu organisations and property owners to stop Scheduled Castes from conversion to Christianity. As R.E Frykenberg writes in his book, *Studies in the History of Christian Missions*.

Apart from the political implications, there have been both practical and theoretical reasons from some Hindus to oppose conversion of other Hindus to Christianity. Under British rule out castes that became Christians were sometime able to escape lifelong serfdom and other dignities. Especially if they became literate or moved to other occupations or city. Higher caste Hindus specially wealthy landlords

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Lewis.R.Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 13.

resisted such a change and challenged the idea that any Hindu could not opt out of social position in which they were born.¹¹⁶

Moreover the management informed that they are kept in the Center for four to five months where they are provided with food, accomodation, Islamic education some money each month and some money when they leave. As reported in the same newspaper "He told that they are provided with food, medicine, Islamic education and some money when they leave the center."¹¹⁷

The record about families is kept in a register in written form that consists of the caste of the converts, their preivou name, names after conversion, age, city and how much of their loan has been paid off. The amount of loan can reach up from few thousand to few lacs. The system of registration can be figured out through following image of the pages of this register.

¹¹⁶ R.E.Frykenberg, *Studies in the History of Christian Missions* (Michigan Unites States of America: wm.B.Eerdsman Publishing Company, 2014), 172.

¹¹⁷ Mandhro, "37 Hindus Converted to Islam in Matli."

تیسرا خاندان									
نمبر	نمبر شمار	انفراد	پلاز نام	اسلامی نام	ولدیت	رشتہ	عمر	قوم	گروہ/شہر
10	410	1	لمون	محمد نیکر	بچا پور	سربراہ	20 سال	میل	تھر فہ
11	411	2	رائی	خدیجہ بیوی	مٹھو	زورہ	28 سال	"	"
12	412	3	نصیب	مٹھو	بچا پور	بیٹا	5 سال	"	"
13	413	4	مہر کی	"	"	"	"	"	"
14									
چوتھا خاندان									
نمبر	نمبر شمار	انفراد	پلاز نام	اسلامی نام	ولدیت	رشتہ	عمر	قوم	گروہ/شہر
5	414	1	بٹریو	الشریف	لاڑو	سربراہ	40 سال	میل	تھر فہ
6	415	2	نجمہ	اسمیر بیوی	مٹھو	زورہ	35 سال	"	"
7	416	3	سنتار	ولیدہ	بٹریو	بیٹا	1 سال	"	"
8	417	4	سیدہ	سائو بیوی	"	بیٹا	5 سال	"	"
9	418	5	رشیدہ	راشدہ بیوی	"	"	4 سال	"	"
10									
11									
پانچواں خاندان									
نمبر	نمبر شمار	انفراد	پلاز نام	اسلامی نام	ولدیت	رشتہ	عمر	قوم	گروہ/شہر
12	419	1	چیتن	محمد علی	ماروہ	سربراہ	28 سال	میل	تھر فہ
13	420	2	مکری	عبدہ بیوی	ٹراویو	بیٹا	25 سال	"	"
14									
15									

118

Amount of debt shown in register seems insignificant but this amount seems a mount to the indebted family having no sources of income. We have the same examples of conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the past for petty price.

Dr Ravi Pati Shastri in his article, A degenerated India and debased Hinduism seems to be the life blood of Christian Missionaries.

The rich Christian Missionaries are making use of country's poverty and social conditions to further their mission. They entice people through cardinal sin, in order to convert people. In North-Eastern belt the Bapatist missionary use cheap polyster trousers to triable people ready to convert, and with motor bikes if the prepare any other to get convert. In Madhya Perdaish missionaries gave loans or worth 5 to 10 dollars to tribal people on interest. Loans that they knew wil not be easity paid

¹¹⁸ Copied from Express Tribune dated January 21, 2012

back. But the payments of these debts can be waived off in case debtors accept Christianity.¹¹⁹

It is also evident from the record that Center has to pay for each convert and this type of conversion, conversion on payment has been part of history of Scheduled Caste Hindus. As Gandhi G in one of his books writes

“Conversion has become a business like thing. I read a missionary report saying, how much it costs per head to convert and presenting budget for next year. He maintained that had he power he would have stopped this proselytization.”¹²⁰

This business type conversion confirmed by the management of the center through this incident. Manager of the Centre told that we came across the families consist of three hundred people. They offered us to become Muslim in case they are provided place to live and financial assistance. He told that in the mean time we were arranging the funds for this deal the people belonging to Ahmadi religion contacted them and offered them more than we offered so these 300 people converted to their religion.

For the same reasons the Church has been target of criticism in the past as Arun Andrew mentions in his book about the church missions in India.

“The church is responsible for spoiling Indian culture and social tranquillity, and unity by converting poor people with the power of money.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ A degenerated India and debased Hinduism <http://www.vicharvimarsh.com/2015/01/05> accessed 10 September 2016

¹²⁰ http://www.hindubooks.org/Retrospect_of_Christianity/ch6.htm

¹²¹ Jhon, "The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity: Conversion Story of South African Anglican Chrisitan."

researcher was further informed that males are circumcised regardless of their age. The reason was told that Circumcision eliminates the chances of apostasy as the other Hindus consider this person confirmed Muslim and don't reaccept in their religion and the person had to remain Muslim.

Some selected kids from the families are registered for Quran reading and memorization of Quran. They are given 1000 per month as scholarship. This one thousand seems big amount in comparison to condition of these families.

4.4 Experiences of three new Converts

Researcher was fortunate enough to meet one of the new converted family in fieldwork area who got training in the same Center. Later this family introduced two other families that remained in center for four months. researcher got information from them. The following information about the conversion experience and training in Bait ussalam were provided by the head of each family. As the converts have same background, the problems and difficulties they face. They relate the same stories regarding their conversion experience , expectations and consequences. All three converted related same stories with minor difference, that is why it seems useless to describe experience of each one separately.

Their experience regarding conversion follow as:

We were working as tenants in farms, although under worst circumstances yet we were getting two time bread for our family members. When we were contacted by the center for conversion we saw it a good deal. We accepted Islam in hope to get better status in society, to get better economic oppertunities, we accepted Islam in hope to provide our children better life.

We were brought in the center for learning basic teachings of Islam. Untill we remain there we got assistance but after four months were left to our fate. Now we have disconnected from landlord and no other job to do. We send our kids to mosques to learn Quran but no one takes interest

in them. We are still facing the marginality. We were hoping that conversion to Islam will end our miseries and we will be considered equal to other Muslims but nothing has changed. No one invite us in their marriages and other social gatherings. People in society doubt our sincerity to Islam.¹²²

These were the experiences related by three head of families trained in Bait Ussalam.

Here I am not raising questions on the sincerity and intentions of management of Bait Ussalam. Their motivations may be sincere and they may be doing their best in their own perception. But this temporary solution of the problem, just providing new converts facilities for four month's and then leave them on their own fate is creating permanent and unbearable problems.

¹²² I met these three converted families in Hala near Shahdadpur. They claimed to be trained in Bait Ussalam

Chapter Five: Fieldwork Incorporated into Lewis R. Rambo's Seven Stage Model

5.1 Introduction

Researchers apply models that most fit to their works. The nature of conversion in different parts of world demands different approach. So far the works done regarding religious conversions have been Christianized generally by Western Scholars and Westernized mostly by Muslim Scholars. If any one tried to make the difference in his work then the application of model or theory of any Western scholar Westernized it.

The reason is quite obvious that mostly models and theories are cultural specific and same is with the Rambo's stage model. As Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh says in her book **Conversion to Islam the Case of Dusun Ethnic Group in Brunie Darussalam** about Interaction stage that I think applies not only to Interaction but all stages. "Thus it is quite clears the Rambo's definition of Interaction stage is too cultural specific and can not be applied to all types of conversion experiences."¹²³

While keeping all these aspects in mind, in the present thesis researcher has tried to assess the phenomenon of conversion in its true perspective, and has tried best to present th phenomenon as it is. As mentioned earlier that in this work the Rambo's Seven stage model has been used just as an organiser of work. As this model is holistic, hueristic and flexible, it allows any type of work to get fit in it.

