CHAPTER-V

Caste and Practice of Untouchability among Muslims and Christians
This chapter attempts to investigate caste like hierarchical divisions and practice of untouchability among Muslims and Christians society. The issue of untouchability is very delicate and complex. Legal provisions have made the matter more complex. Government has enacted law making untouchability a punishable offence. There is double pressure on Christians and Muslims. First pressure is from their theological principles which proclaim equity for all persons. People are placed on horizontal, not in vertical order. The second pressure is on legal provision. Therefore every respondent is hesitant to give clear answer on this issue. Because of legal provisions, even the Hindus now hesitate to speak out openly on the practice of untouchability. Therefore, efforts were made to extract the practice of untouchability among Muslims and Christians by observing their behaviour in actual situation with regard to marital alliance, participation in festivals and religious ceremonies. Information on this kind of sensitive issue is generally obtained through informal discussions.

The reservation, which the respondents have on the view on untouchability, remains the same for giving actual picture of prevalence and practice of caste in their respective societies. It is well know that there is no recognition of caste in both the religions-Muslims as well as Christians. The practice of untouchability has its close relation with the existence Caste and associated behavioural prescription. Untouchability materialises when people translate their behavioural prescription in their interaction with people of different groups in society. Since the religion does not prescribe untouchability, the Muslims and Christians deny, the existence of caste among them. Discussions made on caste in preceding pages clearly establish that the caste is not necessarily linked with Hindu hierarchical system.
Various studies on Muslims and Christian society clearly express that the term caste may not be found in those societies but the features associated with caste are explicitly found in their society. So at times it appears that it may be variation in use of the term to depict the similar situation. Thus, it can be said, citing Mertons' view, there could be diverse terms to describe a situation of common characters.

II

Muslims of Sagar, selected for the present study, belong to nine caste groups from here onwards we will use shorter term “Muslims” which will stand to denote our respondents selected for the present study. The Muslims form nine distinct groups are given specific place in the hierarchical division of society. Each group is recognized by specific distinct name. The hierarchical placement of the Muslims has been demonstrated in the following chart.

**Table 21**

Caste Hierarchy in Muslim Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Division/Category</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Total No. of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sayyad</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheikh</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mughal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathan</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashraf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makrane</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajlaf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rangrez</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arjal</td>
<td>Behana</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhisti</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it has been demonstrated in the 18th century, the Muslims form three broad divisions—Ashraf, Ajjaf (or Atraj) and Arjal. Undisputedly Ashrafs are considered highest in hierarchy. Next to them are Ajjaf. The Arjal is the lowest in this divisional scheme. Each of these categories comprises more than one sub-caste and each sub-caste in given a definite place in their hierarchical division.

Ashraf claim their origin from foreign country, though their this claim is highly disputed by Muslims of lower ladder. Muslims of Ajjaf, category often question the superior status of Ashrafs. However they do not question the highest place of Sayyad from the Ashraf category. Ashraf comprises four distinct caste groups. Here appears to be some arguments about the use of the term caste and sub-caste. If we call the three broad divisions of Muslims as a caste, then groups within each sub-divisions automatically becomes sub-caste. But if we use the term category to address the broad divisions of Muslims, then other groups in each division can be referred to as caste. In course of analysis of information the broad division seldom comes on the picture. For, all the analysis is based directly on sub-divisions. Therefore it is more situationally correct to use the terms category for broad division of Muslims and term caste to denote people belonging to sub-division within the broad division. We have been following this terminological scheme for analyzing the subject matter of the thesis.

The categorization of Muslims appears to be similar to the system of Varna Vyavastha of the Hindus. Imtiaz Ahmad is firmly of the view that this categorization of Muslims is true version of Hindu Varna system.

Ashraf comprises four castes groups. They are Sayyad, Sheikh, Mughal and Pathan. These four castes are considered highest in comparison to all other castes falling in Ajjaf and Arjal categories. Castes of Ashraf category claim, as has been stated, superiority on the basis of foreign origin. Muslims
of other caste dispute their claim. Generally, they do not create controversy in
according highest place of Sayyad. But they do not accept claim of superiority
of other three castes, of Ashrafs. According to many Muslims, some persons
may have descendants from foreign ancestors but majority of them are
converts, who have taken those honorific names as their surname.
The surname creates good impression among the people. They receive respect
and are evaluated superior by other Muslims and other non-Muslims. What
ever may be the actual position of these four caste groups, their highest place
in hierarchical division is to a greater extent accepted by all.

