CHAPTER-I

Introduction
This study is about Caste and Practices of Untouchability found among Muslims and Christians community living in Sagar Town of Madhya Pradesh. Sagar lies in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and which is nationally known as a centre of higher education and military base.

Numerically, Muslims and Christians are the largest minority community in Sagar in terms of Mandelbaum’s terminology ‘Introduced Religions’. The teaching of both these religions is based on principles of equality of mankind. But social reality depicts the presence of caste like system of stratification among Muslims and Christians. Since the great tradition of Islam and Christianity does not recognize in principle the presence of social division in their respective society, the social disabilities arising out of such divisions is also denied per se. Though lately, it has generated interest among social scientists, but taking refuge to Imtiaz Ahmad, those studies were based primarily on secondary data like census, or unsystematically collected information and the causes of origin of such division and hierarchy were also not studied properly (Imtiaz Ahmad3). This has left ample of scope for a proper field based study.

The present research work is an attempt in fulfilling this gap. This study looks into the existence of social divisions and the origin of such divisions among Muslims and Christians and analyses the disabilities resulting from such divisions. It also evaluates how these disabilities violate the principles of Human Rights. Social disability and consequent untouchability is attributed to caste based Hindu hierarchical order. But

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* David G. Mandelbaum used the word “Introduced Religion” to define religions which did not originated in India. For further reading, refer his book “Society in India”, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1972
recent studies on Muslim and Christian communities in India have factually acknowledged the existence of caste system even among these communities.

II

The Hindu social organization is based on caste system. Caste system creates inequality in the society. American Sociologist Kingsley Davis has rightly observed, "The Hindu social order is the most thorough going attempt known in the human history to introduce absolute inequality as the guiding principle in social relations". Hierarchical placement influences the behaviour between man to man and also prescribes a system of privileges and disabilities for people of different castes.

Human Rights Declaration proclaims that inferior treatment given to any person on the basis of his birth is a violation of Human Right. It states that the government shall ensure "the full and free participation of indigenous people... in all aspects of society". 'Vienna Declaration' attended by 171 countries affirm that all Human Rights - economic, social, political and cultural are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. As such, subjecting any person or group of persons on the basis of his affiliation to socially degraded caste or category is a violation of Human Rights.

The existence of caste or caste like features among Muslims and Christians necessitates describing what caste is and what is its implication in social interaction. Caste is basically an intrinsic feature of Hindu social system. "Hindu is the one", as Anderson describes, "who is born in India of Indian parents and accepts and obeys the rules of caste". People of different caste are placed in a stratified order. The ultimate reality of stratification is in its effect on behaviour (Homans).

In his study of Indian Villages, S.C. Dube found that the relative position and strength of caste often determines the character and behaviour of
people. Caste in Hindu society is governed by the principle of ritual purity and pollution. Castes in upper ladder of hierarchy are accorded higher status and honours by the people occupying lower position. In the words of Tumin, these kinds of "status distinctions are then guaranteed also by rituals. Individual castes develop quite distinct cults and gods". Caste is generally seen in the idiom of 'Varna Model'. The varna model does not give correct interpretation of the realities of caste system. Srinivas rightly says, "the caste system of even small region is extraordinarily complex and it does not fit into the varna-frame except at one or two points". This view is shared by many social scientists who have made empirical study of caste. In his study of Marriage and Religion, Giriraj Gupta is categorical to state, "the varna system gives us an understanding of a categorical classification depicted by the great tradition of Hinduism. The varna system does not fix the rank of a caste and therefore the varna operates broadly to suggest categories of caste as the basis of shared status, historical origins, life styles and ritual behaviours".

When we try to examine the existence of caste among non-Hindu community it becomes necessary for us to identify the basic characteristics, which make any group to be addressed as caste. The discussions given here above clearly establish that the caste has no direct relation with the Varna system of Hindu. Precisely this led Srinivas to say that when he uses the term caste, then it does not mean the caste in the Vedic sense but his concern is to that group of people who form an endogamous unit. In his study of origins and development of caste Pillai forcefully states that caste is nothing but a system of social assortment.