After incorporating the work into this seven stages model and questions in suitable stage, any debateable issues left will be disscussed separately , so that researcher may not leave any aspect of this phenomenon of conversion.

¹²³ Asiya Az Zahra Ahmed Kumpoh, "Conversion to Islam: The Case of Dusun Ethnic Group in Brunie Darussalam " (University of Leicester 2011), 61.

As researcher has already described the Macro Context of these converts in previous chapter, here the micro and immediate contexts of converts will be described through questions included under this stage.

5.2 Four Basic Categories of Converts

I have divided the all converts into four categories according to their first response towards religion.

- 1

converts of Conviction
- 2

Converts of Convenience
- 3

Converts of Compulsion
- 4

Converts of Assimilation

Types of Converts according to their first response to religion

Converts of Conviction	Converts of Convenience	Converts of Compulsion	Converts of Assimilation	Total
8	4	10	10	32

All the categories had their own perception of conversion and religion and motivations. The categorization of converts has helped to organize and better understand the phenomenon other wise they have commonalities regarding their problems. Converts of compulsion or assimilation or convenience can potentially be converts of conviction. These converts have been divided into categories according to the aspect and attitude that is most evident in their lives.

In the Following the table has been presented containing information about converts.

5.2.1 Converts of Conviction

Under this category I have included those converts who accepted Islam whole heartedly and with sincerity of intention. They are regular in their prayers and in other acts of worship. Although they are dissatisfied from society and facing the same marginalization as other low caste Hindus and new converts do but despite this they are committed to religion.

The following Table shows their details

Name	Age	Year of conversion	Previous name	Previous caste
Muhammad Ehsan	60	1998	Chooni Daal	Kohli
Abdullah	56	2012	Taaro Mal	Bheel
Ubaidullah	34	2014	Chaitan	Bheel
Asadullah	32	2011	Gulaab	Banjara
Ahdullah	31	2011	Ramdas	Banjara
Muhammad Uzair	26	2011	Hari Das	Banjara
Muhammad Bilal	27	2011	Karishnan	Banjara
Abu Bakar	26	2011	Shimloo	Banjara

5.2.2 Converts of Convenience

It is generally believed that girls from Hindu community accept Islam after marriage for one or the other reason in large number. My interviewees confirmed it that large number of cases are found in Sindh, but I could not find a single case in my fieldwork area. However I found 4 cases of male converts who converted to marry their relative females who had already accepted Islam. During the interview they acknowledged this reason. Although they said we are now sincere towards religion after marriage However due to their first response to Islam I kept these converts into this category.

Name	Age	Year	Previous Name	Caste
M. Akbar	40	2000	Akbar	Valmiki/Bhangi
Abdul Salam	38	1999	Hardas	Kohli
Rashid	30	1999	Rashid	Mehgwar
Muhammad Islam	43	2000	Javaid	Mehgwar

5.2.3 Converts of Compulsion

The converts in this category are facing the worst kind of poverty as they are landless, homeless and jobless people. These insecure people converted to Islam to fulfill their basic needs.

As Chatanya Charan Das says in one of his article

“Real spiritual conversion takes place when people do convert vertically from being materialist to becoming spiritualist, From being devoted to

world to becoming devoted to God. But when people convert for worldly things such conversion is mostly horizontal.”¹²⁴

Their condition and language both reflect their intention. In response of every question they demand financial help and complain for no help from any side despite their conversion.

The following Table show some detail about these converts.

Name	age	Year	Previous Name	Caste
Mehram Ali	55	2005	Mehram	Valmiki/Bhangi
Muhammad Lal	50	2006	Laaloo	Mehgwar
Sajjan	40	2015	Sajjan	Bheel
Abdullah	43	2015	Ranjha	Bheel
Abdul Rehman	38	2015	Roop Chann	Bheel
Farooq	39	2015	Leedoo	Bheel
Abdul Rehman	34	2015	Khameesu	Bheel
Sulaiman	41	2015	Jumaa	Bheel
Dil Bar	43	2015	Dilbar	Bheel
Ghulam Rasool	45	2015	Harchand	Bheel

5.2.4 Converts of Assimilation

Under this catagory I have considered those converts that are not as wretched as converts of compulsion. Although they are landless however they

¹²⁴ Chaitan Charan Das, <https://www.quora.com/Some-religionists-are-converting-people-to-their-religion-by-offering-financial-benefits-for-converting-What-is-the-Vedic-perspective-on-this>.

have their own homes and they are doing menial jobs and works to meet both ends. They say that they started practicing Islam, like offering prayers and sending their kids to mosques long before embracing Islam. Some of them never practiced Hinduism from their childhood. Their conversion to Islam was just a formality bringing no change in their past and present condition.

Name	age	Year	Previous Name	Caste
Ghulam Abbas	26	2005	Chanaisar	Ohd
Nabi Bakhsh	35	2005	Nangar	Ohd
Nazir Ahmed	42	2005	Nazeer	Ohd
Nazar Muhammad	56	2005	Nazar	Ohd
Ali Bakhsh	54	2005	Khameeso	Ohd
Rahib Ali	30	2012	Rahib	Ohd
Ghulam Shabbir	33	2013	Shabbir	Ohd
Muhammad Mithan	34	2013	Mithoo	Ohd
Muhammad Ali	45	2013	Majna	Ohd
Nawab Ali	56	2010	Nawab	Ohd

One can not determine that conversion of copulsion, necessity, convenience, or assimilation can not change into conviction. I have categorized converts according to their first response to the religion of Islam.

Moreover the I have noted that approach of the converts belonging to all these categories towards religion was quite different from each other.

Before researcher describe what Context is and questions asked under the stage I would like to describe briefly some factors that are key to understand not only the phenomenon of Conversion in the area but also important to understand contexts itself.

These factors are called Socio-Psychological factors, these factors determine the attitudes of people that they demonstrate in society. All these factors have always been determinants behind the phenomenon of conversion where minority starts accepting majority religion in groups that is called mass conversion. A brief mentioning of these factors will help readers to comprehend the dynamics of this mass conversion.

5.3 Socio-Psychological Factors

People belonging to two different religions or countries definitely have unique sets of values, attitude, beliefs and norms. However when they start living together their constant interaction brings about changes this social interaction changes their values attitudes beliefs and norms. ZEYNEP AYCAN and RABINDRA N. KANUNGO in their joint journal article Impact of Acculturation on Socialization, Beliefs and Behavioral Occurances Among Indo-Canidian Immigrants mention Jhon W. Berry's model of acculturation that devides the attitude in four types.

Assimilation attitude occures when people do not wish to maintain their ethnic identity instead they seek relations with the larger society. Separation attitude occurs when there is strong desire to maintain ones culture and identity and not to interact with the larger society. Integration attitude occures when desire to interact with larger society while

preserving ones own identity. Marginalization attitude occurs when people are not willing to integrate and maintain their identity as well.¹²⁵

After assessment of the phenomenon of religious conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Shahdampur researcher has come to conclusion that two attitudes are more evident and dominant among Scheduled Caste Hindus in the area and that are assimilation and marginalization. Although other attitudes we can find in upper caste Hindus in the area but here converts under discussion are Scheduled Caste, so I will mention assimilation and marginalization. The first one is adoptive and the second one is imposed on them by society.

Sociologists use different terms to describe interaction between people belonging different cultures, religions and regions. Enculturation, socialization, assimilation and acculturation are the terms that have almost similar meanings and some time these terms are used interchangeably.