The category of Ajlaf includes great variety of occupational castes,
which are identified by specific caste name expressing their traditional
occupations. Local people may further subdivide the castes under this
category. This sub-division is based on the consideration of purity and
impurity associated with them.

Two castes–Kasai and Makrane are considered to be the caste of Ajlaf
category. The Arjal includes three castes–Rangrez, Behana and Bhisti. Rangrez
has 6 households, Behara 16 and Bhisti 2 households. In the Ajlaf category,
Kasai is accorded highest position. Then comes the position of Makrane.

Category wise the household of Ashraf is largest. They constitute 70
percent of the household. Numerically, the people of Arjal constitute second
place by constituting 24 percent of household. Ajlaf's have the lowest number
of household comprising only 6 percent of the total household. It is note
worthy that Ajlafis are also addressed as Atraf. Two things are important of
this point. One, that in all the castes the membership is recruited by birth and
each caste practices endogamy, though marriage between two castes are not
completely rare. It is said about Sayyads that they can bring daughters from
Sheikh but they never prefer to give their daughter to the persons of three
castes of Ashraf category. People of three other caste groups of Ashraf also
CHAPTER-V CASTE AND PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY AMONG MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS

avoid bringing daughter from Sayyad. It is believed that Sayyads are
descendant of Prophet Muhammad through His daughter Fatima and son-in-
law, Ali. Therefore people of other three castes do not consider it proper to
bring daughters from Sayyad caste. After marriage the daughter will have to
do household work like washing utensils or washing clothes. Getting low-key
job done by descendants of Sayyad is considered an insult to Prophet
Muhammad.

III

Hierarchical placement is third important attributes of a caste. The
Muslims also maintain strict caste division among them. Under any condition,
the four castes of Ashraf group would not establish marital relation with
persons from Ajlaf and Arjal category. There is by and large occupational
prescription for each caste, more particularly from the caste of Ajlaf and Arjal
category. Thus, it can be rightly concluded that caste related all essential
features are found in the organizational division of the Muslims. They may
use different term to address the constituent group or may provide any other
justification but in functional perspective, they follow the activities of caste,
and the hierarchal placement of the people play role to define their intragroup and inter-group relations.

Except caste of Ashraf category all the other castes follow their
traditional occupation. Observances of traditional occupations appear to be
main reason for differential placement in the Muslim hierarchical division. In
a Hindu system, each caste has a fixed prescribed occupation. These
occupations are classified in terms of ritual purity and pollution. Thus ritual is
the key factor to determine the place of a caste in ritual hierarchy of in
Hindus. An occupation which is considered low and impure by the Hindus
that occupation is treated low also by non-Hindus (Pauline Kolenda3). This
appears to be main reason for the emergence of occupation based social
hierarchy. Occupation based social hierarchy has no place in Islamic text, but ritual division in terms of superior and inferior does find place. The notion of Kafa’a is one such case in point. Through Kafa’a or matters related to marriage, one is able to understand the division in Islamic society. This division is attributed to different opinion of Islamic scholars with regards to Kafa’a. According to Qur’an and Sunnah, Yoginder Singh Sikand in his article on Castes in Indian Muslims recalls views of Ziauddin Barani on Kafa’a. Here the views of Barani have been taken from the article of Sikand. Ziauddin Barani was a well-known fourteenth century Turkish scholar and a prominent courtier in the court of Delhi’s Sultan Muhammad Tuglaq. In his famous book Fatawa-I-Jahandari, Barani interpreted Quranic views of ‘piety’ (pious) and ‘faith in partner’ as ideal for marriage, as creating divisions of high and low. He interpreted Quran as saying that good blood is drawn in high born as they are virtuous and loyal while in a blood flows in vice and therefore wildness and destruction originates. Barani further says since Quran opines that piety is found only in noble blood and lowborn do not have piety. This suggest that for ideal marriage, piety is necessary and since piety is found in noble blood, therefore marriage should be between people of noble blood only. Thus notion of Kafa’a suggest superiority of blood. Quoting Yaginder Singh Sikand, “Most Indian Hanafis seem to have regarded caste (birader), understood here as hereditary occupational group, as an essential factor in deciding Kafa’a, and in their way have provided Fiqh legitimacy to the notion of caste”.

