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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to better understand Hindu-Christian relations in the experience of North Indian Pentecostals. The study proceeds from a social identity theory (SIT) framework and is guided by three research questions. The research questions call attention to Pentecostals' perception of the two social groups 'Christians' and 'Hindus', how the relationship between the two groups is experienced, and Pentecostals' interaction with the Hindu out-group. In order to answer these questions a field study was conducted at a Pentecostal college in North India, where nine students were interviewed.

Previous research states that the Hindu nationalist movement is responsible for a growing religious intolerance against religious minorities in India, which has among other things resulted in increasing anti-Christian violence and anti-conversion laws. However, because of the general lack of studies on how Christians perceive and experience Hindu-Christian relations, little is known about the situation from a micro perspective.

The informants' perception of the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group turned out to be more complex than a SIT model predicted. For example, instead of exaggerating the similarities within the groups, the informants pointed to the differences within the groups. The informants did not express hostile attitudes towards the Hindu out-group, but rather perceived the average Hindu as a potential convert. There was, however, a clear negative perception of Hindu leaders.

All informants had Hindu family members or Hindu friends and consequently interacted closely with members of the Hindu out-group. However, there was a significant difference in the interaction patterns between the informants coming from rural, respectively urban areas. The informants residing in villages were part of multi-religious communities and interacted in great extent with the Hindu out-group in their everyday life. The urban informants had the ability to choose who to interact with and were not part of any multi-religious community, which lead to a lesser degree of interaction with the Hindu out-group.

In terms of the informants' experience of the relationship between Christians and Hindus, a main finding is that the informants did not seem to experience that Hindu-Christian relations in their nearest surrounding had been critically affected by the Hindu nationalist movement. The informants described their close relationships with Hindus, as well as Hindu-Christian relations in their home towns/villages, as largely conflict-free. However, the informants generally experienced Hindu-Christian relations in India as tense and expressed fear of how their relations with Hindu out-group would be affected if the BJP won the upcoming national election.

Key words: Hindu-Christian relations, Pentecostalism, North India, Social Identity, Hindu nationalism

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Bahut bahut dhanyavad!

Contents

Abbreviations

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
DBC	Doon Bible College
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NIDPCM	The New International Dictionary of Pentecostals and Charismatic Movements
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SIT	Social identity theory
UCFHR	The United Christian Forum for Human Rights
VHP	Vishva Hindu Pariṣad

Glossary

Dharm parivartan	Religious return (a reconversion ritual)
Dubki vala	Immersion people
Ghar vapasi	Home-coming (a reconversion ritual)
Gopi	Cow-herd girl
Hindu Rashtra	Hindu nation
Prasad	Religious offered food
Puja	Worship ritual
Puncha	Elected village leader
Sangh Parivar	Family of Organization
Shuddhi	Purification (a reconversion ritual)
Tikka	Forehead mark

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The first day of my field work at Doon Bible College, a Pentecostal college in North India, was India's 65th Republic Day. Even though it was Sunday, all the students were lined-up in straight lines outside the main building at 08.30am. Before a special guest held a speech, we sang the national anthem and raised the Indian flag atop the main building. The ceremonial was concluded by some students who sang an own written song. The chorus echoed over the campus; "God loves the people who live in India, what a lovely place we have in India".

As I listened to the song, I couldn't help wondering if the students I soon was to interview actually felt this way about their country. Is India a wonderful place to live in as a Christian? This question has been lingering in my mind for some time, and was one of the reasons I decided to do a field study among Pentecostals in India. Even though Christianity has been part of India's religious landscape since the 4th century (Frykenberg, 2008:115), Christians are today frequently pictured as belonging to a foreign religion and followers of a foreign god (see e.g. Melanchthon, 2002; Bauman, 2008; Jaffrelot, 1996). Hindu nationalist groups have questioned Christians' loyalty to the India nation, and urged them to return to the Hindu fold or leave the country. Moreover, since the outburst of the anti-Christian riot in Gujarat in 1998, violence against Christians has increased drastically around the country (Bauman, 2013:634).

Pentecostals have, compared to other Christian groups, been disproportionately targeted in attacks (Bauman & Leech, 2012). It has been suggested that this may be caused by the strong missionary drive within the Pentecostal movement, and their alleged use of aggressive evangelistic methods. Moreover, in academic research Pentecostals have often been found to draw a clear line between 'secular' and 'spiritual' spheres (Anderson, 2004:261), being a culture 'against culture' (Robbins, 2010:161), and having an exclusive understanding of salvation. In other words, there are some characteristics about the Pentecostal movement that may encourage in-group behavior which may impinge on their relation to other groups in society.

However, my own experience of Pentecostalism in India did not fully conform to this picture. The missionary drive was certainly strong, but I had never experienced what is

referred to as "aggressive evangelistic methods". And even though I had heard horrible stories of violence against Pentecostals and even myself been threaten, persecution was not a common topic of conversation. It did not seem to be a big concern among the Pentecostals I knew. With my study I wished to bracket statistics of anti-Christian violence and analysis if the Hindu nationalist movement's influence over society, and instead better understand Hindu[1]-Christian relations from a micro perspective. I was curious about whether the relationship between Christians and Hindu had been affected by the Hindu nationalist movement on an individual level, and whether Pentecostals actually lived their lives separate from other religious groups.

The study is a qualitative study, with a primary material consisting of interviews with nine students from Doon Bible College. I decided to choose informants from northern India[2] as few studies concerning Pentecostals have been conducted in the area, and because it is the region were the Hindu dominance is strongest and Christian presence weakest according to the 2001[3] national census (Indian Census, 2001).

1.1 Objective and Research Questions

The aim of the study is to better understand Hindu-Christian relations from North Indian Pentecostals' perspective. I will focus especially on how Pentecostals' construction religious identities, in what ways they interact with Hindus, and how the relationship is experienced. This investigation will be informed by the approach of Social Identity heory (outlined in Chapter 2). The study's research questions are as follow:

(1). How do North Indian DBC students, perceive the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group?

(2). In what ways do North Indian DBC students, interact with the Hindu out-group in their everyday life in their hometown/village?

(3). How do North Indian DBC students, experience the relationship between the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group?

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[1] To use such a general term as "Hindus" (as well as "Christians" to designate a group so highly diverse and difficult to define is problematic. Nonetheless, the term will be used in this study to represent those identifying themselves as Hindus, or if stated those people my informants call Hindus. For a discussion on the problems with the modern concepts Hinduism see King (2009).

[2] In the study north India refers to all states except the four Southern states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh), and eight North Eastern States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Megehalaya, Tripura, Sikkim).

[3] I use the 2001 Census as this are the last statistics released by the Indian government that includes religious belonging

1.2 Previous Research

In this section I will highlight two fields of research relevant for my study. The section will also serve as a background for the thesis. Part one concerns Pentecostalism in India, and is vital as it constitutes a framework for both comparison and contextualization of the study. The focus will be on what previous studies have revealed characterizing a Pentecostal identity in India, and how Indian Pentecostals perceive and are engage with the Hindu community. As research on Pentecostalism in India is very limited, and almost nonexistent in terms of Pentecostals' relation to the Hindu majority, I have chosen to give a broad introduction to previous research of the movement in India. Part two deals with three ways in which the rise of the Hindu nationalist movement has affected the living conditions for Christians in India. This part will clarify the particular perspective of the study, as well as the gaps within previous research, which the study aims to fill.

1.2.1 Pentecostalism in India

Little attention has been given to the study of the Pentecostalism in India despite the growing number of adherents and the increasing attention given to the global Pentecostal movement within academia. As Michael Bergunder (2008), one of the leading scholars of the Pentecostalism in India, put it "while we have quite good information on the history and present condition of the established churches, there is hardly anything known about the Pentecostal movement in India" (p.14). Moreover, most studies concerns the south India Pentecostalism movement, which means that studies regarding North Indian Pentecostalism are even more limited in number. The only monograph to my knowledge is Wesley Lukose (2013) study about Pentecostalism in Rajasthan. A handful of articles have also been published. That so few studies have been published on the topic is remarkable, and imply that this study is an important contribution to an unexplored field.

The origin of the Pentecostal movement in India is a much-disputed topic and a question deeply connected to the question of identity (Lukose, 2013:14); is Pentecostalism to be regarded primarily as an American import or an Indian indigenous spiritual movement? As religious intolerance intensifies, alongside an increasing attitude towards Christians as belonging to a foreign religion, the question of identity is not only a religious, but also a socio-political matter.

The question of origin is also a matter connecting research of Indian Pentecostalism with the larger historical question of the genesis of the movement. One can find two main approaches to the issue. First, there are a large number of scholars who trace the roots of

Pentecostalism to America; with a focus either on Charles Parham or William Seymour and the Azusa street awakening in 1906 (see e.g. Yong & Riche, 2010, Robbins, 2004, and Bergunder, 2010). Second, there are those arguing that it is impossible to date back the movement to single location and time. These scholars maintain that Pentecostal-like revivals emerged in many places in the late 19th and early 20th century, of which one was the Mukti Revival in south India in 1905. This approach is often called the "multi Jerusalem theory" and has its strongest advocate in Allan Anderson, one of the most prominent scholars within the field of Global Pentecostalism.

According to Wessly Lukose (2013) most Indian Pentecostals consider the Mukti Revival to be the starting point of the Pentecostal movement in India (p.33). The revival itself took place at a Mukti Mission, a home for widows and orphan girls started by the social activities Pandita Ramabai. The Center did not only become a place where young women were trained and sent out in ministry, but also a vital link for the global Pentecostal network (Anderson, 2007:98).

My own position is in line with the second approach. I consider it problematic to neglect the many early Pentecostal-like revivals around the globe, on the basis that they did not give rise to an interconnected movement and did not have a fully formulated theology (even today many Pentecostal churches and movements lack an explicit formulated theology). The Azusa street missionaries played a crucial role in linking the movement, but this process had probably been much more difficult if there had been no previously (Pentecostal-like) revivals. Moreover, as Anderson (2007) highlights in *Spreading Fires* – a postcolonial study of early Pentecostalism history – there is a "white man bias" in the writing of Pentecostal historiography and a diminishing of the role of native, as well as female evangelists. The multi Jerusalem approach could therefore be regarded as a reworking of the history of Pentecostalism, where one tries to integrate sources that have until now been neglected.

1.2.1.1 Beliefs, Practices and Characteristics

In this section research on Indian Pentecostalism will be discussed in relation to what scholars have pointed out are chief characteristic of the Global Pentecostal movement. The focus will be on the missionary drive within Pentecostalism, the emphasis on the Spirit, ethics and the use of the Bible.

Research on Indian Pentecostalism has shown that emphasis on mission is a chief characteristic for the movement in contemporary India (see e.g. Lukose, 2010, Bergunder, 2008; and Sunesson, 2008). This finding corresponds to research on Global Pentecostalism. In

fact, the missionary drive has been a chief characteristic for the Pentecostal movement since its inception. The first missionaries that experienced the Azusa Street awakening believed that they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to more effectively spread the Gospel as the end times were approaching (Anderson, 2004:206). In 1908, the movement already had spread to around fifty countries and become a worldwide movement (Bergunder, 2008:10). The strong missionary drive is often stated as one of the main reasons to the Pentecostal movement's success.

The laity is an important part of the missionary efforts in India, which according to Bergunder (2010) mainly takes place on the person level, among families, friends, neighbors and colleges. Lukose (2010) argues that missionary methods such as street preaching and literature distribution were previously much more common. However, due to persecution this is seldom encouraged today (p.86). These findings thus run contrary to the claims by non-Pentecostal churches that Pentecostals are using aggressive evangelistic methods in their ministry.

In terms of attitudes towards social work as a form of ministry, research has showed that among Indian Pentecostals there has historically been an ambivalence stance towards engaging in such work. (Bergunder, 2008:212). The finding also conforms to research on Global Pentecostalism in general. Since the originally "calling" was to reach out with the Gospel before the second coming of Jesus, social engagement was not a prioritized activity. However, as Stanley B. Burgess (2001) highlights, the establishment of various kinds of institutions (e.g. schools, orphanages, medical) has been and is quite common among Pentecostals in North India. Burgess argues that the raison d'etre for this engagement in social work was the difficulties missionaries faced in their evangelizing efforts. The most famous example is probably the ministry *Mission of Mercy,* founded by Mark and Huldah Buntain in 1952 in Calcutta. Today the organization feeds over 20.000 people daily, and have set up (among others things) a hospital, several village clinics, drug prevention programs and twelve schools, where 6000 children are enrolled (Burgess, 2001:93-94). The reservation toward social work among Pentecostals, globally as well as in India, has in the course of time weakened. Today social ministries are relatively common among Pentecostals worldwide (Miller & Yamamori, 2007)

However, Bergunder (2008) emphasis that south Indian Pentecostals churches' engagement in social work, often is a means to other ends; a way to reach new converts. Many of the social projects have been initiated by western missionaries and their churches, which tend to have more than charitable intentions. Moreover, many churches have problems

with corruption due to the inflow of large sums of money from abroad to social projects (pp.212-215, 237).

A part from mission, a characteristic for the Pentecostal movement worldwide is the emphasis on the experience, role and gifts of the Holy Spirit. "Signs and wonders" have been an integral part of mission and distinguish the movement from other denominations and movements. A quite often used definition of Pentecostalism is those churches and movements "concerned primarily with the experience of the working of the Holy spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts" (Anderson, 1979:4) There is thus and emphasis on practice/experience rather than theology. As Simon Chan (2000) points out; the "Pentecostal experience" is richer than the "Pentecostal explanation" (p.10).

Among Pentecostals, the presence of the Spirit does not merely imply an attendance, but more importantly empowerment. The empowerment is often manifested itself in the receiving and practicing of "spiritual gifts", such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy. Furthermore, it is often taught that a crucial step in becoming a "full equipped" Christian is to receive the second baptism, the "baptism in the Holy Spirit". Spirit baptism is something different from conversion (which usually just implicates that the individual accepts Jesus as "Lord and Savior") but often closely connected to it (Kärkkäinen, 2010:228-229). .

According to Bergunder (2008) Pentecostals in south India do generally not regard Spirit baptism as necessary for salvation. However, the notion of speaking in tongues as initial evidence of the reception of baptism in the Spirit is widespread (pp.140-142). In terms of spiritual gifts, Bergunder argues that healing, prophecy, exorcism and other extraordinary spiritual experiences have been a major reason to the success of Pentecostalism in India (p.163). Lukose (2013) agrees and even states that the Pentecostal churches in Rajasthan can be understood as "healing communities" (p.75). As medical facilities are not always available or affordable in village setups, the healing ministries of Pentecostals are very appealing. Furthermore, Bergunder (2010) stresses that Pentecostal spirituality and the widespread belief in evil spirits constituted a meeting point with everyday Hindu religiosity. Instead of rejecting belief in spirits as superstition, like most churches, Pentecostals have not only embraced these beliefs and the specific problems they represent, but also offered solutions to them (pp.125-129).

Within Pentecostals studies it is stressed, however, that the tendency to embrace other religions spiritual worldview is often two sided. Even if Pentecostals tend to accept the ontological claims of the existents of a spiritual realm, they do seldom accept all of the values accompanying them. Instead, it is common that other religions' spirit worlds are demonized

(Robbins, 2004:129). This was particularly common among early Pentecostal missionaries, whose letters and reports back to their home churches often displayed a negative view of other religions' and their spiritual worldviews. Quite telling is a British missionary's letter written in 1914's that spell out: "Oh, what a dark, sad land this seems to be, and the longer one lives in it, the more one feels the darkness all around" (Anderson, 2008:233).

However, if one look at the findings of resent research of Indian Pentecostals, the tendency to demonize other religions seems to have weakened. Suneson (2008) found that the Pentecostals she interviewed in two churches in Bangalore tried to speak diplomatically about other religions as not to offend adherents of other religions. One of her informants argued that Pentecostals who are speaking about Hindus as "devil-worshipers" posed a big problem for Christians in India, as they are spurring negative attitudes towards the Christian minority. However, he also stated that Pentecostals are reforming themselves; that the way Pentecostals are talking about Hindus is changing (pp.278-279). Lukose (2013) observed a similar development among Pentecostals in Rajasthan. Several pastors said that they used to regard non-Christians as "destined for hell", but that they now perceived them as "fellow citizens", "future believers" and "pre-Christian neighbors". They explained these changes in their approach against the background of an increasing religious intolerance (pp.85-86)

Two additional characteristics of Global Pentecostalism are a firm moral code, and the use as well as perception of the Bible. Adherents are often warned of engaging with the "world" as it may threaten a holy (and moral) lifestyle. Moreover, converts are often encouraged to make a clear break with their former life, especially if it involves such activities as drinking alcohol, using drugs and sleeping around (Robbins, 2004:127). What the moral standards should be is, however, not an easy matter to settle. According to Bergunder (2008) the discussion of ethical norms is an explosive topic among Indian Pentecostals, which raises conflicts among pastors as well as in the laity. As pertains to the Bible, it is regard as of the highest authority and a literalist approach to understanding its message is common. The Bible is usually read and used as a guide to the daily life, and used to understand everyday experience (Anderson, 2004:225).

These characteristic; the missionary drive, a firm moral code, emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Bible, are key features that are used to distinguish Pentecostals from other Christians. The task to define which churches and movements that are Pentecostal, have though proven to be complicated, and have become one of the most debated questions within Pentecostal studies. Depending on the definition, the numbers of proposed adherents worldwide varies from 250 million to 523 million (Robbins, 2004:117-118). The problem in

defining Pentecostals depends on, among other thing, the diverse character and differing forms of churches; as well as the lack in theological commonalties, a shared institutions and sets of practices. This has led scholars to talk about a "family resemblance" rather than emphasizing one fundamental characteristic.

Another way of defining which churches and movements that are Pentecostal is by tracing their church historical roots. Bergunder (2008) takes such an approach in his work on South Indian Pentecostalism and applies the following two criteria in defining Pentecostal churches: (1) a historical connection to the beginnings of Pentecostalism, and (2) a contemporary synchronous interrelation (p.12).

There are though several problems with using these criteria to decide which churches that are Pentecostal. For example, independent Pentecostal-like churches, resilient to categorize and date back to a common Pentecostal heritage are constantly emerging. There are also many churches that do not want to call themselves 'Pentecostal' (even if their connection with the movement is clear) and churches that other Pentecostal churches do not want to include under the Pentecostal umbrella (Lukose, 2012:71). Hence, a historical/synchronous definition seems creates more problems than it solves. In this study I will therefore use the broad definition of a Pentecostal family resemblance.

I have so far been using "Pentecostals" in an all embracing way to include all the different "spiritual gifts" movements, which also will be the usually practice throughout the study. That is not to say that there are no divisions within Pentecostalism. In attempts to bring order to the many diverse forms of Pentecostal groups/churches/movements, scholars tend to apply and construct taxonomies. However, different categorizations are employed (compare e.g. van der Laan, 2010, Ukah, 2009, Omenyo, 2009, and Anderson, 2010),–resulting in a plurality of system of classification, where overlaps and conflicts occur.

In this study I will at times distinguish between three different types of Pentecostals, a categorization derived from *New International Dictionary of Pentecostals and Charismatic Movements* (NIDPCM): (1) Classical Pentecostals, (2) Charismatic Christians, and (3) Neo-Charismatics. The first category is the form of Pentecostalism which springs from North America, emphasizing Spirit-baptism, and speaking in tongues as an initial evidence for such baptism, as a central doctrine and practice. Charismatic Christians are those Christians/churches/movements/groups that have gone through a pentecostalization but have remained within their mainline denomination. The third category is the largest and includes all indigenous, independent or nondenominational churches that have typical Pentecostal behaviors and beliefs (as described above).