Researcher has tried to use the most appropriate terms that suite the phenomenon in field work area. The two attitudes or aspects, assimilation and marginalization suite best the converts under discussion.

5.3.1 Assimilation

In the following researcher is presenting three different definitions to understand better this concept.

According to first definition

“Assimilation is cultural immersion of a minority into the main cultural body.”¹²⁶

Another definition follows as

¹²⁵ ZEYNEP AYCAN & RABINDRA N. KANUNGO, "Impact of Acculturation on Socialization Beliefs and Behavioral Occurrences among Indo-Canadian Immigrants," *Comparative Families Studies* 29, no. 3 (1998): 451.

¹²⁶ <http://pediaa.com/difference-between-assimilation-and-acculturation/>

In anthropology and sociology assimilation is absorption of culture of ethnic group into main culture of society. This process involves taking characteristics of culture to such degree that assimilated group becomes indistinguishable. This type of assimilation is most extreme form.¹²⁷

According to another definition,

Assimilation is absorption of group into main cultural body. The term fits to immigrants and minority groups. The absorbed group loses the traits of its culture like language, tradition, even self-identity. The process can be quick or gradual change. When individual is indistinguishable it is called full assimilation. Assimilation could be unprompted or forced.¹²⁸

5.3.1.1 Reasons of assimilation attitude by converts

The fourth category of converts that researcher called converts of assimilation show the same features as have been told in these definitions. The reasons of their cultural and religious assimilation are follow as.

Their long interaction with the Muslims from many generations, their low status in society, landlessness, financial dependence, their disconnection from Hindu culture and religion, unacknowledgement as Hindu by upper caste Hindus and strong feeling of social pressure to comply with the social and cultural norms. The reasons above compell them to comply with the social norms and religious norms to live among Muslims.

5.3.1.2 Demonstration of Assimilation

All 10 converts under this category told that long before their conversion and in some cases from their childhood they are practicing Islam. Their children used to go to Mosques, they used to offer Eid and Juma Prayers. They do not know or very little know about Hindu religion.

¹²⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/assimilation-society#Article-History>

¹²⁸ <http://pediaa.com/difference-between-assimilation-and-acculturation/>

The converts in Category are those who after long struggle have settled themselves above the level of homelessness. They have settled small shops and started some small businesses like easypaisa shops, toyshops, grocery shops etc. Due to complete dependence on society to run their shops and businesses they have assimilated themselves in a way that their own culture and religion do not exist any more. The 10 converts belonging to Ohd Caste under discussion show this aspect of assimilation.

5.3.2 Marginalization

Description of marginalization attitude or aspect separately does not mean that the converts showing assimilation attitude do not face marginalization. Definitely

they face marginalization in all spheres of life however the severity of marginalization that face some homeless, landless, Castes among Scheduled Castes is much higher than the converts mentioned under assimilation. Converts under this category are mostly Hari/peasants and Bhangi. From the Castes under discussion following Castes show this aspect.

Kohli, Bheel, Mehgarr, Bhangi,

Following is the definition and brief explanation of marginalization.

Marginalization has been defined as the complicated process of downgrading a particular group. It pushes these groups to the margin of society economically, culturally, politically and socially. It deprives the section of society from resources and their utilization.

Ultimately they are pushed to poverty, low wage, misery, insecurity and discrimination. They are deprived from social mobility. Politically their downgrading deprives people from equal access to power structure and

decision making proces leading to their relegation and reliance on the dominant section of society.¹²⁹

5.3.2.1 Reasons of marginalizations

The reasons of Marginalization of these castes are quite obvious if we see the history of hinduism as they come under fourth Caste that is called Shudra.

But they are leading their lives under the same status even in Pakistan. Due to their status they were kept away from mainstream life and all social activities and sources of power.

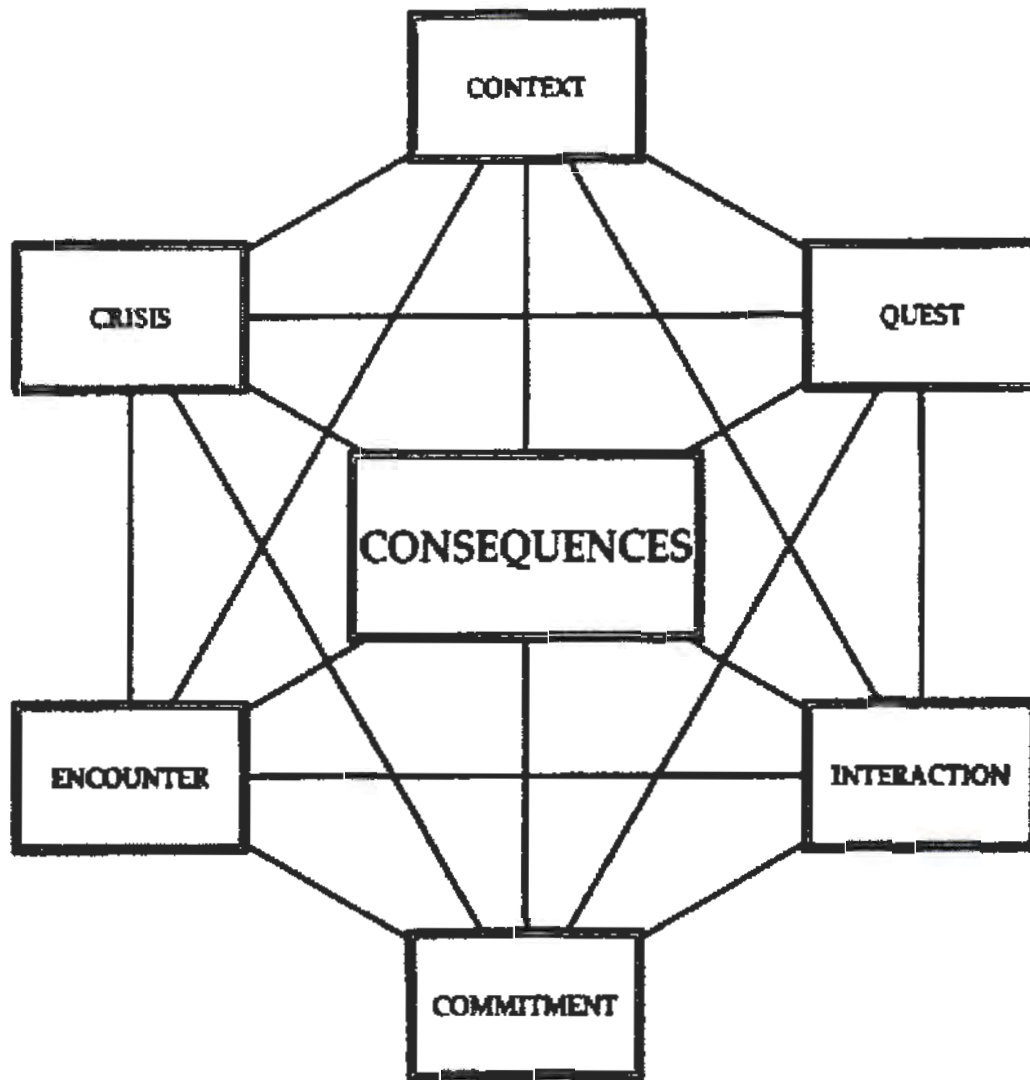
5.3.2.2 Demonstration of Marginality

The Type of marginality these indentured classes are going through is evident from their state of landlessness, homelessness, worst kind of poverty, lowest incmes and their deprivation from all sources of power.

Before we proceed to the description of Lewis R. Rambo's seven stage model I would like to present the diagram¹³⁰ of this model. From the following model one can understand that how much all stage closely related to each other and overlape each other.

¹²⁹ Marginalization and Role of Civil Society <http://www.sociologyguide.com/civil-society/marginalizatio.php> accessed 9 September 2016

¹³⁰ Lewis.R.Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 21.