Regarding nation of Kafa’a as interpreted by Indian Muslim, he writes “By restricting marriage to ones occupational and ethnic group, caste, which is, in theory, an endogamous birth based occupational category, came to be regarded as essential to establishing Kafa’a for the purpose of marriage.” Sikand further writes, “In this way, the notion of Kafa’a helped to provide legitimacy to the existence of caste among the Indian Muslims by effectively restricting marriage within the endogamous caste circle”. (All quotations from Sikand).
Practice of endogamy evidently substantiates the existence of caste in Muslims. The information obtained from the head of each household about the caste of his wife, we found, with few exceptions at most all the heads have married in their own caste. The following table presents the marital alliance of head of the household (Table 22).

**Table 22**

Marital Alliance of Head of Household: Muslim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Sayyad</th>
<th>Sheikh</th>
<th>Mughal</th>
<th>Pathan</th>
<th>Kasai</th>
<th>Makrane</th>
<th>Raingrez</th>
<th>Behana</th>
<th>Bhisti</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sayyad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mughal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makrane</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raingrez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behana</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhisti</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total 108</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fine caste groups belonging to lower order of Ajlaf and Arjala category strictly followed the rules of endogamy. Not a single head had married with women of other caste. There are some cases of inter-caste marriage among the caste categorized in Ashraf. By and large, they have also tended to restrict to the rules of endogamy. Practice of hyper gamy existed among Sayyad and they were freely marrying women of other three castes of Ashraf's category. The analysis of the marital alliance clearly reveals the existence of two facts among Muslims. One, inter-caste marriage may be done but only among higher castes of Ashraf category. There is not a single case where the Ashraf man has married with castes from Ajlaf and Arjala category. Two, endogamy is more strictly followed by the people of lower caste. We
have not found any head who has married outside their own caste. This is the proof of not only the existence of practice of endogamy but also a proof of rigid observances of the notion of purity and superiority of caste. Whatever the Muslim may claim overtly, in practice they were quite similar to that of the caste ridden Hindu society.

IV

The origin of untouchability is seated in the concept of superiority and inferiority of the caste. This concept is very much in operation in hierarchical placement of people. In their day-to-day interaction the Ashraf Muslims keep distance from Ajlaf and more prominently from Arjal people. An incidence, which I found during the course of my research, gives a concrete example of the existence of the notion of purity and impurity. A person from Sheikhs caste had three sons. His one son married to a daughter of Thakur family of Hindu. His second son married in Behana family. Behana is treated very low in the Muslim hierarchy. The head of household of Sheikh accepted the daughter in low who was from higher Hindu caste, but refused to accept the daughter-in-law who was from Behana caste of among Muslims. This again speaks the influence and even casteism to give direction to the behaviour of Muslims. It is noteworthy that the Sheikh from Muslim consider themselves equal to that of the Kshatriya of Hindus. It is a popular believe that the Kshatriya often take the names of Sheikh after their conversion to Islam. People criticize the caste system of Hindu. They condemn the practice of behavioural prescription of caste but when they convert to Islam they carry all those evils which were associated with caste. Rigid hierarchical division is a concrete proof of this. Behana and Bhisti are taken as untouchable castes by the Ashrafs. As described earlier that because of many reasons people do not openly admit the practice of untouchability. But this becomes obvious in social interaction and religious rituals and ceremonies. There is a system of
Iftar party after Roja. To express the concept of fraternity any Muslim is expected to come and eat from the common plate. But Ashraf Muslims do not like the people from Behana, and Bhisti to dine in common plate. A person from Behana gives an interesting explanation of this discriminatory behaviour of Ashraf Muslims. The hierarchical ranking of caste is must to do with of residence place and economic prosperity. He said that since, he was born in Sagar, his father and grandfather also lived in Sagar. So everybody here knew the origin of their caste. Therefore, they are subjected to ill treatment by higher Muslim castes. He said that if he becomes economically strong and settled, where nobody know about the origin of his caste, he can be well taken to be a Muslim from higher Caste. It is popularly believed that majority of people are new settlers especially in comparison to the period a settlement of the people from Ashraf caste.

The new settlers took surname of higher Muslim castes. The Muslim community took them, the way they projected themselves. These people do not disclose the place of their origin nor the origin of their caste. So no body will come to know the real caste of newly settled Ashraf category.