1.2.1.2 Pentecostal Churches and Ecumenism

There has not been mapping of either Pentecostal churches in India as a whole, or of Pentecostal churches in North India. According to the NIDPCM there are 33,5 million Pentecostals in India. However, according to the Indian national census of 2001, there are about 24 million Christians in total (Indian Census, 2001). That the numbers varies to such an extent is remarkable, and problematic. That there are more Christians in India than the national census suggests is however not an unusual position among scholars or statistical databases. Kumar Suresh Singh (1992), general director of the anthropological survey of India, stated in his *People of India* that Christians probably constitute around 7,3% of Indian's total population, which at the time implied 74 million people. The World Christian Database estimates that there are about 62 million Christians in India. To make matters more complicated Ashok Kumar & Rowena Robinson (2010) in a study among Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh, found that many Christian Dalits chose to register their official identity as Hindus, in order to obtain the benefits that a Scheduled Caste status imply,[4] as well as to make sure they were under protection of the Prevention of Atrocities Act.[5] That there are ambiguities and complications in terms of producing reliable data of the numbers of Pentecostals, as well as Christians in total in India is clear.

Even though if larger inter-regional Pentecostal denominations do exist, Bergunder (2008) points out that the south India Pentecostal movement largely consists of independent regional churches. The typical genesis of a small independent church is describe in following way "a pastor settles in a particular place in order to found a church; after hard times, in the beginning, he succeeds in collecting a small congregation around him that grows steadily and guarantees him a certain income" (p.209). If a church succeeds in attaining many new members, it is common that the next step is to create branch churches. However, as it tends to be difficult to grow extensively through missionary efforts, larger churches often absorb smaller churches in order to "grow" faster. The growth rate thus appears high, which tend to encourage foreign sponsors to give finical support (pp.210-211).

Pentecostals churches' relationships to non-Pentecostal churches in India have to a large extent been tense during the 20th century. Most of the Pentecostal movements' adherents have joined the movement from other churches and Pentecostals have as a consequent been

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[4] To be legally recognized as Scheduled Caste a group needs to be registered as Hindus, Buddhist or Sikhs.
[5] An act that aims to simplify the process of hearings, and strengthen investigation mechanism against atrocities committed against members of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.

accused of sheep-steeling[6]. One issue that has created conflict is that Pentecostals have emphasized that adult baptism is necessary for Christians who have been child baptized (Bergunder, 2008:238-243). The issue of baptism was disputed to the extent that Pentecostal missionaries in Rajasthan initially even became labeled as *dubki vala* (the immersion people) (Lukose, 2013:87)

In recent years, the ecumenical relations have started to improve. Lukose (2013) found two major reasons for this development. Firstly, there is an increasing understanding between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostal, mostly due to new expressions of spirituality that is spreading. Secondly, because of increasing persecution, Christians have come together in order to demand justice and protection (Lukose, 2013:90-91)

1.2.2. The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Christians of India

Thomas Blom Hansen (1999) begins *Saffron Wave* with stating that the Hindu nationalist movement "has grown into the most powerful cluster of political and cultural organizations in the country" (p.3). Given this evolvement, it is hardly surprising that the movement has drawn a great deal of scholarly attention. The most common types of works are historical accounts (see e.g. Bhatt, 2001; Jaffrelot, 1998; Zavos, 2000), the movements involvement in politics (see e.g. Hansen, 1999; Anand, 2011; Adeney & Saez (eds), 2005), and it's affect on communalism in India (see e.g. Shani, 2007; Froerer, 2007, Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012). In terms of impact on the religious minorities in India, most attention has been given to Hindu-Muslim relations. For this reason, research on Hindu-Christian relations is limited.

In this section I will present three areas, pointed out by academic research, in which Indian Christians has been affected by the Hindu nationalist movement: (a) a national anti-Christian discourse, (b) anti-conversion attitudes and laws, and (c) anti-Christian violence.

1.2.2.1 Anti-Christian Discourse

The Hindu nationalist movement was born in a time of strong opposition to the British colonial power, a time of Hindu resurgence, and a growing criticism of western Christian activity. Ian Copland (2006) describes how European missionaries provoked controversy not only through missionary activity, but also through involvement in social reforms, and in colonial education and policy changes in favor for low castes. Nonetheless, Christopher Jaffrelot (2007) argues that it was not until the inception of the organization of Arya Samaj in

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[6] I.e. recruiting (steeling) members from other churches.

1875 that the Hindu reform movement of the 19th century took a revivalist turn, and as a consequence became more extreme in its anti-Christian, as well as anti-Western position and discourse. Aryya Samaj portrayed and promoted conversion to Christianity as a threat to the nation. To stop the trend of the growing Christian minority, the founder Dayananda Saraswati introduced the ceremony *shuddhi* (purification), a ritual of reconversion (p.6-10).[7]

It was, however, not until the 1920s that the Hindu nationalist movement would formulate a more rigid and distinctly anti-Christian discourse. *Hindutva - how is Hindu?* , written by Vinayal D. Savarkar, became the first formulation of the movements guiding ideology; the Hindutva ideology. In Savarkar's version of Hindutva, one of the pillars of India's national identity is a common Hindu culture, which all citizens of India should adhere to. Christianity and Islam, religions with foreign origins, were therefore considered a threat to the *Hindu rashtra* (Hindu nation). Indian Christians and Muslims were portrayed as a part of the Hindu race that must be reintegrated into the Hindu society (Jaffrelot, 2007:86).

The discourse of Christians as a alien part of the Indian nation was further formulated in the writings of the former leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Madhav S. Golwalker. Golwalker was in charge of the organization from 1940 to 1973 and was inspired by German race ideology (Jaffrelot, 2007:98). In his most famous book *We or our Nationhood Defined*, Golwalker makes the following remarks concerning the "foreign races":

> *"The foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., of the Hindu nation and must loose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizen's rights"*
>
> (Golwalker, 1947:62)

These three historical flashbacks contain the most fundamental aspects of the anti-Christian discourse: (a) conversion to Christianity as a threat to the Indian identity and culture, (b) Christianity as a foreign and unwelcomed part within the *Hindu rashtra.* The two main vehicles behind the spread of this discourse have been RSS and the political party Bhartaya Janta Party (BJP).

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[7] Reconversion campaigns are still common in India, put has taken different names and shapes, for example *ghar vapasi* (home-coming) and *dharm parivartan* (religious return). See Vandevelde (2011) for further orientation.

RSS was founded in the 1920s, with the aim of spreading the Hindutva ideologue, and strengthen the Hindu majority community. RSS quickly developed into the largest Hindu nationalist organization. Chetan Bhatt (2001) argues that after independence RSS have been "the most important and politically successful Hindu nationalist organization" (p.113). Over the years RSS has generate several other organizations as well as political parties, among them the BJP. As for the BJP, its power is manifested in the fact that it is the only political party that has been able to challenge the Congress party on a national level. RSS and the BJP together constitute the cornerstones in the Hindu nationalist movement, also called *Sangh Parivar* (Family of Organizations). At the BJP's website one can read, "The Bharatiya Janata Party is today the most prominent member of the family of organisations known as the "Sangh Parivar" and nurtured by the Rashtria Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) (BJP website, History). With the growing influence of the *Sangh Parivar*, the anti-Christian discourse is becoming increasingly widespread (see e.g. Gupta & Sharma, 1996, Berenschot, 2011, Hansen, 1999 and Menon, 2010).

1.2.2.2 Anti-conversions Laws

As mentioned earlier, aversion against conversion to Christianity was one of the main reasons for the initiation of Arya Samaj. However, conversion has not only been a burning issue for adherents of the Hindu nationalist movement, but has also fueled widespread discussions in the country. An ambivalent position towards conversion has been advanced by several influent leaders, for example Ram Mohan Roy and Mohandas Gandhi (Kim, 2003). In *Young India*[8] (1931) Gandhi stated, "Every nation considers its own faith to be as good as that of any other. Certainly the great faiths held by the people of India are adequate for her people. India stands in no need of conversions from one faith to another".

In the discussions on conversion in India, Christianity has stood at the center of the debate for two reasons: (1) it is the minority with the strongest engagement in the missionary work, and (2) Christians have been accused by the Hindu nationalist movement, as well as others, of alluring, or forcing poor and underprivileged people, to convert to Christianity. It is claimed that Christians are offering different kinds of material benefits in order to make converts (Bauman & Young, 2012). A study by Amalendu Misra (2011) showed that one motivation to embraced Christianity was of immediate material benefits for several of his informants. In the article Misra argues that there is a triadic relationship between poverty, material security and

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[8] A weekly paper published by Mohandas Gandhi between 1919-1932.

conversion to Christianity in India (p.370). This does not mean that people who convert because of material benefits are to be regarded as victims of Christian mission (as the Hindu nationalist movements argues), they could as well be regarded as agents who take advantage of a provided offer. However, there are of course ethical ambiguities in such a situation, especially if there is a conscious exploitation of people's poverty.

Sebastian C.H. Kim (2003) has written an impressive work about the different discussions concerning conversion between Hindus and Christians. In the introduction Kim highlights three explanations, given by historians and sociologist, for why conversion is problematic in India: (1) it threatens the communal structure present in the Indian society, (2) it challenges the socio-economic establishment, and (3) the anti-conversion discourse is cornerstone in the Hindutva ideology and therefore prevailing (p.4-5).

Kim (2003) himself focuses on the question from a philosophical and theological perspective and concludes that the issue is so hard to settle because it is discussed from two radical different religious systems (p.183). This became evident in the shaping of the Indian Constitution during the 1940s.[9] In the Assembly, Christians argued that the right to change religion and to choose one's religious identity was as a fundamental right for each Indian citizen. Those against conversion on the other hand, regarded conversion as an insult and undermining of other people's religion, as a lack of religious tolerance. Moreover, it was argued that conversion disturbed the harmony in society and that it would be used for political ends (pp.38-40, 56). In the end, however, no law against conversion was written into the Constitution and instead all citizens were ensured the right to "freely profess, practice and propagate their religion" (Article 25).

However, in terms of conversion and policymaking the issue was not settled with the adoption of the Constitution. Since then, several states in India have passed so called 'Freedom of Religion Bills/Acts' which are meant to regulate conversion[10]. Jennifer Coleman (2008) argues that the anti-conversion laws are to be seen as part of a Hindu nationalist agenda to problematize religious choice and identity in India (p.246). The Bills slightly differ from each other, but basically imply that a person who wants to change religion should give prior notice of about one month, and that no person should attempt to convert somebody else by "force" or "allurement". In the Gujarat Bill force refers to "force or a threat of injury of any kind including threat of divine displeasures or social ex-communication", and allurement

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[9] For a fully description and discussion of conversion in the Indian Constituent Assembly, see Kim (2003: 37-58).

[10] For a fully discussion see (Coleman, 2008) or (Noorani, 2012)

to "means offer of any temptation in the form of any gift or gratification, either in cash or kind; grant of any material benefit, either monetary or otherwise" (Gujarat Bill, 2003).

There is not much known regarding the effects of the laws against Christians, however, Lukose (2013) does bring some insights into the issue in his study of Rajasthan (the law has been passed in the state but not yet implemented). The Pentecostals interviewed by Lukose expressed concern whether the law will be misused by the Hindutva party and that it represents a hidden agenda to put Christian missionaries in prison[11] Moreover, Lukose's informants feared that their social work (e.g. medical clinics and educational institutions) will be put down as it will be deemed as a mean to allure Hindus to Christianity. Together with other Christians, the Pentecostals of Rajasthan have argued strongly against the law (p.126). The law thus seems to put stress on already exposed minority.

1.2.2.3 Anti-Christian Violence

Even though anti-Christian violence has been increasing during the last decades, little research has been done on the subject (Bauman, 2013). Most scholars have instead focused on the even more tense Hindu-Muslim relationship (see e.g. Brass, 2003, Berenschot, 2011, Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012). Chad Bauman is a leading scholar on the subject of anti-Christian violence, with several articles published on the subject.

The first large anti-Christian violence riot broke out in Gujarat in 1998. In the riots more than thirty churches were burnt or vandalized, together with several, schools, shops and homes of Christians (Appeliyl, 2009:56). Before 1998 anti-Christian violence had been sporadic and very limited in scope. Between 1964 and 1996 the United Christian Forum for Human Rights (UCFHR) registered only thirty-two cases of attacks. However, in 1997 the rate of registered attacks suddenly grew to fifteen and in 1998 jump drastically to ninety due to the riots in Gujarat. Following years the number of attacks continued to rice and reached the present level of around two hundred registered cases annually (Bauman, 2013). In 2007 another large anti-Christian riot broke out, this time in the state of Orissa. In these riots more than a hundred Christians were killed, a large number of homes and Christian institutions were destroyed and thousands of people ended up in refugee camps (Bauman & Young, 2012:194-195).

In the article *Political competition, relative deprivation and perceived threat* Bauman and Tamara Leech (2012) present the result of an analysis of 502 incidents of anti-Christian

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[11] In the Rajatshan Bill, the punishment for forcing or alluring somebody to convert is imprisonment for 1-5 years.

violence during the years of 2007-2008. Their findings show little support for a simple demographic explanation of violence, for example that poorer states are more affected. The only demographic characteristic that distinguished states that faced more violence was the presence of police; that is, Christians living in states that are under-policed are more prone to be affected by anti-Christian violence (p.2202).

Another finding from the study was that in states where the Christian growth rate approached or exceeded that of Hindus, anti-Christian violence is more likely to occur (p.2204). Moreover, in states with higher percentage of occupied seats by the National Democratic Alliance[12] (NDA) in Lok Sabha[13], violence against Christians was more common. In other words, anti-Christian violence was more widespread in states where NDA had greater political influence (p.2206). The study also gave support to the correlation between violence and Christian surpassing Hindus in work participation (p.2211). Bauman and Leech's study furthermore showed that most attacks are smaller and isolated incidents (and not connected to regional upheavals) (p.2198).

There is a general agreement among scholars studying anti-Christian violence, that an underlying cause to the rise of anti-Christian is the increased influence of the Hindu nationalist movement. Nevertheless, there is a question mark as to why anti-Christian violence significantly has risen since 1998. It is true that 1998 was the year when the Hindu nationalist party, Bharatya Janat Party (BJP), won the national elections. On the other hand, the violence has continued at the same level even after the Congress party came back to power in 2004.

Lancy Lobo (2002) and Jaffrelot (1996) have suggested that attacks against Christians may be used to fill a void after the "successful" campaign of the Ayodhya mosque, destroyed in 1992; that the Sangh Parivar is in need for another anti-minority campaign after the Ayodhya campaign in order to keep alive the strive for a *Hindu rashtra.* Another explanation has been suggested by Monica Melanchthon (2002:110), respectively Johan Zavos (2001:89). They argue that the increased anti-Christian violence is due to the Christian campaigns for Dalit rights, which challenge present identities, and propose a threat to the Hindu nationalist understanding of the order of society.

Bauman (2013) has proposed a third explanation. In *Hindu-Christian Conflict in India* Bauman argues that Christians and Christianity have become symbols for the wide-ranging effects of globalization in India. For example, that Christians through their widespread

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[12] A coalition of parties lead by BJP:
[13] 'The House of the people' - the lower house of the parliament of India.

establishment of educational institutions, represent the shift to a merit-and skill based status system; that Christians through their connections to Western churches and their literacy programs in English represent the challenge of a foreign meaning-making system; and that Christians is an obstacle to the Hindu nationalist project of creating a homogenous Indian Hindu identity. If Bauman is correct in his analysis, that Christians have become a signifier of the effects of globalization in India, the future for the Christian minority is worrying, especially in the light of recent national elections in which BJP gained majority on their own in Lok Sabha. Bauman ends the article with citing Arjun Appadural (2006) who has stated: "globalization, being a force without face, cannot be the object of ethnocide … minorities can" (p.44).

1.3 My Contribution to Research

The aim with this presentation of previous research is in part to acquaint the reader with two fields that are of importance for the study, and in part to present the background to the thesis in order to clarify how the study will contribute to research. I have hopefully demonstrated that the situation for Christians in India has changed since the inception of the Hindu nationalist movement; a worrying development that has intensified during the last two decades. The effects of this development have mostly been studied on a macro or meso level. Hence, there is a lack of studies from a micro perspective. The present study will contribute to a better understanding of Hindu-Christian relations in contemporary India from a micro perspective. To my knowledge no study has been conducted that focus exclusively on Hindu-Christian relations from a North Indian Pentecostal perspective. The study will moreover contribute to deepen knowledge of Pentecostals, which "there is hardly anything know about" (Bergunder, 2008:14). Especially in terms of North India Pentecostals, among which remarkable few studies has been conducted.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis consists in seven chapters. The first chapter (INTRODUCTION) introduces the reader to the study. In this chapter, the overall purpose is presented, as well as the research questions this study aims to answer. Through an overview of previous research of Pentecostalism in India and how the Hindu nationalist movement has changed the living conditions for India's Christian, the study is placed in the context that constitutes its departure point. Furthermore, the study's relevance and contribution to research is accentuated.

The second chapter (THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK) highlights the theoretical perspective – social identity theory – that will be guiding for this study. It is an essential chapter, as it introduces the concepts and the perspectives that has been used to construct the study, analyze the data and described the findings. In the third chapter, (METHOD), the procedures that have led to the study's conclusion are described and discussed; from choice of method, to the presentation of the analysis. The chapter also includes a reflection over ethical considerations related to the study and, as well as a reflection of my own role as a researcher. Chapter four (PRESENATATION OF THE INFORMANTS) contains a short introduction of Doon Bible College and a brief presentation of each of the nine informants.

The fifth chapter (NEGOIATING SOCIAL IDENITIES) is the first analysis chapter. It discusses issues related to the first research question. The chapter is structured primarily around three themes: identification, the Christian in-group, and the Hindu out-group. In chapter six (HINDU-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS) the analysis moves from how the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group is perceived, to how the informants experience the relationship between these two groups, as well as to what extent they interact with the Hindu out-group. The chapter thus entwines the presentation of the analysis to research questions two and three.

In the last chapter (CONCLUSION) the research questions are answered by summing up and discussing the most important findings of the study, suggestions for further research are also given here. The concluding chapter is followed by a list of interviews, a reference list and an appendix.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social identity has during the last decades received intensive attention within social science and been one of the unifying themes of research (Jenkins, 2008:28). It seems like most scholars have something to say about social identity, whether it be anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists or historians. There are currently several theoretical approaches to the concept, such as theories focusing on social identity as a role, culture as well as psychodynamic approaches, and social identity as an intergroup boundary (Korostelina, 2007:21-31). This study adheres to the approach of social identity theory (SIT), originating in the academic works of Henri Tajfel (1919-1982), and fully formulated in cooperation with John Turner in the mid and late 1970s. Turner later developed the 'self-categorization theory', which differs from SIT but shares commonalties and therefore should be regarded as a part of the SIT paradigm (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995:259).

The reason for choosing this particular approach of social identity is because of its strong emphasis on intergroup relations, which is a main focus of this study. However, I will not employ all of the aspects this approach offers, but concentrate on those features relevant for the study. Furthermore, since the inception of the SIT its theories have been further developed and some key assumptions have been questioned. A development which will to some extent be highlighted in this presentation, as I will not always keep to the classical understanding of SIT. Initially, I would also like to state that my understanding of the 'social' is guided by a social constructivist perspective. In other words, I perceive social categorizations and identities not as fixed and unchangeable entities, but as collectively shaped, under constant negotiation and change. Accordingly, the social identities "Christians" and "Hindus" are regarded as socially constructed, and not as groups existing "out there" independent of a society that gives them meaning.

2.1 Social Identity and Self-categorization

Within SIT a distinction is made between personal identity and social identity (Tajfel & Turner 1986). A personal identity is the identity that sets apart a person from other in-groups

members, that is, the other members of a particular social group which a person belongs to. Social identity concerns the individual's identification with a social group, and his/her social categorization of people in society. Social identity can be understood as an individual's self-conception as a group member. It thus provides the individual with a feeling of belonging to a social world, and as such offers an interpretive understanding of his/her position within society at large (Korostelina, 2007:23).

Tajfel (1981) has defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p.255). Accordingly, two accepts are stressed: (1) a cognitive aspect; the conviction that one belongs to a certain group (e.g. "I am Christian"), and (2) an emotional aspect; the importance one's place on that group belonging (e.g. "In my everyday life I try to follow Jesus in everything I do").

As Tajfel noted in the above citation, an individual is not restricted to categorizing himself/herself with a single social identity. Most persons perceived themselves as belonging to several social groups simultaneously (e.g. one can be Catholic, women, Punjabi, supporter of team Delhi Giants, and member of the BJP at the same time). A person can therefore choose to act as a group member of the Catholic Church in one context, and tone down that identity in another context in favor of another identity. However, a particular social identity can be especially salient to a person's self-conception, and thus influence thinking and behavior even in a situation when the context seemingly does not demands it (Oakes, Haslam & Tuner, 1998).