Before I describe the context of converts and answers of question asked under this stage, I would like to give brief description of Context stage described by Lewis R. Rambo.

5.4 Context

Context simply means the background of a person. His educational background, social background, the economic opportunities he has. His access to

basic health and other facilities, his religious experiences, and the whole environment in which he lives. The same applies to whole society.

Context covers person’s intellectual emotional and spiritual environment. Moreover the crises he is going through. The context can provide the researcher the person’s turbulent situation during conversion and understanding of his gradual journey towards other religion.

This first stage goes beyond mere context as Rambo regards it “the total environment in which conversion occurs.”¹³¹ Rambo divides the context of a seeker into macro and micro context. Macro context contains his political and social status as well as the opportunities he has, whether these opportunities are educational, financial, regarding health or religion. The micro context contains his family and close friends and the people who come across in his daily life. We can name this division external and internal context as well.

In the following I am presenting the context of converts in Shahdadpur.

5.4.1 Social Background

As already mentioned that all interviewees belong to Scheduled Castes. The following table is just to show what particular caste they belong to. As 40 different castes of Scheduled Castes have been mentioned that live in the area and other parts of Pakistan. The converts interviewed belong to 5 different Castes that follow as.

5.4.1.1 Division of Converts according to particular Caste

Kohli	Bheel	Mehgwar	Bhangi	Banjara	Ohd
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¹³¹ Ibid., 20.

5.4.2 Educational Background

From the all catagories Out of 32 converts 16 converts are uneducated, 10 of them are primary pass. 5 of them got education up to matric level. Only 1 is graduate (BA)

Uneducated	Primary	Matric	BA	Total
16	10	5	1	32

5.4.3 Financial back Ground or Occupational Structure

Labrour	Peasant	Sanitory Worker	Menial Jobs	Total
10	12	5	5	32

Landless	Homeless	Jobless	Menial Jobs	Total
32	14	27	5	32

5.4.4 Religious Back Ground

Out of 32 Converts 15 Converts told that they used to practice Hindu religion, only 5 of them had strong religious back while 10 of them practiced religion casually and out of Rest of 17 converts 7 told they did not know what religion is. Other 10 converts were assimilated in the society in a way that they used to read Quran and their children used to go to mosques, but the Muslim by birth did not recognise them until they accepted it publically.

Strong Religious Background	Weak Religious Background	Disconnected from Religion	Assimilated in Society	Total
5	10	7	10	32

5.4.4.1 Pull Factors

8 converts told that Onness of God in Islam attracted them, 4 converts told that they accepted Islam because they wanted to marry their relative women who got Muslim but now we are Muslim by heart. 10 of the Converts told that they accepted Islam due to their inhuman and indentured status in Hinduism and in hope to make their life better. Other 10 told that they were disconnected from Hinduism and already practicing Islam from their childhood.

Oneness of God	Marriage	Equality in Islam	Disconnection from Hinduism	Total
8	4	10	10	32

5.4.4.2 Push Factors

From mentioned above pull factor we can derive following push factors

Multiplicity of Gods	Social Isolation	Low Status	Disowning by Upper Castes	Total
8	4	10	10	32

5.5 Crisis

Although the phenomenon of religious conversion is global but its traits and the attitudes that convert show are cultural specific. The nature of crises in each culture is different. In most developed countries and rich societies where converts do not seem in any apparent crises do convert for spiritual or psychological reasons and in cultures where people confront with severe illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and marginalization have different motives for conversion.

Converts in researcher's fieldwork area show different motives for conversion according to crises they are passing through. The depiction of kind of crises by each type of convert does not mean that he is not going through other type of crises but it means that this particular problem inspired the convert most to change his religion.

According to Lewis R. Rambo there are two types of crises, "crises that puts question mark individuals basic direction to life and the crises that is minor but proves a final straw that breaks the camel back."¹³²

¹³²Ibid.

In the phase of crises any thing can happen that can shatter ones faith in previous religion. One can gets confuse about his religion. The newly gained knowledge or discovery may reveal that whatever he has been told till now is mere a tale, and facts are other way round. The person in this phase when makes comparison between realities and his religion, he feels that realities are outweighing his religion. All this may make the situation for seeker unbearable and he may get ready to leave although he may not know where to go.

Any serious disease illness or shock may create crises for seeker. Sometime hardships and immeasurable difficulties may shatter the faith of a person, like earth quick, flood, sudden death of any near and dear one. The seeker may have some mystical experience that may cause an inspiration for new and dissatisfaction to old religion. Rambo says it a sacred call. It is not necessary at all that every person experience crises. Sometime it so happens that people get convert from very organised religions having financial support and hundreds years of cultural and traditional background.

The questions asked under crises stage and response from converts have been presented in the following.

5.5.1 Tyeys of crises that face converts in Shahdadpur

Converts in the area are facing marginality, worst kind of poverty and homelessness, these crises lays the foundation of their conversion.

However through the question **What crises forced you to convert** I tried to know the immidiate and the main reason of each converts among many reasons and motives.

Response of the questions regarding this stage follow as.

Spiritual Crises	Social Isolation	Financial Crises	Social and Financial	Total
8	10	10	4	32

5.6 Quest & Encounter

The problems mentioned above in Crises stage inspire converts to leave their religion. As all converts differ somehow in their context and crises stage in the same way they differ their approach to religion.

Researcher is taking liberty to merge these two stages because converts under discussion do not show any considerable difference in both. Actually the encounter stage envisioned by Rambo describes the interaction between advocate and potential convert after potential convert shows his quest. The type of conversions in which encounter is described separately discuss the active role of advocate. Here in this case we see the eagerness for conversion only on converts side. They actively seek religious change for one or the other reason.

If Researcher observed any role on advocate side it was just to politicize the situation. For example many people host the ceremonies of conversion in which prominent people from political and religious and other fields participate. In such ceremonies after formal declaration of Kalimah certificates are devided and after the ceremoney converts are left to their fate.

Only in case of Bait Ussalam we see that survey team seeks for potential converts, the case of Bait uss Salam has been described separately. Even converts of conviction take initiative themselves and approach near by Mosque or Seminary (Madrassa). In the stage of Encounter the role of advocate is either formal or absent.

In the following I would like to give brief description of both stages afterwards the questions regarding these stages will be included.

5.6.1 Quest

Glynis Parker quotes Rambo while defining Quest in following words.

“Quest is the process in which people try to find the meaning of their lives.”¹³³

The meaning and purpose differ from convert to convert. Some seek religion spiritual satisfaction, other see religion as the source of fulfillment of their physical needs and some see it as a source to upgrade their status.

The person in this stage strives and struggles to know about the new religion that he is seeking for. For this purpose he visits worship places reads books related to the religion he is interested in and talks with the people. The person in this phase uses the every available source in his reach to know the reality.

The person at this stage seems dissatisfied with the society and given social norms. The life looks to him directionless, purposeless and meaningless. To give his life purpose, direction and meaning he sets on a journey to new religion.

5.6.2 Encounter

The fourth stage encounter involves “the contact between potential convert and advocate and occurs in particular setting.”¹³⁴ At this stage seeker meets with the active persons of religion to know more about it.

In most cases he is warmly welcomed and he is provided all kinds of material that is necessary to understand and get depth in that religion. If he needs any financial support the active people in that religion try to fulfil it. Sometime the seeker has to face the situation quite contrary to it. He may find the difference between religion in books and practices and may get disheartened, or he may face the harsh attitude and bad behaviour.

¹³³ Glynis Parker, "The Conversion of South African to Buddhism" (University of South Africa, 2007), 26.

¹³⁴ Mmalony H.N, *Handbook of Religious Conversion* (Birmingham Education Press, 1992), 171.