Such type of claim and counter claim does exist among the Muslims of Sagar. But one fact has remained unchanged, that is, existence and recognition of social division in the line of caste and also the behavioural practices in terms of pure and impure categorization of people.

The notion of purity and impurity is closely associated with traditional occupation of caste. Some occupations are regarded honourable and pure. As against this, some occupations are treated low and impure. Low category of occupation generally involves unhealthy and unclearly types of manual work.

Five of the total nine caste groups of the Muslims were engaged in such low graded unclean jobs. The upper caste Muslims completely deny any
traditional occupations. The Table 23 presents traditional occupation of heads of Muslim households.

Many of the occupational caste presently do not carry their traditional occupation. Present job of occupational caste has been presented in next succeeding table, that is, table 24.

**Table 23**

Caste wise Traditional occupation of Head of The Household : Muslim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>No traditional occupation</th>
<th>Animal buy/sell</th>
<th>Elephant rider/ Water drawer</th>
<th>Cotton carder</th>
<th>Gloring of cloth</th>
<th>Butcher</th>
<th>Donot know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sayyad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mughal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makrane</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangrez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behana</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhishiti</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 24**

Present Job of Occupational Castes : Muslim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Animal Selling</th>
<th>Tailoring</th>
<th>Pryet</th>
<th>Hakim</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Advocate</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Mechanic</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>Beedi Making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makrane</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangrez</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behana</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhishiti</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The responses of the Muslims from different castes present an interesting situation. High caste Muslims are secretive to disclose their traditional occupation. 70% of our respondents are from high castes of Ashraf section. No body gave information about their traditional occupation. 35.72% Heads (Head of household) denied having any traditional occupation. They gave reason, which may justify their statement. They informed that since they are descendents from foreign ancestors, the question of traditional occupation is redundant for them. They say, caste based traditional occupation is a feature specific to Hindu society of India. No such system exists in Arab countries from where their ancestors immigrated to India. 64.28% people expressed ignorance about their traditional occupation.

There is sharp contract in the response of higher caste and lower caste Muslims on the question of traditional occupation. Lower caste Muslim constitutes five caste groups. All persons from lower caste unhesitatingly told their traditional occupation. They frankly admitted that they were aware of the occupation of their ancestors. It was a matter of curiosity for an investigator that why people of upper castes did not disclose their traditional occupation, at the same time Muslims of lower ladder disclosed freely. On asking this question, a respondent from higher Muslim caste jokingly replied. Lower caste Muslim makes their pre-convert family occupation known to every one. It was theirs this habit which made them to remain low even after conversion.

In the changing socio-economic scenario, the traditional occupations are fastly loosing their relevance to provide viable means of livelihood. The effect is visible among the Muslims of Sagar. People are fastly changing their traditional occupation and taking up new types of jobs for their livelihood. The information about present occupation of occupational caste has been shown in the tables drawn here above (Table 24). The people of Makrane caste
present an exception to this fact. They are still engaged in their traditional job, that is, buying and selling of animals. But this fact does not tell much about the relevance of traditional occupation because they constitute only two households. Makrane instance is not proved in case of other caste. Rangrez have left their traditional occupation completely and have taken the jobs like priest, Hakim that are not completely non-traditional occupations.

Kasai are traditionally butcher. There are only two households of Kasai, and both fond butchery no longer a profitable job. They say many more persons have come in the field. Moreover, their occupation required at least a small shed in the center of the market. If you do not have customers, you cannot run business. Both the households of Kasai are economically weak. As such they were not capable to have a shed in the market area. This forced them to do the job of Beedi Making to earn their livelihood.

Occupational mobility is visibly more among the people of Behana. They are fastly switching to non-manual and more respectable occupations like teaching, priestly assignment, etc. Two of them are law graduate and practicing in local courts.

On the basis of the discussions so far, it can conclusively remarked that caste exists among Muslim society, and along with the caste, they are also influenced by the notion of untouchability to regulate and govern their behaviour in interaction with members of that own community.