The process of social categorization has a central role within SIT, and is regarded as a way in which individuals and collectives make the world comprehensible. This also applies to stereotyping. Within SIT, stereotyping is commonly regarded as having the cognitive function of simplifying a complex world and making it comprehensible (Condor, 1990:247). In our tendency to group thinks together, we tend to exaggerate the difference between groups, as well as the similarities within a group (Tajfel &Turner, 1979). In a mundane understanding, to stereotype often denotes a negative portraying of a group or person. However, here it should be understood as also implying positive stereotyping. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that to stereotype also involves self-stereotyping, and in-group-stereotyping.

2.2 In-Groups and Out-Groups

SIT was originally developed by Tajfel and his colleagues inspired by a series of laboratory experiments. In the experiments Tajfel et. al. used simple social categorization (e.g. eye color)

as a means to investigate the influence of social belonging on group behavior and formation of attitudes. A type of experimental method called the "minimal group paradigm". The result showed that simple social categorization was the only thing needed to create in-group favoritism. It had earlier been assumed that group bias (both in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice) derived from cooperative dependence among group members. Tajfel and his colleagues challenged this theory and proposed that affiliation was not necessary for in-group favoritism to emerge; social categorization was enough to create support for in-groups. It should here be underlined, that the experiments did not give any support for out-group discrimination or hostility using the minimal group categorization (Korostelina, 2007:23-25).

Nonetheless, the idea, first properly formalized by Leon Festinger (1954), that people understand who they are by reference to others – that is through social comparison - has become an important part of the SIT paradigm. Within SIT, however, it is primarily applied as to understand comparison of in-groups and out-groups. The motivation for comparison with others is often explained as a desire for positive self-evaluation. As a person identifies himself or herself with a particular social group, the group becomes part of the self-concept. In order to form a positive self-concept, there is need for the in-group to be favorably compared with other (relevant) out-groups (Turner, 1999:8).

However, research has demonstrated that even if in-group favoritism is most common, out-group favoritism does occur. These findings do not fit within the SIT paradigm and therefore raises theoretical challenges. Hinkle & Brown (1990) tries to explain in what situations out-group favoritism may occur and for what reason. A situation that is of relevance for this study is when in-group favoritism is affected by the intergroup power and status. Studies have shown that in some cases members of a low-status groups favor out-groups over in-groups. According to the positive self-evaluation assumption, low-status groups should have a strong incentive for positive evaluation of their social identity, but this apparently not always the case. Diverse explanations have been proposed to explain this inconsistency. For example that in-group favoritism only occur in relation to a *relevant* out-group, and that an in-group may favor out-groups in some areas, or that the out-group favoritism may be a strategic consideration that actually serves the in-group certain purposes (pp.48-55).

2.3 Intergroup Conflict and Social Identity
In terms of intergroup conflicts and SIT, Marilynn B. Brewer (2001) has remarked that there is a big step from in-group favoritism to out-group hostility. She argues that the development from the first to the other is progressive and contingent, and that a strong in-group identity do

not inevitable or necessary lead to hostility towards out-groups. In *Ingroup Identification and Intergroup Conflict*, Brewer outlines a model for the process from in-group favoritism to out-group hostility as follows: (a) in line with SIT, social categorization lays the foundation for group formations, which together with self-categorization to a specific social group lays to ground for in-group favoritism. (b) The individual's in-group identification is in turn driven by two social motives; the need to be included in the group and the need for differentiation (in order to distinguish oneself from others). These two drives create a social structure of 'we' and 'them', same and other. Brewer thus gives and other explanation than the traditional positive self-esteem theory to social comparison. (c) However, this structure tend to be rather unstable, and thus brings an uncertainty to the group's position in relation to others, which often cause a comparison with others to rise (e.g. from "we are trustworthy" to "we are *more* reliable than them"). Under certain circumstances comparisons can develop into a sort of competition, as well as a perception that out-groups constituted a threat to the in-group. (d) In contrast to social categorization, the process of social competition is more connected to a devaluing of out-groups. It is in this phase that hostility, zero-sum thinking and aggression may arise. However, not all group conflicts escalate into violence, in fact most do not. Brewer mentions a few circumstances which may increase the risk that hostile attitudes leads to the outbreak of violence: for example perceived divergence of group goals, political mobilization and manipulation of groups, and a context which are differentiated through one primary categorization (pp.19-33). The purpose with Brewer's model is not to describe under which specific circumstances in-group favoritism develops into out-group hostility and the use of violence, but to identify different phases in such a process.

Dean G. Pruitt & Sung H. Kim (2004) in *Social Conflict* highlights that a cycle of escalation often is follow by emotionally related perception, which can have powerful implications for intergroup behavior (p.102). Their approach can be used to shed further light on the escalation process. Kim & Pruitt argues that a group's "blame direction" could give an indication of how a conflict will develop. They distinguishes between three types of blame direction: (a) self-blame (blaming the in-group), (b) other-blame (blaming the out-group), and mutual-blame (blaming both groups) (p.53). A group emphatically blaming the other, the out-group, is an initially warning signal in group conflict, since such attitudes and feelings tends to evoke anger and a retributive desire to punish the group for their "wrongdoings". It can thus create legitimization of action against the other. For example, there is a tendency to blame attacks on Christians on Christian themselves, due to their involvement in evangelization. If the conflict escalates, other-blame, anger and the retributive desires may

turn into stronger emotions, such as hostile attitudes and strong negative perceptions and feelings towards the out-group. There is a risk that such feelings can lead to a negative stereotyping of all out-group members. However, it is also common that it is only the leaders that are viewed as the wrongdoers, whiles the attitude towards ordinary member of the out-group is more positive (which has been called "the evil-ruler enemy image"). If a negative stereotype has been established, this often escalates the conflict, and obstructs de-escalation. However, Kim & Pruitt highlights that some groups enters a defensive emotional spiral (characterize emotional by fear), rather than entering a cycle of aggressive emotional escalation, when they are met by intensified aggressive behavior, (pp.103-109).

These two models of group escalation will be used to shed light on how the informants experience Hindu-Christian relations. However, there is an apparent weakness in both models, as they do not take into consideration that people have multiple social identities. An individual may perceived another person as an out-group member from one perspective (example religious), but at the same time have several overlapping identities with that person (e.g. class, caste, gender, profession), that brings complexity to a how that out-group member is perceived and treated. Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001) discusses this problem in *Ethnic Identity, National Identity and Intergroup Conflict*. In the article, Eriksen puts emphasis on the fact that individuals of conflicting social groups most often share overlapping identities. These overlapping identities could provide an area for cross-cutting ties and a space for interaction, which may reduce stereotyping of hostile attitudes towards out-groups.

Eriksen (2001), however, points out that sharing a social identity with members of a conflicting out-group is not enough to diminish the potential risk of creating negative stereotypes and hostile attitudes. In fact, a person could have several identities in common with members from an out-group and still live totally separate lives. Erikson argues that in order for overlapping identities to reduce negative stereotyping or hostile attitude, they need to bring about interaction that can create an understanding and a nuanced perception of the other. Erikson also points out, that without a personal experienced of diversity within out-groups, the risk is significant for political manipulation and stereotyping of social identities (pp.42-66).

2.4 Everyday Life

A concept that will be used in this study is 'everyday life'. An everyday life approach is seldom applied within SIT studies, as they are often experimental in character. Nonetheless, I have chosen to include this concept and examine the informants' everyday interaction with

members of the Hindu out-group. As Erikson (2001) stated, certain interactions between in-group and out-group may reduce the risk of negative stereotyping and attitudes. Accordingly, the way the informants interact with members of the Hindu out-group in their everyday life may contribute to a better understanding of the way in which the informants perceived the Hindu out-group.

There is not a consensus among scholars of what everyday life signifies as a concept. As Michael Hviid Jacobson (2009) points out in the introduction to *Encountering the Everyday,* the everyday life is a notion difficult to "capture, delimit and define" (p.9). In this study everyday life is used to denote daily practices and routines, which take place outside the official religious institutional domains.

CHAPTER 3
METHOD

3.1 Choice of Method and Epistemology

The objective of this study is to better understand Hindu-Christian relations from a North Indian Pentecostal perspective. This overall objective could possibly be undertaken with quantitative as well as qualitative methods. However, as the study's research questions primarily concern people's understandings and experiences, a qualitative method - which more effectively produced rich, complex and nuanced data – was a more suitable alternative.

   The choice to use qualitative interviews as a method was primarily guided by two circumstances. (1) I suspected that some issues could be sensitive to discuss in a group setting for the informants (e.g. if they had been ill-treated by Hindu family members or friends). Consequently, individual interviews were preferable. (2) As the informants were currently enrolled as students at DBC, it was not possible to carry out participate observations in their hometowns/villages, about which parts of the study concerns. Hence, the method that has been used to produce the primary material for this study is individual semi-structured interviews.

   In this study, knowledge is not perceived - in a positivistic understanding - as something that I as an interviewer uncover and detect. Instead, my epistemology is influenced by Stienar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann (2009), whom regard knowledge as a product that emerges in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Through questions and answers knowledge is produced, and not discovered (p.70). Furthermore, the knowledge that is compiled during the interviews is communicated through language. The primary material does not contain the informants' experiences, but the informants' experiences as they were narrated. In other words, the product that emerges from the interviews is a verbal representation of understandings, thoughts and experiences. The fact that the informants were interviewed in English and not in their mother tongue thus influences the knowledge that this study has produced. The informants would probably have been more nuanced and precise if they had the opportunity to answer the questions in their own language.

3.2 Semi-structured Interviews: Producing the Primary Material

The form of qualitative interview employed in the study is semi-structured interviews. This interview form is characterized by having a few main themes or pre-determined questions, with the possibility for the interviewer and interviewee to explore particular issues and questions. The semi-structured interview is therefore often informal and flexible in its character (Eriksson-Zetterquist & Ahrne, 2012:40). As other qualitative forms of interviews, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to expand their answers, and do not limit the interviewees to respond according to pre-determine answers. I chose this form of interview as I considered semi-structured interviews most suitable for exploring my research questions. Previous research on the particular issues of the study is limited and therefore discussing themes rather than asking standardized questions seemed to be the most effective procedure.

Two interviews were done with each of the nine informants. I chose to do interview each informant twice as my previous experience of interviewing is limited and I suspected that this factor could impoverish the study. By interviewing each person twice I could compensate for my limited experience of using interviews as a research method. For example, during the first interview it was at times difficult to determine which issues or questions needed clarification. As I listened to the first interview anew I had the opportunity to reflect upon what issues I needed to further question the informants about. Looking back, I consider the decision to have two interviews with each informant very helpful and contributing to the study.

3.2.1 Sampling

Bremborg (2011) argues that the two most urgent questions in the sampling process are who to interview and how many persons to interview (p.313). My procedure and reflections regarding these two issues will be presented below.

The informants for this study were selected among the students in the final year at Doon Bible College. I chose to search for my informants within this particular group for several reasons. First, I aimed at diversity and variation among informants in terms of religious background and rural/urban background, in order to be able to compare how such variables could influence experiences and understandings of Hindu-Christian relations. Hence, a Pentecostal college, that enrolls students with different backgrounds from all over India, seemed to be ideal place for searching for informants. Another reason behind the choice to interview students at DBC was that the field study needed to be operable. As I am writing a master thesis the time period is restricted. I choose to spend only two weeks at DBC;

however, within this time period nine informants were selected and interviewed twice. This was possible as the students were gathered at the campus and there were neither problem to find informants, nor to find time for conducting the interviews. Moreover, the field study was easily arranged as I personally know the principle at DBC (since I have been teaching at the college for a short period – something which I will return to later). The reason for interviewing students from the final year was that I suspected that they would be most at ease to be interviewed in English.

However, the choice to interview students at a Pentecostal college means that this study does not represent the "average" Pentecostal in India. The informants were persons with the opportunity, qualification and most often interest to study theology at college. Moreover, after being students at a Pentecostal college for three years it is very likely that they have been taught and influenced to consider mission to be a vital task for the church, to motivate their views using the Bible etc. It should also be noted that all informants are between the age of 20 and 30. This factor could influence the findings from this study as interaction patterns, experiences of Hindu-Christian relations and attitudes about the Hindu out-group could differ between age-groups. On the other hand, the intention was not to conduct a study that was generalizable for all Indian Pentecostals, but to start exploring issues concerning North Indian Pentecostals that have so far been neglected within research.

The sampling of the students in the final year was done in following way. First, I introduced myself and my project to the class. I described how the interviews would proceed (time span, that each person would be interviewed twice, that they did not need to prepare in any specific way, that the interviews would be recorded), informed the class that anyone who would participate would be anonymous, and emphasized that participation was voluntarily. Second, the students were asked to fill in a short inquiry, where they among other things were asked about their, gender, religious background and whether they wanted to participate (see Appendix 1). Third, nine persons were chosen among the seventeen (out of total 23) who were willing to participate. As the study examines Pentecostals from North India, the main criterion in the sampling was that the students came from this region. Nine students were thereafter selected, (out of the eleven who were from North India and were willing to participate). In this selection I tried to get as much variation as possible. Accordingly, there was no aim that the informants would be representative for their class. For a presentation of the informants see chapter 4.

Bremborg (2011) writes that the number of interviews for a qualitative study is discussable and that the researcher should aim to reach theoretical saturation, which means that nothing

new of significance emerges from new interviews. The number of interviews needed for saturation is, however, not easy to determine. Nonetheless, Bremborg highlights that several studies show saturation between 12 to 30 interviews (p.314). Kvale & Brinkmanns (2012) on the other hand, argue that the number of interviews should be determined on the basis of the studies objective and the number needed to answer the research questions (p.129). The decision to interview nine persons was made on these two grounds, as well as what would be operable for a study of the current study's size. The choice to only interview nine persons came to imply that saturation was not reached. On the other hand, there has not been any problem to answer the research questions, even though saturation was not reached, which I consider to be of most importance.

3.2.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide, for the first interview with the informants, was structured around four themes. A couple of main questions and a handful of key words were attached to each theme (see Appendix 2). The themes were discusses in a certain order, while the order of the main questions was undefined. Following-up questions were formulated during the interviews, which made each interview distinct. The interview guide was thus designed to allow both the interviewer and interviewee to immerse into different issues and questions. Accordingly, statistically validity was not the prime goal but in-depth understanding.

In the development of the interview guide, consideration was given to the research questions, the study's theoretical framework and previous research relevant for a better understanding of Hindu-Christian relations. The questions were formulated in an open-ended form to encourage the informants to extensively and freely answer the questions. However, as later will be discussed (under 3.2.3) some informants were uncomfortable with open-ended questions, and the questions were thus to some extent adjusted to each informant. After two interviews it became clear that some of the main questions contain words that the informant had hard to understand, and the guide was thus slightly modified, as well as my way of asking following up questions. Bremborg (2011) highlights that it can be difficult to formulate the right questions beforehand and that there is often a need for reformulation after the guide has been tested on some respondents. Despite this warning I was at times surprised that some words did not seem to make any sense for the informants. It made me realize that interviewing somebody from a foreign culture involves difficulties that are hard to foresee.

The second interview guide was developed by listening to the recordings of the first interviews. Accordingly, the interview guides for the second interviews differed to a large

extent. Rather than being exploring as the first interview, the second interview aimed to deepen the understanding of certain issues and clarify ambiguities. All informants were, however, asked questions concerning two topics (mission and the Holy Spirit), which I considered needed further examination.

3.2.3 Interviewing

Eriksson-Zetterqiest & Ahrne (2012) emphasize that the setting chosen for conducting the interviews should be a place where the interviewees feel comfortable and where the interview can take place undisturbed (p.45). Usually, it is regarded in India as inconvenient that a man and woman who are not related to each other are alone in a closed room, it was important to find a setting which was both public and where the interviews could talk place without disturbance. Hence, I chose to do the interviews outside, and placed a small table and two chairs in corner of the campus' courtyard where the sun was shining.

Before each interview I described once more the purpose with the study, that there were no right and wrong answers, that I was interested in the person's experiences and thoughts, and that the interview would be recorded. I also outlined the format of the interview. Moreover I again asked each person if they were willing to participate and asked if they had any questions. I also repeated that they would be given anonymity.

Bremborg (2011) points out that the first questions should aim to make the interviewee relaxed, and should be easy as well as engaging to answer. I therefore started each interview with asking some introductory questions concerning the inquiry the informants earlier had filed in. For example if the informant had stated that he/she had grown up in a non-Christian family I asked how he/she had become a Christian, or if the informant were from a village I asked them to described what it look liked. After the introductory questions each theme was in a certain order explore with the help of the main questions and key words.

The interviews were conducted in English, and as already highlighted this was not the informants (nor my own) mother tongue. Most of the informants did seem comfortable speaking freely in English. However, at times there were words and expressions that I needed to explain, and the interviews would probably have been more effortless if the informants had been able to answer in their mother tongue. Two informants did seem a bit uncomfortable to speak English in a free manner. I tried to adjust my language to these informants; both in terms of words and pronunciation, and in carefully giving these informants time to formulate their answers.

The first interview with each informant varied in length between 30-60 minutes, while most of the second interviews took around 20 minutes. The first interviews varied so much in time because there was a difference in how lengthy the informants answered the questions. As above was mentioned, a few informants did not seem to feel comfortable to freely answer open-ended questions (these were the same informants who did not seem fully comfortable speaking English). I therefore needed to adjust the questions slightly. As a result, some questions tended to become leading, which is problematic as there is a risk that meaning was imposed by me as an interviewer. I have tried to be attentive and critical to the answers which were given to such questions during the analysis process.

As Kvale & Brinkmann (2012) point out, a semi-structured interview is not, despite its often relaxed and flexible character, a free dialog between two equals. Instead, there is an unequal power relation in the interview, which can among other things lead to that the informant tries to answer the question according to what he/she believes that the informant wish to hear (p.50). That the informants did not regard the interviews as a conversation between equals was apparent by how they entitled me. Even if I initially insisted that they could call me by my first name, they throughout the interviews address me as "ma'am". However, this could have been an act of politeness, as it is usually expected in India that one addresses a person that is older than oneself, has a higher status, etc as "ma'am" and "sir". Even if it was mainly an act of politeness, it highlights that the informants regarded me as a person they were expected to entitle as "ma'am". The unequal power relation is likely to have influenced the interviews, and perhaps made the informant prudent of for example correcting me when I asked if I had understood them right in a certain matter. It was, however, apparent that the informants felt confident to give me answers which were not in line with what they believed I wanted to hear. It was noticeable by their body language and that they at times excused themselves when answering questions in a manner which they seemed to experience was not expected of them.

3.2.4 Transcription

All interviews were recorded. The quality of the sound recording was good; hence, there was never a problem during the transcribing process to hear what the informants had said. In some cases the informants did though use a term in Hindi or their local language that I have not been able to understand.

That there is a significant difference between the spoken and written language was very apparent during the transcription process. Kvale & Brinkmann (2012) argue that to transcribe

an interview is to transform a form of medium to another medium; a process comparable to translating a text. The record is of course a more accurate representation of the interviews, but transcription increase accessibility and facilitates the analysis and is therefore necessary.

The first interviews were transcribed immediately after the interviews or within a couple of days, and the second interviews a week after they were conducted. The transcription of the record was done in following way: the interviews where transcribed fully word by word, however pauses, sounds as "ehh", "um", ahh" and my feedback sounds (as "ah", "ok", "mm") were not included. I did not correct the informants' grammar, but at times inserted a word within square brackets to make a sentence clear. The transcription resulted in 146 pages.

3.3 Analyzing the Interviews

In the analysis of the interviews I have followed Jens Rennstam & David Waterford's (2012) modes of procedure to analysis qualitative material. Rennstam & Wästerfors distinguish three stages in the analyzing process. The first phase is termed 'sorting'. The main task during this phase is to give order and lucidity to the material. It is emphasize by the authors that there is no self-given order and structure in a collected material. Instead, the order is impinge on the material by the researcher, who therefore needs to be conscious of his/her treatment and reading of the material. Rennstam & Wästerfors argue that it is preferable to have a conscious theoretically informed view in the sorting process, but that the theoretical perspective should not restrict the researcher to explore patterns and themes that lie beyond the theory. However, the vital first step in creating an order in the material is to get familiar with the material (pp.195-202).