Scholars like C. Bougle and S.F. Nadel treat caste as a mechanism for the ordering of groups in society. The system of caste like ranking is not found only among the Hindu. Ranking by and large exists in all human society. Generally two system of ranking remain at work -
1. the purity-pollution principle
2. the judicial-servitude principle

Caste among Hindus is determined largely by the purity-pollution principle but ranking of people in terms of judicial-servitude principle is very common among other society. Cove\textsuperscript{15} narrates that the judicial-servitude principle postulates ranking on the basis of difference in rights over economic resources. Differences in rights permit relations of dominance between different groups. Thus people of any community are placed in the continuum of dominating and dominated. This kind of conceptual framework is receiving more acceptances for the analysis of caste in contemporary India. Caste is undergoing an adaptive process (G.S. Rama\textsuperscript{16}, M.N. Srinivas\textsuperscript{17}, Gould\textsuperscript{18} and Andre Beteille\textsuperscript{19}).

Sociologically, caste is not to be seen through the mirror of Hindu religious system but should be seen through the associated element which qualify to the existence of caste. G.S. Ghurye\textsuperscript{20} identified these elements as an essential feature of caste. They are a name for the group, membership by birth, endogamous unit and a fixed social status.

The views of Mandelbaum are appropriate to understand the phenomenon of existence of caste \textit{ras system} in any society. He says, "A social system consists of a set of groups whose members together perform certain functions that they do not accomplish as separate groups. The groups are thus interdependent and they are interdependent in particular arrangement."\textsuperscript{21}

Having this conceptual frame, existence of caste factor will be seen among Muslims and Christians. It is worthwhile to mention that in our investigation of caste among Muslims and Christians, we are not influenced by Dumontian perspective. Rowena Robinson and the like may possibly think
that searching caste among non-Hindu communities is because of Dumontian perspective which treated Hinduism synonymous with India. Robinson opines that “this notion led both to reifications of Hinduism and Marginalization and neglect of non-Hindu groups and communities.”

In our analysis of caste system among Muslims and Christians we are not influenced either by Dumontian perspective or vision of Hinduism. In the examination of caste this thesis follows the conceptual frame as narrated by Cove. According to him, “Ranking is a multidimensional phenomena which relates to the control and use of different resource bases”23. Existence of caste and caste ranking has been here seen as a form of stratification referring to the process of hierarchical differentiation. In hierarchical ranking the superiority and inferiority finds manifestation in the system of privileges and prohibition rules for different groups. Caste occupying higher place wield considerable socio-religious privileges, whereas socio-religious participation of lower caste is restricted through various prohibitory rules. These rules are more rigid for the castes occupying lowest position in the ladder. The practice of untouchability find expression in the behavioural norm prescribed for the people of lowest category in the hierarchy. They are subjected to many rules regarding what they can do and what they cannot. In purity-pollution frame these people are considered unclean castes. As such they are denied access to many socio-religious activities. Behaviour rules for untouchables are not uniform throughout the country; as such it has not been possible to have a universally applicable definition in sociological literature. In his article on Problems of Untouchables, P.T. Barale quoted Gandhiji to define Untouchable. Gandhiji defined untouchables as “An untouchable is outside the place of respectable society. He is hardly treated as human being. He is an outcaste, hurled into an abyss by his fellow beings occupying the same platform. The difference is somewhat analogous to the difference between
heaven and hell"\textsuperscript{24}. N. Jayaram followed similar line. He defined untouchable through the essence of the arguments of Baba Sahib Ambedkar. The definition reads: "The untouchables were originally broken man, strong survivors of the indigenous tribes conquered by invading sedentary agriculturist, the Brahmins"\textsuperscript{25}.

Our constitution though mentions about untouchability but is not clear about its elaborate explanation. Article 17 of the Constitution of India states about the abolition of untouchability and the practice\textsuperscript{4s} punishable\textsuperscript{26}.

The practice of untouchability is not confined only among Hindus; it is equally present among Muslims most prominently and less vividly among Christians. In fact most confusion and fallacy have cropped up about Muslims and Christians because of looking at them in their respective theological prescription. In actual practice these communities do not exhibits the practices of their respective religious prescriptions. Hence, study should focus on their actual behaviour. Since they are not one, significant diversities are found among them. Fazalbhoy \textsuperscript{27} has coined the term ‘Lived Islam’ which envisages Islamic societies as quite diverse in actual practice. Intiaz Ahmad observes that “while Muslims in India believe in and practice the cardinal pillars of the faith, the practice of Islam in India is heavily underlined by elements which are accretions, drawn from the local environment and contradict the fundamentalists view of the beliefs and practices to which Muslims must adhere.\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{III}

Study of caste and untouchability among Muslims and Christians involves many complexities. In this context four factors are crucially significant:

One, the textual versus actual behavioural pattern,
Two, foreign origin verses indigenous,
Three, individual conversion versus mass conversion, and
Four, noble versus commoner Muslim.