At this stage sometime seekers becomes part of majority and sometime he remain still minority in a majority like a neglected part of society. The encounter may be subjective or objective , like books, articles, internet, magazines.

5.6.3 Converts behavior at Quest and Encounter Stage

Quest for conversion in each convert is different according to the crises he is going through. Some people get convert purly for spirtual reasons. There is difference in level of marginality, some castes are at the level of untouchability like Bhangi, Shaikh, Bheel, Kohli, Mehgwar and some castes like Ohd caste in this study has settled themselves above the level of marginality that is why they are less poor.

The untouchbles who are facing worst kind of poverty have compromised with their status and now the motives for their conversion are financial. The Ohd caste’ s motives for conversions are Psychological, the four converts who told that immidiate motive for their conversion was marriage, the reason of their conversion is social.

Spirtual	Social	Financial	Psychological	Total
8	4	10	10	32

5.6.4 Quest Resulted into Encounter

Reading Quran	Attending Prayers	Communicating with Religious organizations	Seeking aid for conversion	Total
5	12	5	10	32

5.7 Interaction

According to Glynis Parker "Continuation of encounter with group intensifies interaction."¹³⁵ At this stage seeker decides to continue with a religion or quite it. The society or persons active in the religion expect from the seeker and seeker has also expectations from society.

This process varies from religion to religion. Some religions seek for active participation of seeker and demand from him the same zeal and passion towards the religion that they themselves have, others are quite indifferent to him. At this stage specific environment is provided to seeker that is called encapsulation that varies from religion to religion. As Glynis Parker says

The issue is not the encapsulation itself but the way it is applied. In some traditions it is not strict and there is less control over convert. While in other traditions where it is necessary to reject outside world the more control is exerted over convert.¹³⁶

Dr Glynis Parker Mentions three types of encapsulation in his book, the physical, social, and ideological. "physical encapsulation is shifting people to a different environment and social encapsulation is related with the change of life

¹³⁵ Parker, "The Conversion of South African to Buddhism," 31.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 33.

style while ideological encapsulation is related to the world view and belief system.”¹³⁷

The searcher finds a religious group that is most suitable for him. He passes sometime there as a guest to observe, attending rituals learning the customs to know the people. Some groups offer introductory classes for people seeking conversion.

5.7.1 Attitude of Converts at Interaction Stage

Most of the converts participate in religious activities to get society’s attention and to get expected benefits. But when they do not get what they expect they lose their interest. Variation in interest can be noted by figures given in tables under Interaction and Commitment stages.

Attending Regular Prayers	Attending Juma Prayers	Reading Quran	Sending Kids for learning Quran	Total
15	7	8	21	32

5.8 Commitment

Encapsulation results into commitment. Commitment varies from religion to religion. In some religions commitment is demonstrated publically in others it is matter of private life. Some religions give stress on physical worship, other demand total cultural change. For example if some one wants to become a committed buddhist he needs to change not only his physical appearance but diet as well.

This stage is called decision making stage. At this stage convert revises and evaluate the old life and deeply observes the new life. At this stage convert

¹³⁷ Ibid., 34.

often feel joy and relief and has peace of mind. He gets satisfied and becomes contented.

5.8.1 Commitment towards Religion in Converts

The difference of numbers in Interaction and Commitment stages were noted through question about participation in religious activities. The converts told about their participation when they accepted Islam and recent situation.

Most of the Hindus from Scheduled Castes convert other than spiritual reasons. They show their interest and involvement in religious activities to get society’s attention, but when they see that they are being neglected they lose their interest after sometime. This is evident by numbers given under each religious activity.

Offering Regular Prayers	Recitation of Quran	Observing Fasts	Sending kids to learn Quran	Total
8	7	9	10	32

5.9 Outcomes or Consequences

According to Rambo

“Genuine conversion should be constant process and not once off happening.¹³⁸”. The converts to new religion not only participates actively but also continue it. At this stage convert usually face opposition from his family members, friends, and society. He may face job loss and severe financial pressure and separation from his parents wife and children as well. In some cases convert

¹³⁸ Ibid., 37.

gets cut off totally from his environment and in some cases he maintains partial contacts with his family friends and society.

Most often he gets all types of help from the people of religion he converted to. The active members and preachers of that religion not only arrange for him job and other financial assistance but accommodation and marriage as well. But in some cases he may have to face the situation quite contrary to it.

It may be that people belonging to religion he has converted to ignore him and refuse to provide him any kind of help. It is also possible that convert find the people quite contrary to what he has read in literature and he may get confuse and disheart. More over he may get disturb by strict rules and regulations of the new religion and it may be difficult for him change his dietary habits. It may be disturbing for him to change his name and his appearance as well. The consequences varies from person to person, for some people consequences are wonderful and amazing and great change, but for some people these are trivial change.

5.9.1 Consequences for Converts in Shahdadpur

Consequences for converts in Shahdadpur do not present a positive picture. As the all converts belong to Scheduled Castes. They accept Islam in hope to get better status in society and to get better oppertunities to overcome their financial problems. But they face complete neglectness from society.

Religiously they only get Muslim names and no one bothers to teach them about religion. Socially they are not accepted equal to Muslims by birth and converts from upper castes. Financially they get nothing except the certificate of changing religion that works as a begging tool.

The converts in the table considering this conversion a good change were also complaining about complete neglectness in every sphere of life. But they were contented spirtually. Converts having view of trivial change say they just got new names and religion. Some say conversion did not bring any change to their

life. Some converts who got cutt of from their landlords after conversion as we noted in the case of Bait Ussalam say their lives have become worse than before.

Good change	Trivial Change	No Change	Worst than Before	Total
8	10	10	4	32

As mentioned in methodology that mixed method strategy has been used in this study. Researcher conducted interviews with converts through snowball sampling while to get more depth and iformation I adopted purposive sampling method and interviewed the people that in my oponion were most acquainted with phenomenon.

Phenomenon of religious conversion of Hindus in Sind is mostly related to Scheduled Castes and specially in this study all converts belong to Scheduled Caste. Due to overall illiteracy and low caste specific phenomenon of religious conversion common people are not interested at all in recent religious conversions that is why they were not able to provide correct information regarding phenomenon of conversion.

Moreover it was very much possible that converts due to illiteracy, their specific motivations for conversion and due to their unfulfilled expectations may exaggerate, tell contrary to realities or may not be able to tell the whole truth and may not be able to convey due to other shortcomings.

These were the reasons that I had to select people from those sections of society that in my opinion were able to give exact and correct information.

5.10 Public Opinion

Under this topic the opinion of only those people have been included that in researcher’s opinion were most aqinted with the phenomenon. The purpose of

questions asked to them was to unfold and uncover those aspects of conversion that were not possible through personal observation or interviews with converts. Only two questions were put before the each participant to express his views. First question is about the overall phenomenon of religious conversion. The second question is about the marriages of Hindus girls with Muslim men.

The only reason to include second question in this part is that marriages of Hindus girls with Muslim men in different parts of Sindh is reality but it is potrayed by media and Hindu activists as matter of forced marriages and forced conversion to Islam. Although I could not find a single case in my fieldwork area however exclusion of this issue would be a neglectness to important aspect of issue of forced religious conversion.

Researcher approached 15 people belonging to different spheres of life. That in his opinion could give authentic information regarding this phenomenon. Five of them excused to provide any information whether due to unawareness or other reason. So in the following I have included point of views of 10 people that have been mentioned in the table.