The process to get familiar with the material started already at the field and went hand in hand with the process of creating a structure out of the material. However, the undertaking of getting familiar with the material and sorting it intensified after the transcriptions were complete. In this phase I read through the material several times, made notes, wrote down reoccurring themes and patterns, as well as started an initial coding. When I felt comfortable with the material I started a more systematic, selective and theoretical informed coding process. I used more uniform terms, gathered codes under themes, noted each page where the codes were found, and underlined potential statements that could be used as citations.

When the coding process more or less was complete, I entered into the next phase of Rennstam & Waterford's (2012) analysis procedure which is 'reducing'. The authors described the phase as a time when the researcher struggles with the problem of representation; of how to reduce the material without misrepresenting the material and lose

the nuances and the complexity in it (p.195). During this period I thus started to make choices regarding what to focus on in the analysis and what to leave out. This process was guided by the study's research questions, the theory of the study and the result of the coding. I also started to write the first drafts for the analysis. I found the reducing process quite difficult as there were constantly exceptions to patterns and tendencies in the material. The procedure typically went about in the following manner: I wrote the main perspective of a theme or issue that had been selected to be part of the presentation, and thereafter started to nuance the position by pointing to complexity and exception in the material. The text was accordingly reversed over and over again.

In the last phase, which is 'argumentation', the themes and text produced so far were arranged in a specific order and I started to create arguments out of the findings. I initially presented my own results and contributions to research, and thereafter put it in a dialogue with the theory and previous research. This phase was thus an intense period of writing.

3.4 I – the Researcher

Even though I traveled to India, spent two weeks at a Pentecostal college and conducted interviews with people that are culturally dissimilar to myself, this study is not an ethnographic study. According to Philip Lander (2012), what distinguishes an ethnographic study from other qualitative studies is that the researcher for a significant period of time immerses herself/himself in a particular context, closely interacts with the people that are studied and uses varied methods (pp.83-85). During my fieldwork I daily interacted with the students. However, this was not part of the production of the primary material, only the interviews were used for this purpose. On the other hand, even if this is not an ethnographic study I have faced questions and issues that are often associated with such research, and which I consider of importance to highlight and reflect upon. The following section deals with some of these issues.

An often-discussed issue with ethnographic research is "the field". The term most often designates locality, and it is emphasized that doing ethnographic research is about "being there", about taking part of the everyday life of those people that is study (O'Reilly, 2005:3). Even if I was not "at the field" in a strict sense, I did need access to my field - which could be regarded as the informants. In the endeavor to get access to my field, my personal relationship to the college's principle was a great help. He warmly welcomed me to the college, arranged accommodation and three meals a day, presented me as friend of DBC, and made clear that it

was no problem for the students to miss out classes if they participated in my study. This facilitated the field work in many ways.

A matter often stressed by ethnographers and anthropologists, is that cross-culture research confronts researchers with intercultural problems and difficulties. For example: how to behave appropriately, how to communicate verbally and non-verbally, and how to handle the role as a cultural outsider. Moreover, a cross-culture study in a foreign country requires the researcher to adjust himself/herself to a environment different from what he/she is use to (e.g. in terms of climate, food, way of dressing, hygiene standards). It is not unusual that entering into a new culture leads to a bit of culture shock.

As I had previously lived and worked at DBC for six months, there was no problem for me to adjust to the Indian environment, nor to the DBC environment. I knew before-hand that it would be freezing cold during the nights, I knew to whom I was expected to go and pay a visit to, what to eat and not to eat in order to stay healthy, and I that I would not get a proper shower for two weeks etc. I also felt comfortable and accustomed to an Indian way of verbally and non-verbally communicating, and was conscious about many of the difficulties of the Indian-Swedish cross-culture communication. However, conducting cross-culture interviews is a specific form of communication that I was not familiar with. It became apparent that the method handbooks which I had read in preparation for the interviews did not take into account intercultural difficulties when interviewing. I thus had to learn certain things during the process of interviewing, as the interview technique presented in the handbooks did not always lead to effective communication.

Before my arrival, I worried that my role as previous teacher would create a distance between me and the informants, and that they would experience the interviews as an inquiring. Well at DBC I got the impression that my role as previous teacher had the opposite effect in terms of access to the field. As a few students already knew me I was able to intermingle with the students in a relaxed way and thus create a relationship to them before the interviews. I experienced that the fact that I was not a complete stranger, helped me to gain trust and creditability among the students. Moreover, the informants who I previously knew seem to feel encouraged that I was interested in their thoughts and experiences.

My role as a previous teacher at the college made me appear as somebody who partly belonged to the group. This representation was strengthened by the principle's introduction of me as a person connected to the Pentecostal church Smyrna kyrkan in Gothenburg, with which the college has cooperated for decades. This description was not incorrect as I grew up in this church, was for many years involved in its work and was a member until two years

ago. And even if I am currently not a member of Smyrna kyrkan or any other Pentecostal church, I do consider myself a Christian and I am of course influenced by my background. The representation of me as a person connected to Smyrna, made it possible for me to blend in at DBC without being questioned why I was there.

My background in the Pentecostal movement could also be discussed from an insider/outsider approach. I could be described as a researcher with an insider perspective on the Pentecostal movement due to my background. As I have for many years been part of a Pentecostal context, I have an understanding of the movement from a non-academic perspective. In this particular study, the advantage of having a Pentecostal insider perspective was limited. For example, having a Pentecostal background has not helped me significantly in understanding how Pentecostals and Hindus interact in villages, or how it is to live in a religiously mixed family. I did, however, experience that my background helped me to gain trust among the informants and made it easier to effectively communicate, since I was familiar with a Pentecostal terminology.

As pointed out by Melissa M. Wilcox (2002), there have been tendencies to throw suspicion on researchers within religious studies that can be regarded as insiders to the group that they are studying. Wilcox though questions the assumption that researchers with an insider perspective have more difficulties with distancing themselves from their material and being critical to it (p.49). She further argues that the notion that an outsider perspective is preferable needs to be problematized. I would argue that there is not neutral position from which a researcher can study religion, and therefore it is questionable that an outsider perspective as a rule would be less biased. A more constructive and useful approach would be to acknowledge that each researcher need to be conscious, honest and reflective of how their own positions influence their research.

My own experience is that my religious background has helped me rather than made it complicate for me to study religion. As I have myself been part of a religious community, I have a non-academic understanding of what that means, which I experienced has facilitated and contributed to my academic studies of religion. In my role as academic I feel most comfortable to approach religion from a methodological atheistic perspective (Berger, 1969), which I have been educated in. I personally do not experience it problematic to scrutinize religious beliefs, practices, rituals etc using such an approach even though I consider myself religious. Rather, I find it fascinating and interesting. In this study it has been enriching to have access to both an insider an outsider perspective on Pentecostalis

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Kvale & Brinkmann (2012) highlight four areas that need special ethical consideration when conducting an interview study. The first area is 'informed approval' and implies that the participants have been informed about the purpose and intended use of research and after that agreed to participate. As already have been mentioned, I several times described the purpose of the study for the students, that I was writing a master thesis, and emphasized that the participation was voluntary. Before the students did the sampling inquiry, I worried that my role as a previous teacher would make the students feel obligated to participate. I was therefore contended that several students had marked that they did not want to partake, as this signaled that my aim to present the interviews as voluntary had been clear. Before each interview the informants were once more asked if they were willing to participate and it was emphasized that they could always refrain from answering any particular question.

A second question that, according to Kvale & Brinkmann (2012), needs special ethical consideration is the providence of confidentiality, which means that data that could possibly make participants identifiable will not be reveled. Confidentiality is an issue which I have struggled with in this study. Even though all informants have been given code names, it has been difficult to give them full anonymity. Most persons would not be able to identify the informants. However, some teachers and classmates at DBC, as well as family and relatives, would probably be able to recognize some informant/informants, as I have included descriptions of the social context the informants come from and parts of their background that are important for the analysis. I regard this as ethically ambiguous, but found it difficult to write the analysis without this information.

The third area for ethical consideration that Kvale & Brinkmann (2012) highlight is 'consequences' – in terms of harm for participants, as well as the benefits that the participants partaking in the study may imply. I consider it doubtful that this study would cause the informants personal harm. It is unlikely that somebody that knows the informants would read this study, recognize the particular informant and cause them harm for what is written. In terms of benefits, this study could contribute to a better understanding of Pentecostals in India, a group that is often described without nuance, and could also contribute to explain how the current situation of increased religious intolerance in India is experienced by Christians.

The last area for ethical consideration brought up by Kvale & Brinkmann (2012) is the researcher's role. He/she should correctly and representatively present findings and results. The researcher should not fabricate or falsify material and not misrepresent research data. I have done my outmost to follow such guidelines, as well as to be transparent. As earlier

mentioned I did find it difficult to reduce the material and at the same time present the complexity of the material. My hope is though that no informant would feel misrepresented in reading this study.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF THE INFORMANTS

4.1 Doon Bible College

Doon Bible College is situated in the heart of Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand; a city that lies at the foothills of the Himalayans, around 250 kilometers north of New Delhi. Traveling by train from Delhi to Dehradun takes about six hours. However, the college is just a ten minute ride by auto rickshaw from Dehradun central station.

Alongside the narrow streets that connects the college campus with the main Rajpur road lays large houses painted in white and bright colors. After the street slightly curves to the left DBC appears. The blue sign that once sat on top of the gate and welcomed visitors, students and by-passers, was a couple of years ago hit by a bus trying entering the college, and is now places at the wall beside the gate.

Once on campus, a garden like milieu, with tall, trimmed trees and beautifully kept shrubberies, come into view. A large field of grass, often used as cricket plan by the students, is located on the right hand side. An abundance of colorful flowers are placed alongside the passage from the gate to the main building, which of course are strictly forbidden to pick. If one takes a moment and sits down at one of the green benches placed around campus, one will soon notice the many squirrels running from tree to tree.

The campus main building contains an auditorium, a library, a dining hall, a handful of offices and a kitchen. To the Hindu main's chief contentment, the old kitchen is currently being replaced by a new and bigger one. Next to the main building is the girls' hostel, separated from the other buildings by a small but symbolic wall. There are also staff quarters, a computer room, lecture rooms and a large boy's hostel on campus.

At present, 65 students are enrolled at the college; 14 girls and 51 boys. They come from all over India, as well as from foreign countries. For many years a handful of students from Burma have secretly crossed the border in order to study at DBC, and there are also students from Nepal in almost every class. The day-to-day life of a DBC student is structured around a

strict schedule, comparable to the life in a monastery; from 6.30 am, when the bell calls for morning service till 10 pm, when the second two hour long study period ends.

At the moment, the college offers three academic programs, of which the highest is Bachelor in Theology. Most courses aims to deepen the students understanding and knowledge of the Bible, but there are also courses in diverse subjects as 'Christian Ethics', 'Mission and Evangelism', 'Religion' and 'Counseling'.

The college has since its inception in the 1940's been connected to the Swedish Pentecostal movement and especially Smyrna Church Gothenburg. It was started in order to educate young men, and later woman, to tend to the many Pentecostal churches that emerged in the area (Andreassson, Andreasson & Johansson, 2000:67) According to the college's website, a main objective is to serve the Pentecostal movement in India and train young people for Christian ministry (DBC website, About Us).

4.2 Presentation of the Informants

The informants chosen for the study were selected among the final year students at DBC. Six informants plan to work in a church or Christian organization after the approaching graduation, and the other three wish to continue with further studies. All informants are between the ages of 20-30 years. Among the informants there are two women and seven men. As already stated, the main criterion in the selection process was that the students were from northern India. The reason behind the unequal gender distribution is due to the fact that only two women from North India were willing to participate in the study. The total amount of women in the class was 5 (out of 23 students). The informants originate from six different states and one union territory: Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Delhi. Three informants grew up in a Christian family, and six had individually or together with their family converted from Hinduism. Below follows a short presentation of each informant.

Partap is a man in his late twenties who comes from a village of about 100 families in Chhattisgarh. His mother and father were baptized in 1999, and the family has since then been a part of a small Christian community in the village, consisting of 8-9 families. Most villagers belong to the Hindu sect called Satnami, the largest Dalit community in the state (Singh, 2013). Partap came to Dehradun to study Hindi with the aim of later doing a Bachelor in Theology. It was his pastor's nephew (at the time a DBC teacher) that recommended Partap to study at the college. After graduation Partap is planning to go for further studies and do a

Master in Theology. During the interviews Partap gave an impression that he was very attentive to the questions and careful to give sincere and clear answers.

Sangita came to DBC because she wanted to learn more about the Bible and help her father in his ministry. She belongs to a family that has been Christians for several generations. Her home village is large and situated in Maharashtra. The majority of the village's population is Hindu, but there are also a Buddhist and a Muslims community, as well as a few Christian families. Sangita is in her mid-twenties, and her dream is to start a Christian orphanage. It seemed as if Sangita did not feel fully comfortable expressing her thoughts and experiences in English, which during the interviews hindered her from elaborating her answers.

Aadarsh is originally from West Bengal and grew up in a teagarden area in a Hindu family. His family converted to Christianity after his mother had been helped by some members of the Catholic Church when she got sick. However, Aadarsh rarely attended mass and as a teenager started using drugs and became involved in a local gang. Due to these circumstances, Aadarsh was unable to finish higher secondary education. In order to "start a new life" he moved to Delhi. After some time he managed to get a job, but could not break with the addiction. When he one Christmas day joined a colleague and attended a Pentecostal church, Aadarsh had a strong spiritual experience. This became the "beginning" of his Christian life, and an experience that started the process of quitting drugs. Aadarsh had come to DBC because he felt that he needed a theological education in order to do ministry in Delhi, where many people have a university degree. Aadarsh was relaxed and talkative during the interviews. He gave elaborated answers, and did not hesitate to speak about private matters.

Neeraj, a man in his late twenties, was born in a high caste family and grew up in a small village in Uttarakhand, consisting of about 25 high caste families. Neeraj initially left his village to enroll at a (secular) college, but after converting to Christianity Neeraj has not been able to return to his village. His family members, as well as the other members of the village, now regard Neeraj as low caste. When Neeraj started to immerse himself in the Bible, he experienced that he needed help to understand this new sacred book and decided to join a Bible college. It was Neeraj's pastor who recommended DBC. After graduation Neeraj plans to start a Christian training center for skill based education to help people without higher education to find a job. I got the impression that Neeraj felt confident to express himself during the interviews, but had a clear integrity and preferred not to talk about personal issues. Moreover, Neeraj's high caste background implied that his experiences of Hindu-Christian relation and interaction often differed from the other informants.

Renu is from a large city in Uttarakhand and is in her mid-twenties. She was born and raised in a Hindu family. As a teenager Renu was diagnosed with depression, and she described how neither doctors nor Hindu gods could help her. However, her condition started to approve when she one day visited a Pentecostal church with a Christian friend. After some time, she decided to become a Christian. Renu had a strong wish to work among youths, to support to and help those who struggled like she had done. This wish motivated her to study at DBC. Renu is an active member in a small Pentecostal church, consisting mainly of youths that, like her, are of Hindu background. Renu was open and personal during both interviews as well as careful to answer the question with nuance.

Shankar, a man in his mid-twenties, come from a village in Maharashtra consisting of about 200 families. His village is religiously diverse, consisting of a Hindu majority with Buddhist, Muslim and Christian minorities. Shankar's family converted to Christianity when he was a child, after his mother had been healed by a pastor from a poisonous animal bite. The Christian community in Shankar's village is small, and has not yet been allowed to build a church. At the time, Shankar's home functions as a home church. Shankar's main reason of coming to DBC was that he wanted to learn English, but that he soon after his arrival personally accepted Jesus, and felt a strong desire to learn more about the Bible. After graduation Shankar is planning to go back to his village, as he needs to help his mother and father in their work. However, he is dreaming to build a church in his village, as well as trying to be elected village leader - in order to improve the living conditions in his village. Shankar seemed to enjoy being interviewed, and gave long and elaborated answer to most questions.

Ajay is from a city in Bihar, where he grew up in a Christian family. He is in his mid-twenties. His family belongs to a large Pentecostal church with over 2000 members. When Ajay was a teenager his father was badly hurt in a car accident, and was told by a doctor that he would never be able to walk again without aid. However, after two years Ajay's father was able to move without any support and as an act of gratitude to God he decided to dedicate his son to the work of God, and sent Ajay to DBC. Ajay said that he at first felt frustrated about being at DBC, as it was not his own choice. But that he now believed that it was God who sent him to the college. After graduation he plans to help his father in ministry but also hoped to be able to do secular studies. I got the impression that Ajay was a bit shy, and instead of elaborating his answers, responded concisely.

Sanjay grew up in Delhi in a Hindu family. His process towards deciding to become Christian started with one day visiting a Pentecostal church with the purpose of selling a guitar. In the church, Sanjay became witness to an exorcism, a girl were "delivered" from a

demon possession. After being Christian for some time, he felt a strong calling to work among Muslims, and dedicated his life to this task. In order to start a "Muslim church" he felt the need for Bible training. He chose to study at DBC since they were teaching Hebrew as well as Greek, and Sanjay had a big interest in learning languages. Sanjay wanted to do pastoral work, with focus on Muslims after graduation. Sanjay is in his mid-twenties. During the interviews, he tended to give very long answers to certain questions and very short to others. As a result some subjects were discussed in-depth and others briefly.

Ravi comes from a large city in Uttar Pradesh, and grew up in a Christian family. He is 25 years old, and attends a large Baptist church in his home town. He had previously studied at another college in south India, but due to sickness needed to interrupt those studies. He asked the principle of DBC, of whom he is related to, if he could join the college for the last year of his Bachelor in Theology and was accepted. After graduation Ravi wanted to continue with his theological studies, with a focus on mission counseling. He wished to later been involved in ministry among drug addicts. Ravi had himself previously been addicted to drugs for many years. During his teenage years Ravi seldom visited church and was even involved in RSS. A turning point in his life occurred when he was caught by the police with a large amount of marijuana. In desperation Ravi prayed to God, and to his surprised was released. After this Ravi decided to take his Christian life "seriously". Ravi was very relaxed during the interviews. He was personal and did not hesitate to criticize his church or Christians leaders.

CHAPTER 5
NEGOTIATING SOCIAL IDENTITES

The primarily purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the nine informants' perception of the two social groups 'Christians' and 'Hindus'. In line with a SIT framework, 'Hindus' are considered an out-group for the informants and 'Christians' as an in-group. Two additional issues that will be discussed in the chapter are the informants' religious self-categorization and the consequences of switching religious in-group. The chapter is structured as follows: first, the informants' religious self-categorization will be expounded. Thereafter, the informants' perception of the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group will be discussed. Lastly, the issue of altering or switching social identity is treated. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

5.1 Self-categorization

The form of social identity particular to this study is religious social identity. The main topic of discussion in this section is accordingly which religious group the nine informants identified with. The discussion will also go beyond the informants' religious self-categorization since a few informants emphasized non-religious social identities during the interviews. Their self-identification with these latter groups tended to blur the boundaries between 'Christians' and 'Hindus'.

In terms of religious self-identification, six out nine informants did not want to categorize themselves as Pentecostals, but preferred to be regarded as Christians. These informants expressed detachment towards denominations, and therefore did not want to make use of denominational designations in self-categorization. They emphasized that following Jesus was not about belonging to a certain denomination or believing denominational doctrines, but living in accordance with the Bible. As Renu expresses it: "I don't think about denominations, I just want to do what Bible says". Shankar argued that the creation of denominations only causes conflict and uttered irritation towards some classmates who he thought focused too much on denominational belonining.

Several of these informants expressed unfamiliarity with the different Christian denominations previous to their enrollment at DBC. Hence, their choice to apply to DBC did not stem from a primary wish to study at a Pentecostal college *per se*. It was, however, surprising that majority informants did not regard themselves as Pentecostals after three years at DBC, since the focus of the education, as well the college milieu, is characteristically Pentecostal.