Textual behaviour pattern reflects observances of the behavioural form as enshrined in Holy Koran and Hadis for Muslims and Bible and Testaments for Christians. Ranjit K. Bhattacharya remarks, "...the consciousness of an egalitarianian Great Tradition made the Muslims avoid any explicit and direct reference to social facts which were considered contrary to their Koranic texts and Islamic Ideology." The text itself is not uniformly interpreted. Fazalbhoy comments, "...the idea what is the 'textual' is itself subject to change." Fazalbhoy comments that, "...Islam in India have provided ample evidence to show that the Muslims in India display a variety of practices." Fazalbhoy further comments that, "even Koran are also interpreted in different ways in different societies." This shows that there is no 'all agreed' consensus about the textual behavioural prescriptions for Muslims.

The same is the case with Christians. A clear division in terms of Catholic and Protestants itself reveals the differentiation in behavioural prescription. Social norms and value system on various worldly matters of the Protestants are visibly different from that of the Catholics. Textually Christianity advocates equality but they demonstrate stratified system in actual behaviour. In India, for instance Syrian Christians of Kerala consider themselves pure and true followers of Catholic prescription. Neo- converts are considered low and inferior.

There are two clear-cut division among Muslims. This is addressed as Ashrafs and Ajlafs. Ashraf trace their origin directly from Arab countries, and Ajlafs are considered indigenous converts. Thus Ajlafs are accorded lower status and the Ashrafs keep distance from them in ceremonies of major life events.
In Christians also this division is conspicuous. The Christians of European origin are placed higher in status system than the Christians of Indian origin. This has been explicitly expressed in the writings of Mandelbaum.35

In India, majority of the Muslims and Christians are local converts. The conversion has taken two lines, some persons have converted individually, while in majority of cases, the conversion was collective. The people of whole caste have converted either to Islam or Christianity.

Individual conversion is sporadic and interest oriented. Each may have a different reason or motivation for conversion. This is not much important to understand the present behavioural practices of Muslims and Christians. Historical accounts factfully delineate that the Hindu people converted in mass, some went to Muslim fold and some to the Christian fold. People converted to Christianity collectively that were demonstrated by Tharmangalam.36 Similarly, Saberwal37 notes, large number of peasants collectively converted to Islam in West Bengal in British period. The Sayyad section from Ashraf of Muslim Community considers their descent directly to the kin of Muhammad. Sayyad literally means ‘princely’. They consider themselves superior and noble (Mandelbaum38). Christians are more vocal in their presentation to be an egalitarian society. Contrary to this, the existence of notion of superior and inferior is very much in practice. A group of Jacobite Christian who are also known as Knanaya Christian “claim to be directly descended from Christian merchants who settled in Kerala in fourth century under the leadership of Thomas of Cana” (Tharmangalam39). They practiced endogamy and considered themselves pure blooded and far superior to the local converts.
IV

Many things are common between Muslim and Christian religion. Both came to India from foreign country. The main architect of both the religions were messengers of God who are referred to as Paigambers. Christianity is older than Islam. Around six hundred years after the origin of Christianity, Islam appeared on the scene after the birth of Paigamber Muhammad on 23rd April 571 (A.S. Nazibabadi⁴⁰). Iman and Namaj are considered indispensable elements of Islam. Kandhlawi⁴¹ asserts that having inner confidence in the Prophet Hajrat Muhammad is called Iman. Koran and Hadis are most sacred scriptures of Islam. Kandhlawi states that Koran is related to Almighty Allah and the relationship of Hadis is with Prophet Muhammad. Corroborating this statement Bulandshahari⁴² also affirms only Namaj to be next to Iman. In some Arab countries the term Salat is used for Namaj. Highlighting the importance of Namaj, Ansari⁴³ writes the difference between Kafir (non-believers of Islam) and Muslim is to be found in offering Namaz. He identifies the observance of three elements for conversion to Islam. They are: Buzu, Gusl and Namaj.