V

The study of caste and untouchability among non-Hindu involves several complexities. But it is more bewildering in case of study of caste among Christians. The existence of caste and practice of untouchability was perceptually clear in the study of Muslim society but it creates multiple problems to identify caste as a structure in reference to behavioural
organization and the practice of untouchability as a guiding principle in giving shape to the interaction with different lower graded castes among Christians. At the very outset the Christian would say that they don’t believe in caste and condemn the caste related social practice of untouchability. But in reality, the situation is drastically different. At least this is true for the Christians of Sagar. The existence of the notion of higher and lower can be found at the level of bifurcation of Christianity as Catholics and Protestants. Catholics are considered ritually and religiously superior to that of the Protestants. The Protestants also recognize the superiority of Catholics. This had its reflection on the followers of both the branches.

Earlier they were vocal to bring out their differences publicly with an objective to place themselves better from the other branch. Earlier, the main purpose of western travelers and traders was to spread Christianity in India by way of conversion. That required spreading awareness among the people about the ideals and virtues of their religion.

Before the advent of Protestants, the Catholics had no competition. Arrival of Protestant changed the situation. Both the branches wanted to increase numerical strength of their followers. This necessitated to attract more and more converts in their respective fold. Propagation compelled each branch to highlight their religious ideals on a better footing at the face of the ideals of the other branch.

Earlier, only Catholics represented India. That is why all the early converts belong to Catholics. For a policy, the Catholics paid attention to convert people from higher Hindu castes. Majority of early converts in South India were either Brahmin or people from high hierarchical order. Higher castes people enjoyed considerable influence among the people of lower Hindu castes. The Protestant followed different line. They concentrated their attention on low graded castes and Tribals. Theirs this approach brought
positive results. Majority of converts from seventeenth century onwards embraced Protestants. Liberal religious practices of Protestants were congenial for quick assimilation with newly embraced religious sect.

The origin of birth of the converts created clean divide among the Christians of South. The early converts, popularly known as Syrian Christians kept noticeable distance from the new converts. Not only they treat themselves superior but also recognized the new converts as untouchable. Social scientists. Tharamangalam, Alexander, Wiebe and John-Peter have given various examples about the existence of the practice of untouchability among the Christians of South India.

The essence of these historical events has its reflection among the Christians of Sagar town. The origin of birth of the majority of Catholics is higher castes of Hindus. Half of the Catholic households trace their origin from Brahmin and Kshatriya castes. The other fifty per cent households did not disclose their original castes. Social background of Protestants is just opposite. Two-third households of the Protestants were from lower castes or tribals. Origin of birth makes a clear divide among the Christians of Sagar. The description of pre-conversion castes of the Christians has been demonstrated in the Table 13 of the preceding chapter.

The Catholics of Sagar largely represent the converts from higher Hindu caste, where as, the Protestants are preponderantly represented by the converts from lower and Dalit castes and tribal groups. Two opposite tendencies are at work among the Christians of Sagar regarding identification of caste. For the purpose of present discussion, these tendencies can be called as the tendency of ‘disclosure’ and the tendency of ‘concealment’.

The converts from higher castes expressively make known the caste of their origin. Many of the Christians of Sagar have continued to keep the name
of their pre-conversion caste. Even they keep Hindu name. One example will make the situation clear. Name of head of one household is Mahendra Singh Rajput. The name and surname give impression of his being Hindu. Mahendra Singh is a Hindu name, and Rajput is a name of Kshatriya caste of Hindu Varna System. Converts from higher castes proudly brings forth the name of their pre-conversion caste. They also follow certain rituals associated with their pre-conversion castes. Rajput is a warrior caste. Sword is traditionally important instrument of war. The Hindu Rajput worship sword and other instruments related to war on the Day of Dusherra, a festival celebrated by Hindus as a symbolic eulogy for God Ram for His victory over Ravana (a devil). The Rajput family of the Christian celebrates Dusherra in the same way as a Hindu does it. They perform worship to sword and other war related instruments. This is the way of remembering the glory of their original caste.

This kind of practice is not confined only among the Christians of Sagar. It appears to be an all India feature. It is worthwhile to mention two names here who are nationally known in the power politics of the country. Ajit Jogi was Chief Minister of the State of Chhattisgarh, and Raj Shekhar Reddy is the present Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Both name and surname symbolizes their religious affiliation with the Hindus. If one goes by the name and surname, they are taken as Hindus. Reality is different. Both are Christians. The point of making this kind of discussion is to underline the difficulties which one confronts while searching or locating caste among Christians.