Serial No	Name of Interviewee	Occupation
1	Naseer Ahmed quraishi	Advocate District Session Court Sanghar
2	Suneel Kumar Perhyar	Legal Advisor Pakistan international Human Right Advocate District Session Court Sanghar
3	Advocate M. Qadafi Tanoli	Advocate District Session Court Sanghar
4	Professor Dr Hahib Ahmed Minhas	Government Degree College Shehddadpur

5	Professor Yaqoob Laghari	Government Degree College Sanghar
6	Irshaad Bukhari	President Press Club Shehdadpur
7	Tipu Sultan	RTD SSP Sanghar
8	Gopal Daas	Vice President Hindu Council Shehdadpur
9	Molana M. Younas	Bait Ussalam/Maatli District
10	Qari Abdul Rasheed	Muhtamim Dar-ul-Uloom Hussainia Shahdadpur

Following Two questions regarding phenomenon of religious conversion in the area were asked to the participants.

1: How do they see the phenomenon of religious conversion in the area?

2: What do they say about the cases of marriages of Hindu girls to Muslim men?

5.10.1 The response from participants:

Respondent 1

In response of first question:

In my opinion the mass conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the area is due to their poverty and social status. They find no other way to get rid of the problem except conversion. I do not say that all converts have the same motives but most of them get converts due to their status in society.

In Response of second question:

The cases of Hindu girls marriages to Muslim male are reality and such cases are found through out the Sindh. This is not the case of Hindu girls but christian girls as well. Many cases have been recorded in the court. But I do not think it is a matter of forced religious conversion. In my opinion Hindu girls feel themselves more safe regarding their merital life under the religion of Islam.

After such cases the family of girls and other Hindu activist file cases claim it a matter forced marriage and forced religious conversion.

Respondent 2

In Response of first question:

Scheduled Caste Hindus are entering Islam due to their weak social, financial and political position. Religious proselytizers are exploiting their position in society. Scheduled Caste Hindus have become so oppressed section of society that they have no other option other than change their religion.

In Response of second question:

Hindu girls marriages cases are found through out Sindh and many of them are forced marriages and forced conversion to Islam cases. (But when he was asked to provide a single case as an example being an advocate in district court. He excused to provide any case record, however he promised to provide me latter. As according to him large number of cases have been filed in Hyderabad High Court. Untill now I did not receive despite many reminders.)

Respondent 3

In Response of first question:

No doubt that most conversion are from Scheduled Caste Hindus and very few people convert from upper castes. These people get convert to fulfill their needs. However we should take it positively. If they are taking shelter of religion then we should acknowledge that Islam is providing them a shelter. A shelter from casteism and discrimination. Unfortunately behaviour of society is not appropriate with them and they get disappointed after conversion.

In Response of second question:

The cases of Hindu girl marriages with Muslim men is reality and such cases are found throughout Sindh. I think no one force them to marry or convert to Islam. They get convert some time for better future with well settled Muslims

and sometime to prevent themselves from Hindu marriage system that in their does not provide them secure and safe marital life.

Respondent 4

In Response of first question:

The phenomenon of conversion is related mostly to Scheduled Caste Hindus. we can not determine whether they are getting converted for worldly benefit or whole heartedly. However their apparent condition and the way they accept Islam show that they have worldly motives.

In Response of second question:

Cases of marriages of Hindu girls with Muslim men are usual in Sindh. But they get converted with their own will. I think they feel themselves secure and safe with Muslim men. It may be some one has forced any girl to marry with him but such incidents are rare.

Respondent 5

In Response of first question:

These poor people have no religion and do not know what religion is their first problem is hunger. When these poor people ask some person or organization for help in return they are asked to get converted. These people get ready.

In Response of second question:

Marriages of Hindu girls to Muslim men is reality. There may be instances of forced marriages where girl belonging to poor family have no option but to surrender.

Respondent 6

In Response of first question:

Phenomenon of mass conversion is mostly among Scheduled Caste Hindus. They get convert for shelters and to get financial and social benefit. No religious organization or seminary takes interest in their conversion. Even Tablighi Jamaat does not approach them. If they approach near by Masjid or Madrassah for conversion then they are taken through the formal process of pronouncing of Kalimah. Afterwards they are left to their fate.

In Response of second question:

Marriages of Hindu girls to Muslim men are reality and news paper report them. We can not determine the single reason behind it.

Respondent 7

In Response of first question:

Religious conversion is mostly among Scheduled Caste Hindus, they get convert for their worldly needs. And the people who arrange ceremonies of conversion, they have nothing to do with religion. They arrange ceremonies at their homes just for pump and show and to show the people that he has converted so many Hindus to Islam. In such ceremonies religious leaders, journalists, and political leaders are invited. After distribution of certificates they converts are left to their fate, no one bothers to teach them the basics of religion.

In Response of second question:

Incidents of marriages of Hindus girls with Muslim men are reported. Their motive may be many, one can not determine single one.

Respondent 8

In Response of first question:

Only Scheduled Caste get convert they are not the real Hindus. Our Hindu councils do not consider them or count them. They have their own councils. They are being converted due to their poverty by Muslim proselytizers.

In Response of second question:

Incidents of marriages of Hindu girls are common. There are incidents of forced marriages also. These incident are happening because government has taken no measures for security of Hindu community. Even forcefully married girls in the court give statements that they have gotten married and converted to Islam with their free will.

Respondent 9

In Response of first question:

The type of conversion that is mostly found in Sindh is among Scheduled Caste Hindus. It is quite right to convert people by offering them aid and other facilities because in present age we can not bring those role models and characters and level of belief that was the only attraction and reason for non muslims to convert. If Christian Missionaries, and Ahmedies are converting people by offering them financial support and taking them to hell, why we should not do the same to save them from hell fire.

In Response of second question:

The marriages of Hindu girls to Muslim men in Sindh and specially in Hindu concentrated districts are common. Not only Hindu but many Christian girls also adopt the same way. This is not the matter of forced conversion because no religious group or organisation involved in it. Religion has nothing to do with it. They hide their real intentions behind the religion.

Respondent 10

In Response of first question

The Phenomenon of conversion in the area is mostly among Scheduled Caste Hindus, very few people from upper classes accept Islam. They accept Islam due to their poverty and shelterlessness and social status. But we can not know the real intentions. The real intentions only knows Allah Almighty.

In Response of second question

Couples definitely contact with Madrassahs or Mosques in the area to get marry and to get convert. It is not our duty to know their intentions however it becomes our religious obligation to convert them and get them marry. Sometime it so happens that both Hindu boy and girls want to marry but their parents do not allow them. The only way they find to become muslim and take shelter from muslim society.

The above mentioned views of participant show that phenomenon of conversion is mostly among Scheduled Caste Hindus in the area and the cases of marriages of Hindu girls to Muslim men are found throughout Sindh.

Chapter Six: Analysis, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter includes analysis, conclusion, and recommendations regarding phenomenon of religious conversion in Shahdadpur. This analysis has been made through most popular approach in qualitative research, thematic analysis. The reason that I included conclusion and recommendations with analysis is that all these are guided by personal observation and my observations are guided by research questions.

6.2 Analysis

6.2.1 Post 9/11 Phenomenon

This is reality that phenomenon of mass conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Sindh is a historical process and it has its specific reasons. It has very less to do with religion. This problem is more human than religious. The conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus finds its roots back in the history. However the recent projection of issue by media proves that it is a post 9/11 syndrome.

The projection of the issue of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh is a part of media run campaign against Muslim and Islam. The national media adopted the same style of framing news regarding Muslims and Islam as the International media did. The issues regarding conversion of Hindus never came on the surface so forcefully before 9/11.

6.2.2 Historical Process

As mentioned in research question that this type of conversion find its roots back in history. As Christopher Harding writes in his book *Religious Transformation in South Asia*.

“Mass conversion was not only feature of 19th and 20th Century in South Asia. This type of conversion to Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism

finds its roots back into 15th Century and continue to happen in 21st Century as well.”¹³⁹

Above statement of Christopher Harding about conversion is regardless of nature of conversion. The examples of particular type of mass conversion among the Scheduled Caste Hindus in Sindh can be found in 19th and 20th century due to Christian Missionaries activities.