Nonetheless, three informants identified themselves as Pentecostals: Partap, Ajay and Aadarsh. Even if these informants felt attached to the social group 'Pentecostals', they emphasized that being Pentecostal was something on top of being a Christian. Partap also added that non-Christians in India were unaware of the different Christian denominations, which made him usually introduce himself as "Christian".

Partap described how important it was for him to be able to "worship the Lord with a free heart – freely", to be able to clap hands and "say hallelujah". In his experience, few churches apart from the Pentecostal allowed this form of worship. Partap therefore felt most comfortable in a Pentecostal environment, and because of his preference in terms of worship style he identified as Pentecostal. Ajay explained that he identified himself as Pentecostal since his family and relatives had always been members of the Pentecostal church in his hometown. Due to this background, Ajay felt most at home in Pentecostal churches.

Aadarsh attachment to the Pentecostal movement was more complex. As was described in chapter 4, Aadarsh converted to Catholicism from Hinduism together with his family as a child. However, Aadarsh rarely attended mass, and during his teenager years he started using drugs and was therefore unable to finish his upper secondary education. Aadarsh moved to Delhi in order to find a job and start a new life. When he one day visited a Pentecostal church he had a strong spiritual experience, which became the first step for him to quitting drugs. He concluded this story with stating "that's how my Christian life started". For Aadarsh, it was of great personal significance that his "life changing experience" had happened Pentecostal church.

It is noteworthy that the four other informants also had had their conversion experience in a Pentecostal church, but nonetheless did not identify as Pentecostals. These informants expressed a lack of knowledge about the different Christian denominations at the time of their conversion. However, as conversion stories are constructed after the conversion experience (Gooren, 2010) it is significant that these informants with hindsight did not placed any importance on the kind of church their conversion took place in.

In general, it seemed like the informants did not have much knowledge about sacramental or theological differences between the different denominations. This could be an expression of the emphasis that is placed on experience and practice, rather than theological explanations, in Pentecostal settings (Chan, 2000).

Only two informants explicitly mentioned a difference between Pentecostal and other churches. Both informants pointed to the worship style as a marker of denominational difference. As already mentioned, Partap thought that the worship style was freer in Pentecostal churches than in other churches. Partap felt that he did not praise God "according to the gospel" if he "simple sit quite and sing songs" (sic.). In contrast, Ravi, who came from a Baptist background, negatively described that among Pentecostals everything was allowed during a worship service. Ravi argued that it was un-biblical to approach God in such a disordered manner.

Some informants were of the opinion that Catholics were different from other Christians, because of a focus "on rituals". Aadarsh, (who came from a Catholic background) argued that there were nearly no differences between Catholics and Hindus, since they are *doing* the same things; for example performing comparable rituals and worshiping idols. Suneson (2010) found a cognate attitude towards Catholics in two Pentecostal churches in Bangalore. Suneson's informants recalled Catholics kneeling in front of idols, gaving offerings and carrying candles during rituals – religious expressions also found among Hindus. Catholics where consequently regarded with suspicion (p.274).

Except the attitude towards denominations, there were no major differences between the informants identifying themselves as Pentecostals or as Christians. Accordingly, a difference in identification did not seem to influence an understanding of what it meant to be a Christian or lead a Christian life.

Even if a majority of the informants did not identify themselves as Pentecostals, all informants could from an etic point of view, using the family resemblance definition, be categorized as Pentecostals. All informants expressed typical Pentecostal-like beliefs and thoughts of what it meant to be a Christian. For example, all informants took the power and empowerment of the Holy Spirit for granted, saw mission as a central undertaking of the church and emphasized the importance of living a moral life according to the Bible. Moreover, all informants were currently members of/or involved in a Pentecostal church. However, Ravi would most accurate be described as a Charismatic Christian since he belonged to a Baptist church in his hometown. The other informants are not possible to classify as Neo-Charismatics or Classical Pentecostals based on the interviews.

Even if it is possible from an etic perspective to define the informants as Pentecostals, the fact that six out of nine did not categorize themselves as 'Pentecostal' points to a problem of definition within the academic research on the Pentecostals field. The question of definition does not only concern the lack of consensus among scholars as to how to define which movements/churches/individuals are to be categorized as Pentecostals. An additional and problematic issue is the difference between the emic and etic use of the term 'Pentecostal'. A relevant question to be asked is whether it makes analytic justifiable to group hundred millions of people together and calling them "Pentecostal" if they do not identify themselves as such.

As mentioned earlier in this section, some informants accentuated other social identities than their religious belonging during the interviews, identities that blurred the boundaries between Christians and Hindus. The two most striking examples of this tendency were given in the interviews with Shankar and Neeraj. Throughout the interview, Shankar referred to his village as "my people" and expressed a strong attachment to the village community. He emphasized that even if there were different religious groups lived in the village, they were all "one united people". Moreover, Shankar expressed more distinctive in-group favoritism to his village community than to the social group "Christians". It seems like Shankar's social identity as part of "his people" was more salient than his Christian social identity; a matter that complicates the binary division between a Christian in-group and a Hindu out-group that this study proceeds from.

Neeraj came from a high caste family and grew up in a high caste village community. Even though his family had rejected him since he converted to Christianity, Neeraj still identified with the high caste social group. He spoke of himself as a member of a high caste group and seemed to feel a sense of duty to reach out to this group with the gospel. Neeraj identification with the high caste community thus created an overlapping structure between 'Christians' and 'Hindus' that illuminates the fact that these two social identities are not mutually exclusive categories.

5.2 The Christian In-group

Even if three of the informants categorized themselves as Pentecostals, it was clear that all informants perceived themselves as part of the social group 'Christians'. Nonetheless, within the Christian in-group, there were several subgroups, which I will hereafter call micro-in-groups or micro-out-groups. There was thus a tendency to fragment the Christian in-group

rather than, as SIT theorist have argued, exaggerate similarities. Moreover, it was possible to find in-group favoritism, but also in-group critic among the informants.

During the interviews, all of the informants distinguished between Christians and non-Christians. They accordingly made a binary social differentiation between people in Indian belonging to the Christian in-group and those who did not. Christians were described, among other things, as "belonging to God" and "living in the light". That Christians had attained an extraordinary knowledge about the world was an opinion that reoccurred during the interviews. As Neeraj said: "Christians are different, they follow reality, that's why I follow Christianity. Christianity is reality". Hence, to be Christian did not only imply that a person was a member of a certain religious group, but even that he or she had realized ontological truths that others had not.

The most common way of distinguishing between Christians and non-Christians were by pointing to a way of living, especially in terms of the Christians concern for other people. The social work Christians in India are involved in was regarded as a sign of Christians' unselfishness, a quality that distinguished them from other groups in the Indian society. Some informants also argued that Christian involvement in mission and ministry was a sign of their concern for others; that Christians did not only think about their own salvation but also tried to save others. The informants that had converted emphasized that becoming Christian resulted in an increasing concern for people around them. Sanjay made the following statement: "When I became Christian my total behavior got changed, you know. Before I was not taking care of anyone, when I became a Christian, I [started to] think about neighbors" (referring to Matt 23:37-39).

The postulations that Christians were enlightened and cared more about others than non-Christians, were the clearest expression of in-group favoritism among the informants. However, this did not mean that all Christians were regarded as caring or enlightened, and all non-Christians as self-centered. Rather, Christians were regarded as exceptions in contrast with the standard person. Several informants emphasized that some non-Christians are even more loving to others than Christians. However, such people seemed to be perceived as exceptions to the general rule.

In-group critique was expressed by several informants. For example, Ravi stated that many pastors in his hometown only sought after money and that many churches were corrupt. He furthermore expressed a frustration that the church had become "more materialistic, rather than to focus on the spiritual". Aadarsh argued that "most churches only see about themselves, they focus on church things", and Shankar expressed disappointment that

churches in his home village area did not teach their members properly about Christian ethics. Accordingly, even if the informants did show in-group favoritism, it was not one-sided.

The Christian in-group favoritism was additionally nuanced by the view that within the Christian fold one can find various types of Christians. There were two major ways in which the informants differentiated between Christians: (1) through denominational belonging and (2) through the behavior and actions of different Christians

Even though three informants identified themselves as Pentecostals, only Partap expressed a clear micro-in-group favoritism with this group. He held that Pentecostals have a stronger focus on ministry and took the Word of God more seriously than other denominations. As a result of these phenomena, Partap argued that Pentecostal churches grew in a faster pace than other churches. His own church was an example of this, which regular baptized new converts and was accordingly describe as "a living church". At the same time, Partap was cautious about speaking negatively about other denominations, saying "I have not much knowledge about other, I am limited. But Pentecostals are practicing the Word of God, really". So even if the micro-in-group favoritism was clear in Partap's case, the micro-out-group prejudice of other denominations was toned down. However, in this micro in-group favoritism lays an implicit understanding of Pentecostals as more serious about following the Bible than other Christians.

As already mentioned, Catholics where regarded with suspicion because of their rituals practices and way of living, which the informants thought were similar to a Hindu life style. Therefore, Catholics can be understood as a kind of micro-out-group within the Christian in-group. However, a part from stressing Catholic's "Hindu conducts", the informants did not speak negatively about Catholics.

Micro-in/out-groups were also constructed by pointing to the specific behavior of different Christians. It was stressed that there were Christians who called themselves "Christians" but did not behave as a Christian should, and were not saved. Renu explained how she previously thought that all Christians were saved, but that she now had discovered that "there are many Christians who know Jesus Christ, but they, they didn't accept him in their life". A reoccurring example of this type of Christians was pastors' children, who had grown up in a Christian family and had knowledge about Christ but did not have a personal encounter with Jesus.

The concept "born-again", which is very common among Pentecostals globally, was not used by any informant. Rather than emphasizing a spiritual birth and using it as a group marker, the informants talked about the importance of *personally* meeting and accepting

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Jesus. There was thus a tendency to differentiate between Christians who had personally met Jesus and lived in "as Christians" with those who only called themselves Christians. The informants clearly considered themselves to be part of the former group.

It is noteworthy however, that only one informant mentioned baptism in the Holy Spirit, since it is a central doctrine within the global Pentecostal movement. And a doctrine that often is argued distinguishes the movement from other Christian denominations. It seemed like the informants did not regard Spirit baptism as necessary either for salvation or in order to receive spiritual gifts. Rather, spiritual empowerment was regarded as available for all Christians who had accepted Jesus in their life.

Another micro-group within the Christian in-group was those who had not received proper teaching about Christian living and therefore were living more or less like Hindus. Such Christians seemed to be regarded as partly Christian and partly Hindu. Catholics belonged to this type of Christians. But the most referred to example was Christians living in village in need of proper leaders. Partap said that there is a lack of good Christian leaders in the area where his village was situated, and claimed that as a consequence "this local Christians are living just like Hindu people". Markers of such Christians were idol worship, participation in Hindu rituals and "wrong" baptism practices. There was little resentment towards this group, as their behavior was not deliberately wrong. Nevertheless, the informants clearly distanced themselves from this type of Christians since their behavior was not "good".

The interviews clearly demonstrated that the in-group 'Christians' is not a homogenous social group for the informants. However, rather than differentiating between Christians through a spectrum of social identities, such as particular denomination belonging, behavior and practices were the markers that set Christians a part. By pointing to the behavior of Christians, micro-in-groups and micro-out-groups were constructed. The informants (implicitly) placed themselves in a micro-in-group consisting of Christians who had personally accepted Jesus in their life and strived to live in accordance with the Bible. Even if there was a tendency to describe Christians as caring and enlightened, there was no clear one-sided in-group favoritism; Christians were not uncritically regarded as good.

5.3 The Hindu Out-group

As the study focuses on Hindu-Christian relations, I did only ask questions concerning the Hindu religious out-group. Consequently, other potential relevant religious out-groups (e.g. Buddhists, Sikhs, and Muslims) will not be part of the analysis.

In spite of rising anti-Christian rhetoric and violence in India, the informants did not present an antagonistic portrayal of Hindus. 'Hindus' were portrayed as an out-group, but not in hostile or intimidating way. Clear negative statements of Hindus were rare. Even when the informants retold stories of how they had been badly treated by "Hindus", they were careful in stressing that most Hindus do not act in this way. Moreover, some informants referred to Hindus as "brothers". For example, Ajay said that Christians do not want to think negatively about Hindus, because "we have to save our brothers".

That the informants took the existents of a social group called 'Hindus' for granted was clear. However, when asked to describe and define who was a Hindu, all informants hesitated and several of them stated that their knowledge of Hindus and Hinduism were fragmented. This lack of confidence describing the characteristics of 'Hindus' was surprising, since six of the informants came from Hindu backgrounds. Nonetheless, a common way for explaining Hindu identity was by way of religious practices. Idol worship was often mentioned as a Hindu characteristic, but also the centrality of sacrifice and other rituals. Some informants also pointed to the beliefs in many gods, and Aadarsh specifically mentioned the belief in rebirth.

A few informants also made a comparison between Hinduism and Christianity. Ajay thought that the Hindu gods were very different from the Christian god. He exemplified this opinion by referring to the story of how Krishna took the cloth from some *gopi* (cow-herd girls) taking a bath, implicitly stating that this was not an act he expected by a god. Moreover, four informants argued that within Hinduism, as opposed to Christianity, there is no right or wrong, but that all paths and behaviors could lead to salvation. As Shankar put it "if you are doing wrong or right you are the true Hindu".

Pentecostals have been described as fostering a culture "against culture", and a community that tend to demonize other religions (Robbins, 2004). However, this sort of tendency was not found among the informants, in regards to their attitudes towards the Hindu out-group. Lukose (2013) and Suneson (2008) have argued that Pentecostals in contemporary India are adjusting their language and behavior towards Hindus in order not to offend anyone, in a situation where religious intolerance towards Christians is an increasing phenomenon. It is, however, not possible to draw the conclusion that the informants had adjusted their way of speaking about Hindus to such a situation. On the other hand, several informants emphasized that Christians way of speaking about Hindus and behaving towards Hindus affected Hindu-Christian relations. There was thus an awareness of Christians playing an important role in the creation of a well-functioning relationship with the Hindu majority.

Aadarsh recalled how a Hindu friend of his had been told by a Christian "you worship this and that, you are Satan". Aadarsh was very upset about this, and said that Christians should never judge or talk to anybody in this way. Furthermore, he said that such behavior will negatively affect how Christians are perceived in society. Other informants also mention that Christian treatment and talk about Hindus will affect how they are treated. For example Renu said the relationship between Christians and Hindus depends on Christians to a high degree "how we are talking to Hindu people and how is [our] behavior with them – so it is very much dependent on us".

5.3.1 Different Kinds of Hindus

Even though Hinduism, according to some informants, was regarded as a religion that was too morally and religiously tolerant, the informants did not generally associate bad behavior with "Hindu people". Hindus were by several informants spoken of as acting and behaving in a good manner, sometimes even better than Christians. However, like the group 'Christians', 'Hindus' were not regarded as a homogenous group by the informants. So even if Hindus in general were not negatively described, some groups within the Hindu out-group where looked upon with suspicion and even fear.

The majority of the members in the Hindu out-group were perceived by the informants to be "normal Hindus". The informants described these Hindus as people practicing their religion as it had been done for generations; hence living according to their tradition without much reflection. Partap said that he did not feel any bitterness towards these Hindus because they were still "living in the dark", implying that they had not yet been enlighten by the gospel and should therefore not be judge for their deeds. Several informants stated that the average Hindu usually accepted Jesus as a god, and did not mind the presence of churches, as long as Christians kept to themselves. There was, however, an understanding among the informants that the Hindu acceptance of Jesus as a god was a result of the normal Hindus lack of knowledge about his/her religion. For example, Renu made the following comment about Hindus' mind-set towards Jesus; "normal Hindu, they will accept him, because they don't know many things even about their own religion. So they will accept him as god". And Shankar said that "most of the Hindu people don't know what is written [in their sacred scriptures], they only know the practices of Hindus".

The "normal Hindus" seemed to be regarded as a group of potential converts. There was something like an evangelistic optimism present among the informants in the view that the average Hindu could be transformed. Hence, rather than perceiving "normal Hindus" as a

group to be avoided, there was an eagerness to reach out to this group and create good relations, which in turn could led to opportunities to share the gospel. In other words, rather than perceiving "normal Hindus" as a competing out-group, they were regarded as potential members of the Christian in-group.

A category of Hindus that was not regarded with the same approval was the religious leaders and "strong idol worshippers" (who will hereafter be called "strong Hindus"). These types of Hindus were described as corrupted and a group causing trouble for Christians. Moreover, they were blamed for influencing normal Hindus in a negative way. For example, Aadarsh argued that it was "some of the Hindus, they who are very religious" who were spreading the rumors that Christians are forcefully converting others.

The informants did not express fear of Hindu leaders or "strong Hindus", even though they were, partly at least, persecuting Christians, but rather annoyance and irritation. Some of the informants portrayed these Hindu as competing agents in the pursuit of gaining converts. In contrast to the perception of Christians' missionary efforts, however, "strong Hindus" and leaders were perceived as seeking converts not out of a concern for others, but for increasing their power and for the sake of money.

The attitude and approach towards Hindu leaders and "strong Hindus" was thus very different from the attitudes towards "normal Hindus". While the informants seemed to feel an urge to reach out to "normal Hindus", the Hindu leaders and "strong Hindus" was regarded as a competing out-group. The informants uttered distinct negative attitudes towards these Hindus. Moreover, in terms of blame direction, there was a clear other-blame approach towards Hindu leaders and "strong Hindus"; no informants explained these Hindus' behavior towards Christians by pointing to how Christians conduct themselves. Hence, there was a tendency among the informants to have an evil-ruler enemy image (see Chapter 2) of the Hindu out-group.

It is striking that the informants were most affirmative of "strong Christians" and most critical of "strong Hindus". The informants expressed no feelings of admiration or respect for those Hindus who took their religious life "seriously". Rather they were perceived with distrust and suspicion.

Another type of Hindus that the informants spoke about was Hindus belonging to *Sangh Parivar* organizations. However, rather than describing these Hindus as nationalistic Hindus, the informants spoke of "Hindu biased people". In other words, their social identity as members of the Hindu out-group was toned down. Instead they were constructed as a group

sui generis, that were distinguished by their Hindu partiality in politics and their approach towards society.

The informants did not speak negatively about "Hindu biased people" in a straight forward manner (e.g. they are corrupted and evil). Rather it was noted that *Sangh Parivar* members do not like Christians and that they are persecuting Christians because they want to create a Hindu India. Hence, the critique was more implicit. The informants were well aware of *Sangh Parivars'* anti-Christians discourse. Ravi, a former member of RSS, described the organization's attitude towards Christians in following way "either you change religion and come back to Hinduism, or you leave the land". Moreover, the informants clearly connected *Sangh Parivar* organizations with the persecution of Christians. However, none of the informants mentioned the anti-conversion laws, which indicates that the anti-conversion laws impact on the Christian minority has been limited.

The informants expressed fear and worries concerning *Sangh Parivar* groups. There seemed to be an understanding that the Christian minority could do nothing to stop the influence and actions of *Sangh Parivar.* In Lukose (2013) study concerning Pentecostals in Rajasthan, a similar attitude of helplessness and fear was present among his informants. His informants claimed that they felt that their freedom to process and practices their religion had been seriously affected with the rise of the BJP (p.118).

It is noteworthy that some informants did not regard being Christian to stand in conflict to a membership in a *Sangh Parivar* organization. As mention, Ravi had been an active member of RSS, and at the same time calling himself Christian (even if he in his view did not take his Christian life "seriously" during the time). Another informant said that if a Christian friend of his, who where a member of the BJP, would ask for his support, he would definitely voted for him.

5.3 Changing Group

Before concluding the chapter, the issue of conversion will be discussed. As described in the Introduction chapter, to convert – i.e. to change religious social identity – is an explosive matter in India. As a person's religious identity is connected to personal law, rights and reservations etc, religious belonging is not only a private matter, but can have far-reaching effects on overall social life. Moreover, the Hindu nationalist movement has turned religion into a national matter, by connected Hinduism with the creation of a national identity. As such, religious identity is clearly political in India. However, before turning the attention to

what reactions the informants' experience as they changed their social religious identity, I will briefly discuss their conversions in relation to research within the Pentecostal field.