The situation is quite different among lower caste converts. Lower castes have degraded position in the Hindu system. They do not want to carry the symptoms of degradation after conversion to Christianity. Therefore, they have a tendency to conceal their pre-conversion caste. They have taken western name and surname for their social identity. Western surname is not
based on occupation. It is just a mark of family identification. So, it is not possible to easily know the caste among Christians through their name or surname.

VI

Unlike the Muslims, the Christians have made remarkable educational improvement. There is hundred percent literacy among the Christians of Sagar. Number of higher educated persons is remarkably high. Education helped them to acquire high and respectable jobs. So they do not continue with their traditional occupation. There is applaudable occupational mobility among the Christians of Sagar. As such, it is not possible to identify caste among Christians through their occupations.

This kind of social reality made binding to employ more than one technique to ascertain the existence of caste and practice of untouchability among Christians of Sagar. From the discussions carried out here above, one thing is undisputedly clear that fact of caste does exist in the conscious mind of all the Christians whether they disclose or conceal their caste, both the tendencies explain the pivotal position of caste in organization of their interactional system. Their response on few issues gives further evidence about categorization and social division of people similar to the line of Hindu stratification system. The Tables 25 and Table 26 demonstrate their views on the issue relating to hierarchical division and system of membership.

Table 25

Views on Hierarchical Position: Christian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Response on Hierarchical position</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Place to Catholics</td>
<td>1st Place of Protestants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 26

Response on Recruitment of Members: Christian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis of Recruitment</th>
<th>Catholics</th>
<th>Protestants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 25 and Table 26 record the views of Head of Christian household, which comprises both Catholics and Protestants. 87.9 per cent Christians accord higher place to Catholics in reference to Protestants. What is revealing is that 86.2 per cent Protestant themselves believe that Catholics are at a higher place in the hierarchy in comparison to the place of the Protestants. Thus, we find a religious community which claims to be a believer of the notion of equality, in practice, they believe in hierarchical division of people.

The analysis of their response (Table 26) on recruitment of members in social groups reveals their faith to distinguish a person from the point of purity and impurity of blood. Nearly 97% Christians accept that membership in a group is determined by birth. Hundred per cent house holds of Catholics subscribe to this view. However, nearly 3.5% heads of household from Protestants reported that membership can be acquired through the means other than the birth. Recruitment of membership by birth is a clean indication of the existence of the closed social system. This is similar to the social system of the Hindus. Membership by birth is one very important fact for persistence and continuation of caste system in Hindu society.

Christians also follow the same principle to recruit members in their groups. So overtly they may not accept the existence of caste among them, but in practice they follow the norms which were responsible for creating caste and caste hierarchy among Hindus.
Therefore, looking to the recruitment system of the Christians, it can be said that 'Caste is in the making among them'.

Further evidence about the existence of caste can be found in their membership to Church. There are three catholic churches and six churches for Protestants. People take membership of Church according to their conveniences and propriety with other members. Since Catholic have rigid hierarchical order of priest, followers cannot construct church on their own wishes. Situation is different among Protestants. They are free to join any church, and if need arises, a group of people can construct their own Church.

In Sagar, two of six Protestant churches came into existence recently. Some people could not adjust with the organization set-up of existing church. They made their independent churches. These two churches do not have church like building. Residential houses have been converted as church. Membership to church generally follows caste-line. The division between clean caste converts and untouchable Scheduled Caste convert is so strong that one Protestant church in exclusively earmarked for the persons of scheduled caste converts.

Caste factor and the ceremony of "Holy Communism" presents a living example of the practice of untouchability among the Christians. As the name suggests, this ceremony is hold to strengthen the message of equality and brotherhood for all the Christians. Priest offers sacred wine to all members present in the ceremony. Members are expected to sip few drops from a bowl (in some church, the holy wine is given by Father dipping his finer and touching the tongue). The same bowl is served to all members. People of higher caste convert objected to this practice. With the results, two separate bowls are used, one for members from higher castes, and the other exclusively for untouchable converts. This system of separate service indicates presence of not only caste system, but also institutionalization of the practice of
untouchability. Caste consideration play determinant role in settlement of marriage. People make enquiry about the original caste of prospective bride or groom. Higher caste converts do not settle marriage in a family from Dalit or scheduled caste.

Firm conclusion can be drawn from the discussions given here above that caste and caste oriented practice of untouchability exists among Muslims and Christian society with change in the mechanisms of expression.
REFERENCES:


5. Sikand, Yoginder Singh, ibid.