The examples of same type of mass conversion that is happening in Sindh with similar intentions and consequences is found in the history of sub continent during British Rule. This recent process of conversion is the continuation of that historical process from its every aspect.

6.2.4 Marginality

Marginality of these people is also a main factor in their acceptance of Islam. Scheduled Caste Hindus in the past have also been accepting other religions due to their marginality. As Lewis Rambo says “Those who convert in hostile setting are neglected people of society.”¹⁴⁰

In the same book he is of the view “These people are detached from sources of power and traditional culture. This marginality makes them more likely to convert.”¹⁴¹

Scheduled Caste Hindus are marginalized in all spheres of life that is why they are more likely to accept other religions. Their nearest shelter and best possible choice is Islam. The mass conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the past did not bear any fruit, no matter what religion they converted to. They remain unrecognized and unacknowledged due to their previous caste.

¹³⁹ Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press 2008), 5.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis.R.Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 41.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

6.2.5 Cultural Crises

Scheduled Caste Hindus living form many generations in the Muslim society have almost left not only their culture but the worships that are part of their religion. This cultural crises is also a reason of their conversion to Islam. As Lewis R Rambo says.

The cultures that are in crises have more potential converts that the culture that are stable. The time period, force and the degree of crises determines the number of converts. In intestiy of crises the deficiencies of culture become clear and people start taking interest in new.”¹⁴²

Further he says

“In a cultural crisis, it is possible that the most talented, creative people will take the lead in conversion because they may perceive advantages to themselves and to the group as a whole”¹⁴³. The same did Dr Ambedkar a Scheduled Caste Hindu leader in 1956 when he among 3,65000 followers converted to Buddhism.

6.2.6. Intensification of the same status

The conversion of Scheduled of Hindus to other religions in the past and specially in this case seems an escape from their social status, that includes financial and political status as well. However their effort did not bore fruite in the past and in this case as well. As all converts complain that they are leading their lives same like before and in some cases they say that worst than before. Their low status and caste follow them throughout their life. They remain the neglected part of society.

As Christopher Harding says .

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41,42.

“The behaviour with the converts of mass-movement from beginning to this day in South Asia that conversion has proved the intensification of same status than redemption of subalternity.”¹⁴⁴

6.2.7 Socialization or Assimilation

In the recent conversion of Hindus to Islam the factors of socialization assimilation are also at work. Hindus are living in Muslim society for centuries. Being a low caste they have also been disowned by upper castes. They are not allowed to inter in temples of upper castes. Moreover their financial position and their nature of work leave a very little room for worship in their life.

Their kids start going to Mosques with Muslim kids and they also start offering eid prayers and keep fasting and start reading Quran being of part of this culture. As many converts told during the interviews that they were already practicing Islam before they got convert formally. They get socialized, get mix in society, adopt majority life style intentionally or unintentionally.

6.2.8 Factor Acting like Physical Force

Although I could not find a single case of forced religious conversion to Islam in my fieldwork area as claimed by Media and Hindus activists and organizations but I found the factors that are working same like physical force and compelling them to change their religion. These factors are psychological, social, political and financial.

6.2.9 Politics of Religious Conversion

These poor and powerless people had been exploited in the past by political parties and religious organizations alike. The same practice is going on one way or the other way. Still there are organizations and people who just for show off organize ceremonies of religious conversions.

¹⁴⁴ Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia*, 3.

Religious and political leaders, journalist and public is invited. After formal pronouncement of Kalimah and distribution of certificates they are left to their fate. There is no arrangement for their training and learning except Bait Ussalam that is a special case. Researcher found during fieldwork so many people holding these certificates of conversion and begging in the name of religion.

6.2.10 Negligance on part of Government

It is government's responsibility to mainstream scheduled castes and give their due rights, reserved quota and due status in society. Until government does not take steps to solve political, financial and educational problems of these people, they will be exploited by different elements for their petty politics and numbers.

6.2.11 Negligance of Religious Organization

Scheduled Caste Converts complain that after conversion there is no arrangement for their training and learning from any side. After formal ceremony of Kalimah pronouncement they are left. Even Tablighi Jamaat that is very keen in teaching religion to other Muslims does not pay attention to teach these poor new Muslims.

6.2.12 Negligance from Society

Even after conversion these Scheduled Castes are still neglected part of society. Converts complain that no one cares for them. They are not invited in any gathering of other Muslims. They can not get marry in other Muslims. I personally met the group of five young men from who converted from Scheduled Castes to Islam. Three of them told me that after conversion their wives left them. From that day to till now 6 years have passed, no one is ready to give his daughter in marriage to us.

This case is not specific to Scheduled Caste Hindus, but people hesitate to give their daughter in marriage to converts even from upper castes.

6.2.13 Motivations

Although in most cases the apparent motives for conversion to Islam seems physical needs. However there may be exceptions. The person converted with insincere intentions can be sincere after sometime. The intentions and motivations can change. As Lewis Rambo says.

Motives, after all, are not simple and single. They may be multiple, complex, and often quite malleable. For instance, when a person first comes into contact with a religious movement, his or her motives for conversion may be to achieve prestige, a sense of belonging, or other extrinsic rewards. After a period of interaction, however, the person may change his or her rhetoric of motives, as deep spiritual or religious yearnings and aspirations are triggered.”¹⁴⁵

Further he says about motivations

People change over time, and so do their motives. Indeed, change is the essence of conversion. There is certainly no one motive for conversion. Motives that start out as multiple, interactive, and cumulative are likely to be further transformed in the process of personal and spiritual growth and development or through the acquisition of a new vocabulary that is more in line with the requirements and expectations of the group.¹⁴⁶

No matter with what motives these people convert. However we can not determine that their motives will remain constant. Any person converted for physical gain can change into sincere convert for spiritual growth.

6.2.14 Importance of Relations

The problem that is common with the new converts from Scheduled Caste Hindus is, they are left to their fate after conversion. They are not cared by society and religious organizations. There is no arrangement of training and

¹⁴⁵ Lewis.R.Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

teaching except the special case of Bait Ussalam. Even in Bait Ussalam they get four month's training but after they are left to their fate. It is very much important for religious organizations and society to maintain a strong relations with them to keep them engage and intact with religion.

As Lewis R. Rambo writes,

Some scholars have theorized that formation of close personal relationships during conversion enables converts to feel accepted at a deep level, and that such personal affirmation releases energy that gives vitality to the new orientation. Others have theorized that an experience of recognition make them feel to surpass conflicts increase self-esteem and view life from new angle. It is agreed upon among many of the social scientists that relationship connection are key to conversion.¹⁴⁷

To elaborate the importance of Lewis R. Rambo gives an example of Muslim preachers in some parts of Africa.

The importance of relationships is also demonstrated in the process of conversion to Islam in some parts of Africa. Arens reports that one of the ways Islam has become important in sub-Saharan Africa is through a patronage system. A stranger is introduced to a village by a patron, and between them a father-son relationship develops in which reciprocal obligations are mutually accepted. The "father" sponsors his "son," and the "son" thereby becomes part of the extended kinship network. If the sponsor is a Muslim, the "client" too becomes a Muslim, as an integral part of becoming a full member of the community. The stranger thus receives access to the community, and the sponsor gains prestige and power by the elaboration of his social ties throughout the community.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 112.

If religious organizations or people of society make a mechanism like this in which new converts feel at home then their problems and sense of alienation can be reduced to great extent. The crises these new converts are going through after conversion can be overcome only by making strong relationships with them during the process and after conversion.

6.2.15 Islam as a Shelter

No matter with what kind of intentions Scheduled Castes do convert to Islam but one thing is quite clear that they think Islam their ultimate shelter. In their opinion Islam can be a remedy to all their problems. There is no doubt Islam gives equal status to all people. If society and people are not acknowledging these converts and not giving their due status then Islam should not be blamed.