Conversion within Pentecostalism is by scholars often described as a radical break with the past, as well as the surrounding social world. Scholars tend to use words such as "rupture" and "discontinuity" to explain the process. It is often argued that the radical break is caused by the Pentecostal dualistic worldview, in which "the world", as well as other religions, is regarded as something dangerous to be avoided. Hence, converts are encouraged to break free from their former "worldly" and religious life, in order to embrace a "Pentecostal moral code" (Robbins, 2004:127-128).

The informants' conversion stories only in part correspond to such a description. Among the informants, seven out of nine described some kind of conversion experience: two had converted from Hinduism together with their families, three had converted from Hinduism individually, and two had experienced a revival of their Christian identity rather than converted. Six of these informants spoke of how their conversion had resulted in a discontinuity with a previous lifestyle, as well as change in behavior. Shankar's family had prior to their conversion earned their living making wine and used their home as a bar. After the family became Christian, they closed the wine business and turned their home into a church. Ravi and Aadarsh had due to their conversion, stopped using drugs, and Sanjay, Renu and Neeraj made a clear break with their former Hindu religious life. Sanjay and Renu also stopped drinking alcohol. For these informants, there was clear difference between their life before and after their conversion. Partap, who had converted together with his family, did not describe his conversion as a radical break with a former life style. The only difference he mentioned was that his family started attending church.

Even if the informants expressed that their conversion had given rise to a clear break with certain practices, it was clear that the discontinuity with the previous lifestyle only concerned certain areas. For example, even if they did no longer participate in Hindu rituals with their family or drank alcohol with their friends, they did not make a break with family, friends or the village that surrounded them. The rupture involved certain behavioral patterns rather than entire relations.

The reason for converting differed among the informants, but typically involved some kind of spiritual experience; healing from physical or mental illness, exorcism or the experience of a being strongly touched by the Holy Spirit. This confirms Bergunder's (2008) observation that healing experiences and exorcisms, to a great extent, contribute to the numerical growth of Pentecostalism in India.

It should be noted that most informants made a difference between converting and being saved. In their understanding "to convert" was primarily about outwardly changing religion, and did not necessarily involve a personal conviction. Salvation, on the other hand, involved a personal encounter with Jesus, a realization that Jesus is the savior and resulted in a change from the inside. Hence, a person could convert to Christianity without being saved, an aspect that further complicates the understanding of the Christian in-group.

5.4.1 Reactions on Conversion

As emphasized in chapter one, conversion is a highly controversial issue in India that has resulted in numerous debates, anti-conversion laws and anti-Christian violence. The interviews confirmed the image of conversion as problematic. All informants who had converted from Hinduism, individually or as a family had faced problems.

The three informants – Renu, Sanjay and Neeraj – who all had converted from Hinduism without their families' approval, had faced most problems within the family. They had experienced strong negative reactions as they converted. Renu and Sanjay's families had now accepted their conversion, but still there were, at times, arguments and tensions within the families. Neeraj, who came from a high caste background, had been excluded from his family as he became Christian. In his village, Christianity was regarded as a low caste religion and as Neeraj converted, he also was regarded as low caste by his community and family. It was now five years since the conversion, and the only contact he had with his family during this time where a few sporadic phone calls with his brother.

Partap, who also came from a village background, described how rumors spread about his family when they converted, which ruined their reputation and position in the village. Research has shown that conversion in villages is particular sensitive as it challenges the social-economic establishment and undermines the rural economic system where high caste excise control over low caste (Kim, 2003:4). As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Partap came from a village were the majority were low caste, and one could possibly expect that conversion to Christianity is less controversial in such a setting. However, this did not seem to be the case in Partap's village; there had even been an incident where a group of people that got baptized were forced to reconvert.

The two informants – Ravi and Aadarsh – who rather than converted, experienced a revival as Christians, had very different experiences than the informants coming from Hindu backgrounds. Both had prior to their conversion been addicted to drugs and had other difficulties in their life. As they quitted drugs and became committed Christians, Ravi and

Aadarsh were mostly met with very positive reactions. Both recalled how their reputation drastically changed; from being regarded as troublemakers, they became positive examples in their community and were now treated with respect.

5.5 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of this chapter it can be concluded that the informants' perceive the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group in a more multifaceted manner than a SIT model suggests. Neither the Christian in-group nor the Hindu out-group were described as homogenous groups. Instead of exaggerating the similarities within the two groups the informants stressed that there were different kinds of Christians, as well as Hindus. The Christian in-group and the Hindu-out group were, as a result, fragmented into micro-in/out-groups.

The Christian in-group was primarily divided into micro-groups by appealing to the behavior of different Christians. For example, the informants held that there were Christians living like Hindus, Christians who knew Jesus but did not live according to the Bible and Christians that had personally encountered Jesus and followed him with their actions. The informants identified themselves with the later group.

Six out of nine informants did not want to categorize themselves as part of the micro-group 'Pentecostal' (or with any other denominational nomen), but prefer to call themselves "Christian". The unwillingness to categorize oneself as a member of a denomination primarily arose from the attitude that being Christian was about following Christ, not the teachings and practices of a certain denomination.

In-group favoritism was primarily connected to the micro-in-group that had personally met with Jesus and lived in accordance to the Bible. However, the informants also expressed in-group favoritism to the larger Christian in-group; Christians were described as a group characterized by their concern for other people, and as possessing a kind of knowledge non-Christians did not. On the other hand, some informants posited a strong critique against the Christian in-group. The description of the Christian in-group was thus not one-sided.

The informants did not express any hostile attitudes towards the Hindu out-group, but did have notable different perception and opinions of various Hindu micro-groups. The most distinctive micro-groups the informants mentioned were "normal Hindus", and "Hindu leaders" and "strong Hindus".

In terms of Pruitt & Kim's (2004) and Brewer's (2001) models of escalation, the informants did not seem to regard "normal Hindus" as a group that "Christians" (or any

Christian micro-group) stood in conflict with. "Normal Hindus" were perceived as non-threatening and described as a people who followed their religious tradition without much reflection. Moreover, these Hindus were regarded as a group that could be transformed; as potential converts. The informants did, to some extent, compare themselves with "normal Hindus", but did not portray these Hindus as rivals.

In contrast, "Hindu leaders" and "strong Hindus" were regarded with suspicion and several informants expressed negative attitudes towards these Hindus. They seemed to be regarded as a competing group in the endeavor to gain converts and were described as influencing "normal Hindus" negatively. There were thus some worrying tendencies in terms of conflict escalation regarding the informants' relation to "Hindu leaders" and "strong Hindus"

Sangh Parivar groups/members were described as "Hindu biased"-people rather than a group within the Hindu out-group. Hence, their activities and attitudes were not seen as compatible with the Hindu out-group as such. Though, it was emphasized that *Sangh Parivar* groups persecuted Christians as well as held and spread negative opinions about Christians.

The informants' conversion stories confirm the findings of previous research: changing social religious identity in India is a highly problematic issue. For one informant becoming Christian even led to a social death; he was excluded by his high caste family and village, and was now perceived as being low caste.

Lastly, the conclusion can be drawn that ambiguities arise when applying the terms "in-group" and "out-group" in a real life setting. Such a strict binary division does not take into consideration the complexities of humans' numerous and diverse social identities that often blur the boundaries between groups.

CHAPTER 6
HINDU-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the informants perceived the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group. In this chapter the focus will be on the informants' experiences of the relationship between the two groups, as well as the ways the informants interact with members of the Hindu out-group.

The purpose of including these two perspectives in the study is twofold. First, even though scholars have emphasized that religious intolerance and anti-Christian attitudes are spreading in India, few studies have investigated how Christians experience Hindu-Christian relations, and in what way Christians interact with Hindus in the day to day life. It has been ascertain that anti-Christian violence has increased significantly, especially afflicting Pentecostals. Moreover, anti-conversions laws are becoming more and more common and Hindu nationalist organizations are increasing their influence and power. However, we do not know much about the situation from a micro perspective. With this chapter, which goes beyond the informants' perception of their Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group and investigates the experienced relationship between the groups, as well as the interaction that takes place, I hope to contribute to these two neglected areas of research.

Second, studies of Pentecostals tend to focus on institutional forms of religious life, such as groups' beliefs, rituals and practices. As a result, Pentecostals are often described as foster an exclusive understanding of salvation, to have ambivalent ecumenical relations, as demonizing other religions, having an ecstatic form of worship, a strong dualistic worldview, a strict moral code and being a culture against culture etc. In others words, Pentecostalism is often represented by scholars as an extreme form of Christianity. However, as McGuire (2008) points out, the everyday religiosity, the religion practiced outside institutions, can take a very different form. Humans seldom live according to an institutional religious package. McGurie therefore argues that it is often misrepresentative to lay too much emphasis on the religion that is preached when trying to understand a group's or individual's religiosity. With this study I aim to look at Hindu-Christian (Pentecostal) relations from another angle than what is

taught by Pentecostal churches, namely how Pentecostals interact with Hindus in their everyday life.

6.1 Interacting with Whom?

In this first section of the chapter, I will highlight what kind of relationships the informants have with members of the Hindu out-group, in other words what relationships the informants have with Hindus they interact with. In addition, attention will be drawn to how these relationships are experienced. It should be noted that the informants, as far as the interviews reveled, only had close relations with "normal Hindus". Moreover, *Sangh Parivar* members were not explicitly regarded as part of the Hindu out-group and therefore generally not included in the experience of Hindu-Christian relations.

Seven out of nine informants had family members our relatives that were Hindus. Hence, these informants were part of an in-group – the family - that consisted of both Hindus and Christians. The Christian in-group and Hindu out-group were accordingly bridged by the social group 'family' (including extended family). Within the family close everyday interaction took place between informants and members of the Hindu out-group.

Even if the relationship with Hindu family members and relatives were largely described as well-functioning, the informants noted that at times it was problematic to be a Christian in a Hindu family. Arguments due to religious differences seemed to be quite common. Especially Renu were bothered by the discussions, which she experienced as an expression that her family and relatives had not fully accepted her choice to become a Christian. Sanjay said that his parents had difficulties accepting that he wanted to do pastoral work since they had paid for his engineering education which he currently had no plans of utilizing. And Sangita narrated how conflict at times occurred between her family and relatives as her family did not take *prasad* (offered food) and participated in rituals during Hindu festivals.

Nevertheless, not all informants experienced tensions in their family or among their relatives because they were Christians. For example, Aadarsh, who had drastically changed his life after his "conversion", stressed that his family and relatives were positive and encouraging that he nowadays took his Christian life "seriously". He described how his mother used to cry for him because of his drinking habits and drug addiction. When he returned after his "conversion" healthy and without any addiction she had been both happy and proud. Moreover, his reputation had drastically changed in his home village; from having a "very bad reputation" he was now regarded with respect.

The informants did not only interact with Hindu family members and relatives in close relationships, but also with Hindu friends. Eight of nine informants had close Hindu friends. In fact, some informants seemed to have almost only Hindu friends in their hometown/village. Sangita said that "almost [all] my friends are Hindu", and Neeraj noted "all the friends are non-Christian; I am the only one Christian". There was no differences between informants coming from rural and urban areas in this matter and no gender difference either. Accordingly, there was no tendency among the informants to avoid being on friendly terms with or interacting with persons from the Hindu out-group. In the informants' everyday life friendships created bonds between Christians and Hindus.

In most cases, the informants did not describe different religious belongings as a problem in their relations and interactions with Hindu friends. When Ajay was asked if his Hindu friends minded that he was a Christian, he answered "No, no, doesn't matter". Sangita said smiling that her friends were particular happy that she was a Christian in Christmas times, because this meant that she gave them Christmas gifts. Among Ravi's friends it seemed like one dealt with the religious differences by joking about them. Accordingly, for the informants, different religious belongings were a minor problem among friends, than in the family setting.

However, those informants who had converted had experienced negative reactions from friends in connection with their conversion. Sanjay narrated how one of his closest friends, who he use to party with, got suspicious when he stopped drinking alcohol. He couldn't understand why Sanjay had become a Christian and accused him for receiving bribes from Christians. According to Sanjay, his friend had after some time accepted and understood why Sanjay had become a Christian, and they now had a good relationship. That the informants' Hindu friends after some time accepted their conversion seemed to be most common. However, for Neeraj, it was still problematic to make his friends understand why he as a high caste had converted to a "low caste religion". He narrated how that they often "pinched" him about this. Moreover, some friends' behavior towards him had change. For example, last time he visited an old friend of his, his friend did not touch the same thing as he did as he now considered Neeraj low caste.

Another issue that some informants experienced caused conflict in their relationship between them and their Hindu friends was eating meat, especially beef. Renu recalled how her friends use to say "we worship cow and you people eat it!". The informants seem to overlook that eating beef obviously was a provocation for many of the Hindus they knew. It appeared like eating beef had become part of a "Christian behavior" and in a sense an identity

marker for the social group 'Christians'. That is not to say that only Christians eat beef or that all Christians eat beef, but among the informants eating beef seemed to function as a way of distinguishing oneself from the Hindu out-group.

There were no significant differences between those informants living in villages and cities in terms of interaction with Hindu friends and family. However, the differences was striking as regards to how they described their daily contact with the Hindu out-group in general. First, it was clear that religious identities were much more salient in rural areas than in urban areas. As Neeraj said, in a village context "everybody knows 'he is Christian' and 'he is Hindu'". Hence, it was uncomplicated for the informants from village areas to describe their daily interaction with "Hindus" since they were aware of the religious identities of their neighbors. The urban informants explained that religious identity mostly played no role in the interaction with people they had no personal relationship to; hence, they did not perceive interaction with colleagues, shopkeepers, bus drives etc. as interaction with "Hindus".

Second, it was apparent that the village life required daily cooperation and contact over religious boundaries. Christians in villages could not choose to detach themselves from the rest of village. But had to live together with people of other religions and adjust to the village life and its power structure. The informants living in cities were not part of such multi-religious communities that they had to adjust to. Moreover, they could to a greater extent choose to interact or not to interact with members of the Hindu out-group.

Accordingly, there were more interaction between Christians and Hindus in village contexts, in the sense that both parts were aware of the other persons' religious belonging. There were, however, a couple individual exceptions. Renu's family lived in a "Hindu area" of a city and she regularly use to intermingle with her "Hindu neighbors". And in Neeraj's village, religious and caste homogeneity prevailed; there was consequently no interaction at all between Christians and Hindus. After Neeraj had become a Christian, he could no longer live in the village where he had spent almost his entire life, he explained: "everybody is following caste system, and everybody is thinking that I am low caste. How to survive and how to live in the same village when they do not accept me."

The informants' description of the relationship between Christians and Hindus in their hometown/villages varied slightly but was generally portrayed as conflict-free. Sangita said that in her village "Christians are in good fellowship with them (Hindus)", and Shankar proudly stated "all are living as one, like one united people". Renu expressed a positive experience of Hindu-Christian relations in her city and exemplified "like my parents and pastor: my pastor is completely Christian and my parents completely Hindu, but they have a

good relationship". Ravi said that the relationship between Christians and Hindus in his home city was "healthy" even if there at times were tensions.

Even if most informants were quite positive about Hindu-Christians relations in their hometown/village, there was a concurrence experience that many Hindus had a lot of prejudice about Christians. Several informants said that they often encountered attitudes that Christians are immoral (as they have seen on Hollywood movies), that people converted to Christianity because of material benefits, and that Christianity was a low caste religion. Furthermore, eight of nine informants highlighted that there was a perception among Hindus that Christianity were a foreign religion, or that Christians worshiped a foreign god – an attitude in line with the Hindu nationalist representation of Christians. Some informants noted that *Sangh Parivar* members often had more extreme opinions and ideas about Christians than the average Hindu. For example, Partap called attention to that there were BJP politicians in his district who openly claimed that Christians are "harmful for our Hindu people". And Sanjay narrated how a previous teacher of his who were an RSS members, had argued that Great Britain aimed to rule India again and as a part of the plan were converting people to "their religion" (Christianity).

Seven informants mentioned that at times there were tensions between Hindus and Christians in their hometowns/villages, and even harassments against Christians. In villages, the most common type of disturbance was harassment against Christian meetings. Shankar narrated how a gang once came with axes and pounded on the door to their house were the meeting was held. And Sangita recounted that Christian meetings had been interrupted several times by people who came and spoke "bad and harsh things about Christians". It seemed like disturbance during meetings were less common in cities. Among those informants coming from urban areas, only Renu mentioned that something similar had happened. In connection to the riots in Orissa in 2008, RSS members had threatened Christians in her hometown and told them that they would burn their churches if they held meetings there. However, none of the informants had been beaten or hurt for the reason that they were Christians.

Among the informants living in cities, there was an understanding that in rural areas the situation for Christian was much worse than in cities. When Ajay was asked how he experienced the relationship between Hindu and Christians in his homecity he described it as quite good, but added, "outside my city, it is very violent". Neeraj, who now lived in a town, argued that "village areas are totally different, Christians are differently treated". And when Sanjay were asked if his church in Delhi had faced any problems from Hindus he answered "Not my church, I will say, not in Delhi. But in village area, they are facing problems". These

informants thus had a perception that in the cities, where they were living, Hindu-Christian relations were fine, but in rural areas the relationship between the groups was tense. The informants who actually lived in villages, did not seem to think of their living situation as especially problematic, violent or dangerous (except for Neeraj). As above discussed, these described it as generally good even if there were prejudices about Christians and times of tensions.

The informants who claimed that Hindu-Christian relations were tense in villages, argued that the underlying reason for the situation was lack of education; because people did not have any education they followed the caste system, thought that the Christian god was a "western god", and did not fully accept Christians. Ajay maid the following statement: "In city, everyone is little bit educated. They know, if they are persecuted or scold, they can go to court or the police station. But in village, only *puncha* (elected village leaders) is there, and one cannot go to the police station. If one will go to the police station, *puncha* will send that persons out from village. So they don't go." In the argument Ajay makes two points: that people in villages have not been taught their rights, and that it creates troubles if one does not follow the village system. The informants, living in villages, did seem to agree with Ajay on the last point; they emphasized that conflict often rise if Christians do not follow the norms of the village.

Moreover, even if the informants living in villages did not argue that Hindu-Christian tensions arise due to lack of education, they claimed that "Hindus" lack of knowledge about their religious tradition had bad consequences. For example, Shankar said that "Hindus" lack of knowledge of their own religious tradition made them follow their leaders "blindly". Moreover, Partap argued "if they (Hindus) knew and followed their own religious book, they will also become good." There thus seemed to be an understanding among the informants that secular as well as religious education would bring about a better society.

6.2 Living as Christians in India

During the interviews, the informants expressed worries about the political situation in India, as well as the general relationship between Christians and Hindus in the country. The informants did not experience that the central government or the state governments treated the different religious communities equal, but that there was a clear Hindu favoritism among politicians. Even though the informants were more positive about the Congress party than the BJP, they did not seem to fully trust Congress politicians either.

Ravi described the relationship between Hindus and Christians in India in following way: "it seems like very good and all. But when you go into the deep down, and if you find the roots and all that, they are infected". Partap expressed a similar opinion about the situation, and said that Hindus outwardly seem to be sowing love and understanding towards other religions, but that they on the inside felt "bitterness" towards Christians. Aadarsh argued that in some places Hindus and Christians are living peacefully together, but in most cases the relationship between the two religious groups was tense. Moreover, he said that Hindus think India "is like Hindustan, that it is a Hindu land". Sanjay also pointed to how there was a "Hindu bias" everywhere in society. That even if Hinduism was not the official religion and that Indian was a secular country India's population consisted of a Hindu majority that took advantage of their dominance.

When the informants talked about the relationship between Christians and Hindus in India as a whole, they also referred to violence against Christians in greater extent. The most common incidents mentioned were the riots in Orissa in 2007-2008 and the burning of the English missionary Graham Staines and his two children (which happened in 1999). Often RSS, VHP or other *Sangh Parivar* groups were argued to stand behind the attacks. A few informants narrated that they had read newspapers or seen reports on TV about attacks against Christians. Ravi had recently participated in a protestation against an attack on two nuns in his home state, who had both been burnt to death. He was disappointed that the state government did not take any action against the perpetrators and sighing said "we protested for that, we wanted justice, but nothing happened". However, overall the informants did not seem to be particular informed about the spread of attacks and violence against Christians in India.

That the central government and state governments did not protect Christians, hid information about attacks, and did not treat Christians equal to Hindus were common opinions among the informant. Several informants emphasized that it was not only Christians who were treated differently, by also the Muslims. As already mentioned, the urban informants also pointed out that the living situation was worse for Christians living in village areas, that the government cared even less about those areas.

However, Sangita and Shankar (who were from Maharashtra) differed from the rest of the informants and were positive about the Congress Party. Shankar made following remark concerning the party: "they see equally to everybody, and gives to what the need of the person is, they always support those in need". However, as most of the other informants, he was worried about what would happen if the BJP won the national elections, and said "If Modi comes now, he will be great trouble for Christianity people. Because what he did in Gujarat, it

is much terrible". Narendra Modi, RSS member and the BJP:s prime minister candidate, were Cheif Minister in Gujarat during the Hindu-Muslim riots in 2002. During the riots, over 2000 people were killed and thousands of people were injured and driven from their homes. Modi and his government were criticized for taking insufficient action during the riots, as well as condoning violence. The Supreme Court of India have stated that they have not found evidence that Modi was willfully allowing communal violence, a decision that has been widely questioned (Chatterjee, 2012).

Eight of nine informants believed that if the BJP would win the national elections it would affect the situation for Christians, as well as Hindu-Christian relations. Ravi argued that a BJP led government would negatively impact the living conditions for Christians and Muslims. He believed that the persecution of Christians would be more openly and said that he was worried about the election. Aadarsh also said that he feared what would happen to the Christian minority if the BJP won the national elections, as he experienced that the party's main goal is "to make whole India Hindu". Neeraj expressed a similar opinion; that the BJP is only thinking about the Hindu majority. He said that "Christians and Muslims, they are treated badly. In front of the people they treat good, treated very polite. But in case only Christians are there, they are treating very badly". It was clear that the informants, as part of the social group 'Christians', felt that they were not wanted and accepted by the BJP.

Sanjay was the only informant who believed the situation would not change for the Christian minority if the BJP won the national elections. He argued that if the BJP was the ruling party, they would be held responsible for their actions, and in a greater extent be questioned if persecution against religious minorities increased. When asked about his own opinion about the party he said that they are "people who are making trouble". Moreover, he also expressed that *Sangh Parivar* groups were affecting the relationship between Christians and Hindus by spreading rumors that Christians were converting people because they got money from abroad.

As stated in previous chapter, the BJP, RSS, VHP and other *Sangh Parivar* groups were described as "Hindu biased people". Hence, there was a tendency among the informants to perceive persecution of Christians by *Sangh Parivar* groups as persecution from political orientated groups, rather than persecution by "Hindus". For example, Shankar described how he had been threatened by RSS members several times because he was wearing a cross. He did not connect these experiences with the relationship between Hindus and Christians, but described the RSS members as a political oriented people who cause troubles for Christians.

Ravi, who had previously been involved in RSS for two years, gave some insights to how the organization worked on a grass-root level. He had been recruited as a teenager and offered money and alcohol in exchanged for participating in political rallies, strikes and protests. As part of the youth wing he and his friends were told to go out on the streets and "just do some crazy stuff on the road", like yelling and breaking glasses of buses. They were promised that if they were caught by the police, RSS (who had connections within the police force) would help them out. This happen once to Ravi; he was arrested by the police during a rally and placed in a cell, but released after half an hour. Ravi emphasized that the RSS never forced anyone to do anything or to stay in the organization, since they easily could recruit new youngsters. Moreover, he said that RSS accepted anybody as a member, but that they were spreading ideas that Christianity and Islam were foreign religions, and influenced young people to become "Hindu biased".

6.3 A Ternary Mode of Interaction

In this section of the chapter, there will be a focus on in what ways the informants interacted with members of the Hindu out-group in their everyday life. The setting where the interaction takes place is primarily the informants' hometowns/villages. Some attention has already been paid to the issue as the informants' relationships with Hindu friends, family members and the village communities have been discussed. However, in this section the focus will be on under what circumstances interaction took place and what activities that brought about interaction. Moreover, what attitudes that impinged on what kind of interaction that took place. Three modes of interaction will be broached. First, attention will be drawn to the day to day life. The discussion will chiefly concern the informants' interaction with members of the Hindu out-group who they not were in an intimate relationship to. Thereafter two events, festivals and marriage, will be discussed. The last part will focus on mission and ministry.

6.3.1 Day to Day Life

The majority of the informants, lived in areas were Christian and Hindu homes were intermixed. In others words, in most cases the spatial arrangement of towns or villages did not separate Christians and Hindus. However, as will be showed, this did not necessarily imply that the informants interacted a lot with their Hindu neighbors. Three informants lived in religious homogenous areas: Renu in a Hindu area, Partap and Ravi in Christian areas.

In Partap's village a "boarder" had been set up between Christian and Hindu homes, in other words Christians and Hindus were living separately. Partap narrated that it was the

Hindu majority who had arrange the homes in this way. The segregation of Christians from the rest of the village was thus involuntary. Partap though experienced that there were usually no tensions between Christians and Hindus as most Christians "are living everything like Hindus". However, he did mention that if Christians "start to preach the word of God, and we say Jesus is the good way", or baptized new members, it could give rise to conflict. A few years ago there had even been a case when people who had been baptized were forced to "go back to their own religion".

Nonetheless, even if Christians and Hindus were living separate, the two groups interacted a lot in their day to day life. Farm work was the main source of livelihood, and in the fields there were no division by religion. Partap described how Christians and Hindus "to 100 % are helping each other in the fields". Moreover, Partap spoke of a custom of "giving and taking" as a way of helping each other in the village, a custom that included both Hindus and Christians. Partap also noted that he tried to find time to pay visits to his Hindu relatives, as well as some of his Hindu neighbors, whenever he went back home. Hence, even if Christians and Hindus were living separately and there at times were tensions, they two groups intermingled in their day to day life.

Peggy Froerer (2007) has conducted an ethnographic study in a village in the same state – Chhattisgarh – as Partap village is situated in. The study deals with how RSS works to transmit Hindu nationalism to rural areas, but Froerer pays some attention to Hindu-Christian interaction in the village. The Catholic Oraon group living in the village had untouchable status. They were living in a separate area and did not serve any specific ritual role in the village. Moreover, the Oraons worked in a nearby industry and were therefore not involved in the daily work at the fields with the rest of the village's population. The daily informal contact between the Hindu community and the Oaron Catholics were as a consequence very limited.

The study elucidate that Hindu-Christian interaction is not only related to religion, but also to matters such as caste status and work participation. For example, in Partap's village Christians and Hindus were also living separately but since everybody worked together at the fields the two groups had daily contact.

Christians and Hindus were living separated in Ravi's hometown as well. He described how there were big colonies were Christians were concentrated. When Ravi was asked why Christians were living together he explained that it was of "safety purpose", and continued "if we are scattered in the places and all, like, chances are high that we will be persecuted". The religious segregation in Ravi's town was thus voluntary in the sense that nobody had forced Christians to live in a specific area. On the other hand, it seemed like Christians did not feel

safe enough to live intermixed with the Hindu majority; that this voluntary separation derived from fear.

Ravi emphasized several times that Christians were in a minority situation in his hometown and that many Christians felt insecure living among a Hindu majority, especially in times of conflict. In connection to some election rallies last Christmas, Ravi's church had been threatened by *Sangh Parivar* groups. His pastor had therefore asked the police for protection. The police promised to send reinforcement, but sent only a one security guard. Ravi said that the church was chocked by the officer's behavior and that they felt very unsafe in the situation.

In contrast to the situation in Partap's village, the spatial separation of Christians and Hindus in Ravi's hometown had resulted in noticeable division between the two religious groups. Ravi said that Christians seldom visited the Hindu areas and that "Hindus hardly comes over to the particular areas where Christians are living".

In Shankar's and Sangita's home villages, there were no separated living areas for different religious groups. Nonetheless, Sangita narrated how there had been some tensions when they got new neighbors. Her family had been straightforward and told the new neighbors that they were Christians and that they eat meat. At first these neighbors had been very skeptical and kept a distance. However, after two three years the neighbors started to eat meat "secretly", which Sangita found very amusing and use to joke with her neighbors about, who now had become her friends.

Shankar was critical of Christians who choose to live in separated areas and asked "what is the use of it". In his opinion Christians should live together with non-Christian, so that non-Christians had an opportunity to get to know a Christian. Shankar described how he often sat and "just talked and listened" to Hindu neighbors in his village. He argued that if Christians treated Hindus well, there would be no problem between neighbors.

Nevertheless, Christians in his village, including his own family, had been troubled by the former rulers of the village. They had declined to help Christians in need (because the thought they had foreign sponsors) and refused to let Christians build new houses, as well as a church. Nowadays however, Shankar's cousin's uncle had been elected village head. Shankar had a good relationship to him, and he said that even if he is a Hindu he treats everybody alike. "He understands who we (Christians) are" said Shankar, and described how the current village head was even willing to put his son in a Christian school.

The daily interaction between Christians and Hindus in Sangita's and Shankar's villages was similar to what Partap described. Everybody worked together in the fields, and helped

each other if needed. Shankar's family had a "bullet car" which they use to loan to neighbors. Moreover, as his family had good connections with some doctors at a nearby hospital, they also use to help anybody if they needed medical treatment. To pay visits to each other were also part of the day to day life. Sangita moreover described that if anybody had a party, or got married, Christians and Hindus invited each other alike.

Sangita and Shankar never mentioned that there had been conflicts when somebody got baptized or because Christians were doing missionary work. Sangita described that if they wanted to do some ministry in a village they needed to first ask the police and the village leaders for permission. But if they had permission there was not a problem to do ministry. In general, Christians seemed to be more accepted in these two villagers, which were both located in Maharashtra. Even Sunday services (which took place in the two informants'' families' homes) were from time to time spontaneously visited by non-Christians in the village.

Apart from spending time with Hindu friends, family members and relatives, the informants living in cities rarely spoke about their daily interaction with "Hindus". Only Renu mentioned that she use to intermingle with "Hindu neighbors". It seemed as if religious identity played a minor role in the day to day life for the urban informants since few knew about their Christian identity. The urban environment enabled these informants to have religious anonymity. Nevertheless, two situations were pointed out by Neeraj and Ravi in which they experienced that their Christian identity influenced how Hindus treated them. Neeraj was an electrician, and therefore visited Hindu families in his work. As he had a typical Hindu name, his customers presupposed that he was Hindu. If he exposed that he was a Christian, he usually got questioned about why he had "left his culture". He argued that this exemplified that there was a lack of acceptance of Christians in India. Moreover, Ravi described that the "Hindus" working at state institutions often treated his family differently because their last name revealed that they were Christians. Their files and request were often placed last, which made such business time consuming.

6.3.2 Festivals and Marriage

Festivals were on the one hand occasions that brought the informants together with the Hindu out-group, and on the other hand events that cause conflicts to rise. Especially Hindu festivals were events that easily caused tension between the informants and their Hindu surrounding, in villages as well as in cities. The tensions mostly aroused within the family for the urban

informants. While in villages, it became an issue for the whole village, as festivals were occasions when the whole village was supposed to be gathered.

The informants spoke of Hindu festivals with ambivalence. There were in particular two issues that seem to be problematic: (1) the custom that each family is suppose two contribute with money to festivals, and (2) to what extent it was acceptable for a Christian to participate in festivals. The first issue was mostly a question for those living in villages, while the second issue concerned all informants.

The informants had an ambivalent attitude as regards to giving money to Hindu festivals. On the one hand, it seemed like the informants considered it to be an improper Christian behavior to support Hindu festivals. On the other hand, to contribute to (Hindu) festivals was part of a village life. That it was not adequate to refrain from giving money was a something that Shankar's family personally had experienced. After the family had converted to Christianity, they had at first refused to give money to Hindu festivals. However, this caused some villagers to go to the police and submit a complaint about them. Shankar's family had for that reason thereafter contributed to the festivals. Shankar made following comment about the situation "because we are living in village, we have to follow the system of village".

All informants from rural areas answered that their families were giving money to festivals, but were apparently unease with this behavior. Partap said that "because if we live in village ma'am, we need to give too. We ask for something, and we give something, it is like that." Sangita explained that it was necessary as "we Christians have to live there, na". The informants did not seem to be content about the requirement to contribute with money, but nevertheless accepted it. Hence, even if the custom stood in conflict with a "Christian behavior", it was a custom that was followed since the informants' families were also members of the village community. However, the requirement to give money did not seem to be a practice that made Christians feel as an integrated part of the community since it was involuntarily, enforced by the dominating part.

Most of the informants struggle with the questions of if to participate in Hindu festivals and to what degree. The practices varied between the informants, but there was though a consensus that a Christian should not participate in the religious parts of the festivals (e.g. in the religious rituals and eating *prasad*). Hence, during Hindu festivals the informants did not interact and joined Hindus in religious rituals or practices.

Several informants though mentioned that there were Christians that participated even in the religious parts of the festivals. In Partap's village most Christian celebrated Holi (one of the major Hindu festivals). Shankar made following comment about the different practices

among Christians during Hindu festivals: "the strong Christians, true believers, are not participating in their (Hindus) festivals. But nominal Christians are doing". Accordingly, it did not seem to be uncommon that Christians actually participated fully in Hindu festivals, even if the informants did not.

It seemed like the Hindus in the informants' surrounding did not mind if Christians participated in the festivals, but rather encourage it. The informants were regularly invited to festivals, and in addition requested by friends and family to join *puja* (a worship ritual) at various occasions. Aadarsh described how these situations became problematic for him: "They use to call me, my friends, to *puja* and all. I use to go, but they want me to take *prasad*, to eat, and they want me to put the *tikka* (mark on the forehead), which my conscience won't allow me ://: when I say no to them, they say 'why are you doing this, all gods are the same'. Like this type of reactions they have". To say no could thus be offending. Sangita narrated that it had happened several times that tension arouse between her family and relatives because her family did not eat *prasad* during festivals.

Some informants participated in the non-religious parts of the festivals in respected for their family or relatives. Aadarsh narrated "as my relatives are Hindu, I usually go there, and I eat food and spend some time." And Renu pointed out "sometimes if there is no idol worship, just to enjoy, just to like make them happy, sometimes I join". A few informants argued that Christians should not even participate in the non-religious parts of Hindu festivals. Shankar who had this position though admitted, "when we are not going over there, we feel little bad".

In the same way as Christians were invited to Hindu festivals, Christian invited Hindus for their festivals. At Christmas, there was usually a Christmas program in churches were it was custom to invite non-Christian to. Some of the informants said that Hindus use to come. However, the Christmas program did not seem to draw crowds; Renu narrated that when they call people "some come just to see the performance. They come and see the dance and all. But most of them that are invited don't come". Each year she asked her parents to see the Christmas program but was every time told "Church is not for us. If you want to go, you can go, but church is not for us".

Even though religious festivals were occasions that gave opportunity for Hindu-Christian interaction, it did not seem to be occasions that brought the two groups together in a thoroughly way. The informants rather seem to experience these events as a time of tension, as their loyalties to different social groups came in conflict. Moreover, Hindu festivals were occasions that enhance their otherness, as they did not take part in the religious parts of festivals.

Despite the highly diverse religious population in India, inter-religious marriage is widely viewed as unconventional. Exogamous marriages are often negatively perceived, even regarded as rebellious (Narayan, 2003). The informants had a comparable attitude, and expressed that it was neither good nor biblical for a Christian to marry outside the Christian in-group. This position also existed in the majority of the informants churches. In Ravi's church the rules were clear: "In my church, like, I will talk about my personal church, our pastor never allows that. If in any case a girl or a boy has been married to another person, a person from another faith, their membership will be deleted from the church". The church was an important control institution in terms of marriage arrangement, an institution that made sure that its members did not marry with non-Christians.

However, interreligious marriage seemed to be a very critical issue also among the Hindu population in the informants' hometowns/villages. When Partap was asked why Hindus and Christians don't intermarry he answered: "Because they (Hindus) have bondage under their tradition. Christians are not going against their rules like that. They are afraid of these villagers, so they don't do it". Aadarsh express a similar experience "it is a very big issue. The Hindus would not, never allow it". Accordingly, the resistance towards interreligious marriage seemed to be as clear within the Hindu out-group as within the Christian in-group.

Examples of interreligious marriages did however occur in both Sangita's and Shankar's villages. Shankar described that before he came to DBC, he was positive to practice of interreligious marriage, but had changed his mind. He expressed frustration and critique against his pastor in his home village who he thought taught the young people of his church incorrectly. In terms of acceptable marriage arrangements, Christians seemed reluctant to marry off their daughters to Hindu men. In Shankar's village marriage between Christian women and Hindu men were rare, and in Sangita's village the practice was nonexistent. Women are traditionally understood as a part of the man's family after marriage. Therefore, withholding daughters from interreligious marriage was probably a way for Christian parents to keep their daughters within the Christian community. That inter-religious marriage did occurred in these two villages is notable, and draws attention to that even in rural areas there are exceptions to the India endogamous norm.

6.3.3 Mission and Ministry

A third mode in which the informants interacted with the Hindu out-group was in their efforts to spread the gospel. As was noted in the previous chapter, the informants perceived "normal Hindus" as a group of potential converts, and were keen to reach out to this group. However,

as will be demonstrated, this undertaken was not an easy task. In the discussion below the informants' attitudes to different forms of missionary methods will also be brought up. It is a vital subject as it has been argued that Pentecostals are contributing to tense relationships between Hindus and Christians in India by employing aggressive evangelistic methods,

The informants were in agreement that a key task for the church was to spread the gospel. Sanjay express his position in following way: "Mission is really important. In my opinion, the church should be mission orientated. They should send out their people for a mission to share the gospel or do some social work". Renu stressed that it was crucial that the church gained new members and grew, to which she commented "if we will not tell the people [about the gospel], then how people will come to church?" Neeraj further argued that it was every Christians' responsibility to use their personal gifts and talents to spread the "good news".

Despite the consensus about the importance of missionary work, the informants related to mission differently: two informants express that mission was primarily a task for the church, while the other informants argued that each Christian should engage himself or herself in the task to spread the gospel. Among the later informants, some informants felt a personal calling to reach out to a specific group. For example, Sanjay had a vision to start a "Muslim church", and Aadarsh, as well as Ravi felt a calling to help people in drug addiction. Even if all informants described mission as a vital task for the church, a personal commitment to being involved in mission varied.

The majority of the informants were skeptical of approaching strangers and sharing the gospel. It was emphasized that the gospel would not make any sense to an average Hindu, who had little knowledge about Christianity. Moreover, some informants noted that Hindus could easily be offended by a Christian who all of a sudden approach them and argued that Jesus was the sole source of salvation. Renu argued that to approach a random Hindu and remarking that his/hers gods are not real, is comparable with offending a strangers' parents. She underlined that it was not peculiar that such behavior made Hindus angry and created conflict between Christians and Hindus.

One informant - Sanjay - was personally engaged in street evangelism. He regularly went out on the streets of Dehradun and distributed tracts and tried to talk to people about Jesus. Sanjay though admitted that this type of evangelism was difficult. Sanjay described how he often was accused for preaching the gospel only because he got money from foreigners, and said that it was difficult to gain trust among the people he met on the streets

Partap and Ajay described that their churches were involved in a form of village evangelism, which implied that a "team" was sent out to a village to sing some Christian

songs and shared their testimonies. Even though they were not personally involved in these activities, they were not disapprovingly about such evangelism, in spite of the fact that it seemed to provoke conflict. Partap narrated how two members of his church had been badly beaten by "Hindus" as they went to a village for "preaching the word of God", and Ajay described that the "teams" usually got "scold" and harshly told to go away. Partap's pastor seemed to have a worrying fatalistic attitude to the effects of this type of evangelism. Partap described that he was teaching the congregation that there was "no need to be afraid of people. They are just persecution, and we are preaching. Just let them do their job and let us do our job."