6.2.16 Encapsulation

The important aspect of this conversion is encapsulation. Especially in case of Bait Ussalam. Almost all religious groups try to encapsulate their followers and new converts in order to save them from outer effects. Encapsulation is not necessarily a bad thing, it can be applied to class room for better concentration, as Lewis Rambo says, "in every classroom encapsulation is applied to create an environment for better concentration, noise control, new ideas and avoid interruption."¹⁴⁹

In case of Bait Ussalam we can find three types of encapsulation mentioned by Lewis Rambo. Physical, social and ideological.

"Physical encapsulation is definitely shifting people to a different place for example temple monestry etc. Social encapsulation is related with the activities. Converts are supposed to join study group, adopt dress codes for example Hare karishna's Orthodox Jews. Ideological encapsulation "Cultivation of worldview and belief system that works like vaccines to save converts from alternative systems."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 106.

But this encapsulation in Bait Ussalam has adverse affects on converts, as they are uprooted from their previous environment, they are alinated from their culture whatever they have, they loose their job although a kind of slavery, they could not adopt the belief system that they are supposed to adopt due to their shelterlessness, worst kind of poverty and their state of being unrecognized Muslims by society.

We find not much different situation in this description of the story of South African Indian Scheduled Castes. They reached South Africa from South India in 1860 as indentured labrors.

The Western Church was in hurry to take them into it's culture while keeping some distance. They established Mission Compounds to rehabilitate and to save them from prosecution of upper castes. This rehabilitaion resulted into segregation of these converts from society. The missions were criticized to alienate and uproot converts and make them foreigner among their own peopl. Yet, the missionaries never lived with new converts in compounds. Their accommodations were always at the distant place. However they used to support convert by visiting their compounds regularly. It could not form a close relation between converts and missionaries. They were not less from a washer man's dog neither belong to washer man nor to street.¹⁵¹

The recent mass conversion of Scheduled Caste Hindus in Sindb is neither different in nature and in consequences.

6.2.17 Conversion or Inversion

I am not raising questions on the sincerity of action or intention of Bait Ussalam and their approach towards Scheduled Caste Hindus and new converts. But this kinds of conversions not only at present but in the past could not prove fruitful for converts and the facilitators facilitating such type of conversions. Instead these conversion have proved inversions. The same experience Jhon

¹⁵¹ Jhon, "The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity: Conversion Story of South African Anglican Chrisitan," 7,8.

Andrew describes in his work *Conversion Story of South African Anglican Christians*.

“The approach from converts who were quick to westernize their life-style and the church that was quick to uproot them from mainstream society has adverse effect on them, on the lives of converts and the witness of church.”¹⁵²

The experiences of New Converts to Islam in Bait us Salam are not less than these converts to Christianity.

6.2.18 Problem of Hindu Girls Marriages

This is quite clear from the point of views of respondents who were interviewed through purposive sampling, that Hindu girls marriage throughout Sindh is reality. Although Hindus girls marry due to various reasons, however it is quite possible to force girls belonging to Scheduled Castes for marriage and later their conversion. As the poor families have no say in courts and society.

6.2.19 Steps Taken by the Government

Although Sindh Government has taken some measures in last two years to stop the frequent cases of Hindu girls marriages and conversion to Islam. But no steps have been taken to change the over all condition of Scheduled Castes.

According to the Law passed by Sindh Assembly unanimously:

Pakistan Muslim League Function law maker Nand Kumar Goklani presented a bill Criminal Law, act 2015 that demands imprisonment of five year to life for those who will be found guilty of forced conversion and fine will also be paid to the victim party.

The person who will perform marriage or facilitate the forced conversion in name of marriage will have three year's imprisonment and fine that will be paid to victim. In case of forced conversion allegation the court

¹⁵² Ibid., 8.

will give 21 days time to victim to arrive at independent decision. The change of religion will not be acceptable by underage children.¹⁵³

Further this law says

Regarding the mechanism of complaints the law says that victim, the person appointed by victim or witness can file case in the court. The court will announce the date of hearing that will not exceed more than seven days from the day case was filed. Further he said that any case related to forced conversion will be disposed of within 90 days.¹⁵⁴

Hindu Marriage Act was also passed by National Assembly and Senate to solve this problem. That related to marriage registration, divorce, and remarriage with the minimum age of marriage that is 18 years for both boys and girls.

These actions taken by the government acknowledge that problems regarding forced marriages and conversions exist somehow.

6.3 Conclusion

As well as the physical forced religious conversion is concerned, researcher could not find a single case in fieldwork. To make up for any inevitable incompetency on researcher's side interviews through purposive sampling were conducted to bring the reality more clearly on the surface.

For this purpose researcher met with the people belonging to different sections of society and visited District court Sanghar where I expected to find the cases regarding forced marriages and forced religious conversions. Specially I visited Advocate Suneel Kumar Perhyar Legal Advisor Pakistan International Human Rights. He deals all the cases regarding minorities in the District Court. Although he claimed that Hindus are being converted through force and forced

¹⁵³ Published in Dawn, November 26th, 2016

¹⁵⁴ Tunio, "Sindh Assembly Passes Bill against Forced Religious Conversion."

marriages of Hindus girls also there in the area but he was unable to show any case as a proof filed in the District Court. He promised to provide some cases filed in the High Court as proof but so far despite many reminders I did not receive yet.

On the base of this work we can not deny the existence of this issue in other parts of Sindh and we can not generalize the finding of this work. We need to see this issue beyond physical force. Other forces acting like physical force should not be ignored. Socio-political and socio-economic and socio-psychological factors make these Scheduled Caste Hindus vulnerable to the elements who use them only for their numbers.

The issue of forced religious conversion of Hindus in Sindh is complicated and multifaceted. It is recent because the projection of this issue started only after 9/11. It is historical because it finds its roots in the history of Scheduled Caste Hindus of Subcontinent. It is human issue because many political, social, financial psychological factors are attached to it. So far media has projected this issue for its rating and political and religious element have exploited these people to increase their numbers. No concrete effort has been made from any side for the permanent solution of this issue.

We can not undermine or underestimate the efforts being done by the organisations like Bait Usslam. But intentionally or unintentionally they are walking on the same line regarding Scheduled Caste Hindus and making the same mistakes with same consequences that already Christian missions have made in the history of Sub-continent.

Being a novice researcher this is my humble effort to bring reality on the surface and to draw the attention of authorities to solve or at least lessen the problems of these poorest of poor classes in Sindh. I have tried my best to remain objective and sincere to my work. I think that this work despite its loopholes and inadequacies will pave a way for those researchers who have abilities and sources to conduct research on the topic effectively.

6.4 Recommendations

Although National and Provincial governments have taken many steps to stop the under age girls marriages and conversion through legislation yet this is the one aspect of this problem. Legal, social, political, educational and financial issues need to be addressed for the permanent solutions of the problems of Scheduled Caste Hindus and new converts to Islam. Strict actions should be taken against bonded labour to solve their financial problems.

For the solution of these problems other sections of society will have to realize their responsibilities and play their part. Parents should upbringing and train their children to respect every human being and specially all Muslims indiscriminately.

Religious leaders should teach the public to embrace these converts as people of Madina embraced migrants and being a minority Scheduled Caste Hindus should be given all right that Islam promises.

Teacher should teach the kids from very basic level respect for whole humanity, equality of rights, rights of minorities and to help the needy people in society. Electronic and print media should also play its part to create awareness among the people regarding problems and solutions of Scheduled Caste Hindus and new Muslim Convert.

Political parties should not exploit these people only for political purposes but after getting elect special attention should be given to problems of Scheduled Casts and for their uplift.

They should not be uprooted from their workplace if religious organizations can not arrange permanent accommodation and other facilities. If some people want to get convert, they should be imparted religious teachings at their workplaces. The government should take strict actions to eliminate bonded labour.

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