All informants spoke affirmative about Christians' involvement in social work. As discussed in the previous chapter, Christians' concern for other people was regarded as a characteristic for the Christian in-group. Nonetheless, there were various attitudes as regards to what degree and for what purpose Christians should be involved in social work. The majority of the informants regarded social work as beneficial because such work created relationships with Hindus and good opportunities to share the gospel. As Ravi said: "Like if a person is hungry and you are telling Jesus is the bread (referring to John 6:35), that doesn't make any sense. If you give bread and later on you can express the feelings, and share the gospel that will be more effectively". Likewise, Sangita narrated how members of her church had set up a medical camp in a nearby village. By helping people with their medical needs, they were able to gain the trust needed to share the gospel.

Some informants though emphasized that social work was important in itself as Christians were called to help those in need. It was argued that the Christian gospel was about meeting the physical as well as spiritual needs of humans. However, other informants were skeptical about churches and Christian organizations that had strong focus on social work. They argued that any non-Christian organization could be involved in social work, but only Christians could spread the good news. Therefore, "spiritual issues" should be the main focus of mission.

It was stated by informants that before one presented the gospel to somebody, it was preferable to develop some kind of friendship to that person. However, when the informants were asked if they talked about their religion with their Hindu friends and family several of them became uncomfortable. It seemed like they felt embarrassed for not managing to reach their friends and family with the gospel and started to give explanations to why their friends had not yet become Christians. Sangita said that her Hindu friends use to come to Sunday school as kids, but "because of their parents, they can't accept Jesus Christ". Ravi had a similar explanation, he had tried to speak with his Hindu friends about Jesus, "but they only

say one thing: 'I am ready to accept your God, nut not my family members'". Partap argued that his Hindu relatives had not become Christians because there were some "land problems" between his father and uncle.

To share the gospel with Hindu friends in family seemed to be a difficult task. Renu said that she had spoken with her friends about Jesus, but they "did not accept" and that it was very difficult to make them understand. She had now given them Bibles and encouraged them to read it, as well as to pray to Jesus. Sanjay also had difficulties in "sharing the Bible" with his Hindu family members, and had therefore changed his way of talking about Jesus. He said that now "I am just using their Gita, their Purans. And I am just, whatever similarities with the Christianity, I am just sharing. I am just making a bridge between me and my family". Ajay embarrassed admitted that he had not yet talk with his Hindu friends about the gospel, but added: "but I am going to talk, because I am going to try to save them".

Several of the informants pointed out that the gospel did not have to be preached in words but could be shared through one's actions. It was argued that in some relations, and under certain circumstances, the best way to share the gospel was to live it. Overall it was emphasized that words and actions should always go together; to live according to the Bible and to "follow Christ" was for that reason argued to be of vital importance.

It has been argued that Pentecostals are adjusting their missionary methods to the current situation of increasing religious intolerance in India; that churches are more conscious not to upset non-Christians (especially Hindus), and therefore have change methods of doing ministry. Aadarsh emphasized this and said that it was not longer possibly for Christians in India to use the same methods as previously due to an increasing influence of *Sangh Parivar.* He described how some of his teachers had narrated that when they were young, they use to go with drums in the streets and gather people and share God's word. "But now, it's been totally change because of these things (referring to the influence of *Sangh Parivar)*", and stated that now days "we do mission secretly, we cannot do openly".

6.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine in what ways the informants' interacts with members of the Hindu-out group in their everyday life, as well as the experience of the relationship between the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group. Hence, the informants' personal experience of Hindu-Christian relation and their life outside the institutional church-life has been in focus.

The common tendency of describing Pentecostals as a group that withdraws from "the world" does not agree with the informant's interaction patterns. The informants did not show any inclination of trying to avoid everyday contact with members of the Hindu out-group. All informants had family members, relatives or close friends that were Hindus with whom they frequently intermingled with. The informants thus had close relations with people of the Hindu out-group, relationships that bridged the two religious groups in the everyday life. In other words, all informants were engaged in the form of interaction with members of the Hindu out-group that Eriksen (2001) argues contribute to understanding and a more nuance perception of the out-group.

A significant difference divided the urban informants and those informants living in villages in terms of their interaction with the Hindu out-group. The informants living in villages described the village life as implicating a membership in a multi-religious community that worked together and help each other in the day to day life. Hence, these informants had a lot of contact with the Hindu out-group, not limited to Hindu friends or family members. The village life also demanded that Christians adjusted to the village system and the Hindu majority. The urban environment, in contrast, enabled the informants to in a higher degree chose whom to interact with. Religious identity seemed to be a private matter in their day to day life; these informants could act anonymously as Christians since few knew about their religious identity.

Since all informants were members of either multi-religious families or village communities, they were all part of an in-group that included both Christians and Hindus. The informants did not live their life as members of a Christian in-group that at times interacting with members of a Hindu out-group, but were part of groups that consisted of both Christians and Hindus. The informants felt allegiance both to their Christian in-group and multi-religious family or village in-group, which was especially apparent during Hindu festivals. During Hindu festivals the informants struggled to meet both groups' demands.

Even if the informants insisted that preaching of the gospel was a crucial task for Christians, it was not a primary mode of interaction with the Hindu out-group. The informants seemed to experience difficulties in the evangelization of Hindus friends and relatives. Many informants therefore hoped that deeds and actions would speak louder than their words and emphasized the importance of living the gospel. Tellingly, only one informant was involved in street evangelism, which was thus a rare form of interaction with Hindus. The attitudes towards different forms of missionary methods varied. The majority of informants was skeptical of preaching to absolute strangers and instead emphasized the importance of

building relationships in which the gospel could be shared. The informants were affirmative of Christian social work, but had different approaches to the extant Christians should be involved in such work.

There was a significant difference between the informants' experience of the general condition of Hindu-Christian relations in India and close relationships with Hindus and Hindu-Christian relations in their hometowns/villages. Even if tensions and conflicts at time arose both in the intimate relationships with Hindus and between Hindu and Christian communities in their hometowns/villages, they described the relations with Hindus as mostly trouble-free. Tensions and conflicts between Hindus and Christians in these contexts did not seem to be regarded as normative but rather as an exception to a normally peaceful coexistence.

In contrast, -Christian relations in general in India was described as tense. The informants stressed that what happened in Orissa in 2007-2008 demonstrated the simmering tensions existing between the groups. The informants also stressed that the Indian government does not take sufficient steps to protect Christians. Moreover, the informants expressed worries about the consequences for the relations between Hindus and Christians if the BJP won the national elections.

It is important to note that neither intimate relations with Hindus, nor Hindu-Christian relations in the informants' hometown/villages were described as unproblematic. The informants who had converted without their families, quite often came into disagreements with their Hindu family because of their faith. One informant had even been excluded from his family as a consequence of his conversion. The informants living in villages recalled how the Christian communities from time to time were subject to harassment by Hindus. In one informant's home village, Christians had been commanded to live in a certain area, while in another informants' hometown, Christians lived in separate colonies for security reasons. The informants also expressed experienced a lot of prejudice about Christians from Hindus. The informants nonetheless seemed to feel and experience that their nearest surroundings had not been critically affected by neither the general Hindu-Christian tensions in India, nor the Hindu nationalist movement.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The overall objective of this thesis is to better understand Hindu-Christian relations from the perspective of Indian Pentecostals. The study proceeds from a Social Identity Theory framework and is guided by three research questions, which shed light on Hindu-Christian relations form three perspectives. The first research question focused on how the informants, students at the Pentecostal college Doon Bible College, perceived the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group. The second question concerned how the informants experienced the relationship between the two groups, while the third question concerned the informants' interaction with members of the Hindu out-group.

This study's main contribution to research on Hindu-Christian relations, as well as Indian Pentecostalism, is to shed light on Hindu-Christian relations in contemporary India from a micro perspective. Previous research states that the Hindu nationalist movement is responsible for a growing religious intolerance against religious minorities, which has among other things resulted in the increasing anti-Christian violence and anti-conversion laws. This development is worrying, especially since the BJP again won the national elections and will govern India for the coming mandate period. However, because of a lack of studies on how Christians perceive and experience Hindu-Christian relations, little is known about the situation from a micro perspective. To my knowledge, there is no previous study about Hindu-Christian relations applying a SIT approach. Moreover, I have not been able to find any study that focuses on the everyday life of Indian Pentecostals. I have chosen to proceed from the perspective of Pentecostals since this Christian group has been disproportionally targeted by hostilities. Moreover, it has been claimed that Pentecostals are responsible for worsening the relations between Christians and Hindus by employing aggressive forms of mission.

The chapter will be structured in the following way: the main findings of the three research questions will be presented separately and thereafter some suggestions for further research will be given.

7.1 Main Findings

The informants' perception of the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group turned out to be more complex than a SIT model anticipated. Instead of exaggerating the similarities within the groups, the informants pointed to differences within the groups and seemed to be cautious not to present a stereotypical picture of neither the Christian in-group nor the Hindu out-group. The Christian in-group was primarily differentiated with respect to behavior. And the Hindu out-group was divided into "normal Hindus" and Hindu leaders, as well as "strong Hindus". "Hindu-Christian relations" did not only involve two social groups from two major religions, but also groups within these groups that related to each other differently (e.g. "strong Christians" to "strong Hindus", and "village Christians" to "Hindu leaders").

Christian in-group favoritism occurred primarily in two forms. First, in the perception that Christians are more concerned about others than Hindus, and second, that Christians had a special access to knowledge about the world that non-Christians lacked. However, the informants did also express in-group critique and were not affirmative to all the micro groups within the Christian in-group. The majority of informants did not identify with or favor a Pentecostal micro-in-group, but a nameless Christian micro-in-group consisting of Christians that had encountered Jesus personally, and lived in agreement to the Bible.

An existing prejudice against the Hindu out-group was that Hindus did not know very much about their religion, but kept practicing their religion as they had been taught for generations. However, there was no tendency to demonize Hindus, which Pentecostals at times are accused of. In fact, the informants did not express any hostile attitudes toward the Hindu out-group at large. Some informants did nonetheless note that Hindus had a partial attitude towards the Hindu majority. However, rather than perceiving "normal Hindus" as a competing group, they were portrayed as a group of potential converts. Moreover, several informants did express a negative opinion of Hindu leaders as well as "strong Hindus". These Hindus were depicted as a competing Hindu micro-out-group with regards to gaining converts, and as a group that influenced "normal Hindus" negatively. Hence, the following conclusions can be drawn from Pruitt & Kim's (2004) and Brewer's (2001) models of escalation: the informants did not seem to perceive "normal Hindus" as a group one stood in conflict with, but expressed worrying attitudes of conflict escalation regarding the perception of Hindu leaders and "strong Hindus".

Sangh Parivar members were by the majority of the informants not regarded as a group within the Hindu out-group, but rather as political orientated persons with a clear "Hindu bias". Therefore, they were generally not included in the informants' reasoning about the

Hindu out-group or in the informants' description of their experience of Hindu-Christian relations.

In terms of the informants' interaction with the Hindu out-group, there are three main findings. First, all informants had close relationships with members of the Hindu out-group, either within their family structure (including relatives), or with friends. In other words, all of the informants were engaged in some form of interaction with members of the Hindu out-group, which Eriksen (2001) highlighted could contribute to a more nuanced perception and understanding of the out-group. This is a positive signal for Hindu-Christian relations, and may in part explain why the informants did not form negative stereotypes of all Hindus. Since the informants tended to have many Hindu friends, the view of Pentecostals as an exclusionary group that keeps to themselves is nuanced. It is also indicated that the focus on institutional forms of Pentecostalism within academic research, perhaps represents Pentecostal adherents as more extreme in beliefs and practices than the everyday practices of religion supports.

The second main finding on the interaction patterns is the significant difference in what ways informants from urban and rural areas respectively interacted with the Hindu out-group. The informants living in villages described the village life implicating that one was a part of a multi-religious community, working together and helping each other in the day to day life. As a result, these informants did not only intermingle with Hindu friends or family members, but also had a great deal of daily contact other members of the Hindu out-group. Moreover, in villages social religious identity was much more salient which implied a vulnerable situation for Christians, living as minority. The informants that lived in villages, pointed out that Christians needed to adjust their behavior and interaction patterns to the Hindu majority.

However, interaction patterns varied from village to village as a result of the specific circumstance that prevailed in the village in question. For example, one informant left the village he grew up in several years ago, since neither his high caste family nor the rest of the village accepted his conversion to Christianity. In another informant's village, Christians and Hindus intermingled to the extent that inter-religious marriage was common.

For the informants living in cities, social religious identity seemed only to play a minor role in the interaction with people they did not know personally. These informants did not describe random interactions with colleagues, rickshaw drivers, or shopkeepers as interacting with a "Hindu". Moreover, the informants living in cities were not part of multi-religious communities that brought Christians and Hindus together and thus interacted with the Hindu out-group to a lesser extent.

The fact that seven out of nine informants were part of a multi-religious family or a multi-religious village community implies that their in-group included both Hindus and Christians. Accordingly, "Hindu" and "Christian" were not two mutual exclusive social identities, but bridged by shared belonging to various social groups. This highlights a weakness with SIT. Most SIT studies are conducted in an experimental setting, which means that they often fail to account for the complexity of a real life setting in terms of multi social identities, overlapping identities with out-groups, and its implication for behavior. This became clear when the informants described how they interacted with their Hindu family or multi-religious village during Hindu festivals. The majority of the informants did not adjust their behavior to one in-group, but tried to compromise for the sake of both groups.

The third main finding concerning the informants' interaction patterns with Hindus is that even if it was evident that the informants regarded mission as vital (as Pentecostals tend to do), it was not a main mode in which they interacted with Hindus. The informants seemed to experience difficulties in their evangelization efforts of Hindu friends and family relations. As it was difficult to share the gospel verbally with Hindus, many informants hoped that their actions would speak louder than their words. Only one informant was involved in street evangelism, which thus was a rare way of interacting with Hindus among the informants. There were various approaches to different missionary methods; some informants emphasized evangelization, others the importance of helping others through social work, and again others social work as a means to build relations through which the gospel could be transmitted. It seemed complicated to share the gospel with Hindus, as the belief that there is no other god than the Christian was offensive and caused conflict, at times even violent reactions.

In terms of the last research question, the relationship between the Christian in-group and the Hindu out-group was experienced differently on different levels. The informants described the close relationships with members of the Hindu out-group (family, relatives and friends) as mainly well-functioning. However, there was a difference between how the relationship with Hindu friends was experienced in comparison with Hindu family members. Belonging to different religions seemed to play a minor role in friendship, but did at times cause conflicts in families. It was clear that the informants' conversion to Christianity had given rise to strong reactions among both friends and family. One informant had even been rejected by his family due to his conversion.

The informants also described their experience of Hindu-Christian relations in their hometowns/villages as generally conflict-free. Tensions, conflicts and incidents of harassment of Christians were regarded as exceptions to the general state of peaceful coexistence.

Several informants stressed experiencing an unequal power relation between Hindus and Christians in their hometowns/villages; that Christians lived in a noticeable minority situation. In one informant's city, Christians even lived together in colonies for safety purposes. In spite of such conditions, the informants generally experienced that the Christian in-group and Hindu out-group were getting along in their hometowns/villages. Hence, the informants did not seem to experience that Hindu-Christian relations in their nearest surroundings had been critically affected by the Hindu nationalist movement.

However, when the informants talked generally about their experience of Hindu-Christian relations in India, they express distress and seemed worried. Several informants mentioned the riots in Orissa 2007-2008 and the burning of the missionary Graham Staines and his two sons. The riots showed for the informants that Hindu-Christian relations were in fact unstable. The informants living in cities particularly stressed Hindu-Christian relations in rural areas as tense. Moreover, the majority of the informants experienced that politicians were "Hindu biased", and did not properly protect or care for the Christian minority. The informants also expressed fear of the effects of the BJP winning the national elections and Narendra Modi becoming prime minister. Eight out of nine informants believed that it would have a negative impact on Hindu-Christian relations.

Another finding concerning the informants' experience of Hindu-Christian relations was that they felt that there existed a lot of prejudices about Christians within the Hindu out-group. For example that Christians were regarded as unmoral, were supported by foreigners and were a low caste religion. Nevertheless, the most common prejudice the informants experienced from Hindus was that Christianity is a foreign religion. This is a common Hindu nationalist standpoint that, according to the informants, seems to have spread among the Hindu population.

7.3 Further Consideration

This study has provided insight in how North Indian Pentecostals perceive and experience Hindu-Christian relations in India, as well as to what extent interaction takes place between Pentecostals and Hindus in the everyday life. These issues have to a large extent been neglected by academic research and as a result this study is a small, but significant contribution to a largely unexplored area. The religious life of North Indian Pentecostals is a research area that consequently is much in need of further investigation.

I consider three issues to be of particular importance for further research: (1) the mission practices of North India Pentecostals. As has been stated, Pentecostals have been accused for

worsening Hindu-Christian relations by utilizing aggressive forms of evangelistic methods. In contrast, there are studies that suggest that Pentecostals are adjusting their missionary strategies to an environment of increased religious intolerance. This study has shown that there seems to exist a prevalent skepticism towards evangelistic methods that target strangers, while some churches nonetheless have mission practices that lead to conflict and cause aggressive reactions from Hindus. To investigate what missionary methods are employed among North India Pentecostals and how they influence Hindu-Christian relations is an important topic of research. (2) In order to better understand the complexity of Hindu-Pentecostal relations, there is a need for ethnographic studies that can supply more in-depth knowledge. (3) The outcome of the recent election gave the BJP 282 seats in the Lok Sabha. This implies that the party will have a majority on their own during the coming mandate period (Dasgupta, 2014). As been revealed in this study there are worries among Pentecostals regarding how Hindu-Christian relations will be affected by a BJP-lead government, and fears that the persecution of Christians will become more widespread. To further investigate the minority situation for Christians is therefore of vital concern.

Aadarsh. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.30.2014

Aadarsh. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Ajay. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.30.2014

Ajay. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Neeraj. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.28.2014

Neeraj. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Partap. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.28.2014

Partap. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Ravi. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.31.2014

Ravi. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Renu. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.29.2014

Renu. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Sangita. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.29.2014

Sangita. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Sanjay. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.30.2014

Sanjay. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

Shankar. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 01.29.2014

Shankar. Interviewed by Julia Kuhlin at Doon Bible College, Dehradun 02.05.2014

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Appendix 1
Inquiry Sheet for Sampling

1. Would you be willing to be interviewed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. I come from: ☐ India. State: _____

☐ City ☐ Village

☐ Outside India. Country: _____

4. Religious background: ☐ I grew up in a Christian family

☐ I grew up in a non-Christian family

5. Plans after DBC: ☐ Go out in ministry

☐ Other work than church ministry

☐ Continue to study (theological studies)

☐ Continue to study (non-theological studies)

☐ Other: _____

☐ Don't know

6. Name: _____

Appendix 2
Interview Guide for First Interview

Theme: Religious identity
Key words: religious identity, meaning, boundaries, salvation, convert

- How would you describe you religious (x) identity?
- What thus being x mean to you?
- What thus being Hindu mean to you?

Theme: Religious identity in everyday life
Key words: experience, affect, treatment, stereotyping, security, political concern, attitudes

- How does your x identity affect your everyday life?
- How does your x identity affect how non-Christian people treat you?
- Have you ever experience being ill-treated because of you x identity?
- How do you experience that the government of India treats the Christian minority?

Themes: Hindu-Christian relations in hometown/village
Keywords: experience, communities, dwelling, interaction, friends, family, church

- How do you experience the relationship between the Hindus and Christians in your hometown/village?
- Is there any interaction between the communities? (work, festivals, eat, marry, living, leisure time, visiting, neighbors)
- Do you have family members or relatives that are Hindus?
- Do you have friends that are Hindus?
- Are there any particular areas of conflicts between the two communities?

Theme: Hindu-Christian relations in society
Keywords: society, relations, attitudes, tolerance, Sangh Parivar, BJP, security

- In general in society, in India, how would you describe the relationship between Hindus and Christians?
- How do you experience that the Sangh Parivar has affected the situation for Christians? Hindu-Christian relations?
- There is an upcoming election, how would a change of government (BJP) affect the situation for Christians? Hindu-Christian relations?