A reputed Muslim writer, S.A. Kadari⁴⁴ states that Namaj is the factual expression of Iman. It has the faculty to protect a person from the evils of demon. The other Muslim intellectual like A.A. Thanawi⁴⁵ stresses the importance of Namaz for happiness and to get rid from all sorrow and pains. Life of the Prophet Muhammad is looked with deepest honour and reverence by the followers. Tayyab⁴⁶ goes on say that hearing the stories about Prophet gives strength to the followers. Subscribing to these kinds of notion, Muslims keep the name of their children relating to the name of Allah, Prophets and Caliphs. Many scholars have highlighted the prevalence of brotherhood of man in Islam. Quoting Hajrat Umar, A.R. Khair⁴⁷ states that there should not be any partiality between matters of dispensation of justice. Many Sufi Saints and poets emphasized universal brotherhood. Reputed Iranian Scholar, Hajiz gives a humble advice to the Indian Muslims that if you want love and
affection, then you remember the name of Allah while you are with Muslim but say Ram-Ram when you are with the Brahmin (Farooqui A.48). But all is not well in Islamic scriptures. The reference of Jehad (holy war against non-believers of Islam) is most damaging and destructing for the mankind. Kandhlawi 49 assertly states Jehad as the duty of Muslims imposed by the Almighty Allah. Allah calls upon the adherence of Islam that Jehad is very important and in midst of all the odds one must use his sword and strength to defeat the Kafir (non-believers). Exploring the benefit of Jehad it says that if you win the battle you will get their wealth along with their wives and children and occupy area of the enemy. You will get everything if you succeed in Jehad. In Islam Jehad is considered much higher to Haj (pilgrimage). It is these kinds of message, which is creating hatred and is cause of communal violence. Spirit of hatred for non-believers of Islam is so prominent that at one point it is said “don’t leave any single Kafir on this earth. If you leave them alive then their descendants will misguide the followers of Islam” (Nashir 50).

Some messages narrated here above reveal the religious philosophy and behavioural prescriptions of Islam. It would not be a totally hypothetical to say, it is these kinds of discriminatory messages, which are broadly responsible for Hindu-Muslim divide in India and Muslim-Christian at the international level. What is more interesting is that in spite of offending themes in the form of Jehad and Kafir, Majority of the Indian Muslims reverently follows Hindu rituals and customs. It is rightly said ‘culture die-hard’. Though they have embraced Islam but they have not got rid of their traditional Practices. This is evident from various studies done on Muslims in various parts of the country.

The history of spread of Christianity in India is much more older than that of Islam. It dates back to 50 AD when St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew
arrived in India ostensibly with a motive to convert Indians into Christianity. During same time another Thomas, named Judas Thomas was also send to India through an Indian Merchant named Habbal. In his book, “Indian Society”, S.C. Dube writes that Judas Thomas a -skilled carpenter, was reluctant to go to India to convert its people. According to the acts of St. Thomas, Judas Thomas hesitated because he felt that he did not had strength enough for it (to convert Indian)* (Dube)⁵¹. But finally he agreed on some divine motivation. His efforts brought positive result and people started attracting to Christianity but the major conversion look place after the arrival of Syrian traders. Conversion to Protestant Christianity took place in eighteenth century when two Germans landed in the Danish colony on the south east coast of India called Tranquebar (Hudson⁵²). Infact the whole history of conversion to Christianity in India can be conceptualized into two phases. Mandelbaum presents this as “Christianity was brought to India in two main moments separated by more than a millennium. The first movement occurred in the early centuries after Christ when Christian traders, following the trade routes from the Levart, settled along the coast of Kerala, made converts and established permanent group of Christians there. The second move began in the sixteenth century when European seized political control over trade centers and eventually on the entire subcontinent. The second introduction of Christianity into India was different from the other religions introductions in that it was carried forward by missionaries, who were professionally dedicated to making converts”⁵³. Large-scale conversion after the arrival of Portuguese in Sixteenth century was carried out in the state of Goa.

Christianity spread in India through service oriented activity of the missionaries. The missionaries projected Christ as a Prophet of kind, piety and forgiver of sin. He was projected as messenger of God, to spread
humanity. Emphasis was placed on purity of soul. The missionaries projected this virtue of Christ. By translating this virtue through their actions, they opened hospitals and very often-treated patients without taking money from them. Schools were opened in the cities and even remotely situated villages. This kind of helping attitude of the missionaries had a very positive effect in the minds of the local people. These help create faith in the Christianity. Missionaries exemplified the ideals of Christianity into actual practice through their own behaviour and activity.

V

For a pretty long time Muslims and Christians were treated as a whole with no interactional variations in them. Majority of the Hindus still hold this kind of perception about these two communities. Textual prescription strengthens this kind of fallacious notion about Muslims and Christians. Religiously both deny existence of variation in them and claim all the followers enjoy equal social status. This kind of notion depicted wrong picture about social organization and behaviour practices of Muslims and Christians. In general query Muslims and Christians also do not accept the existence of hierarchical division or preferential social practices. Intellectuals and scholars were puzzled how this largely populated community maintained their social organization without variation and differentiation. Social scientists became interested to understand the governing principle of their social organization, which account for maintaining homogenous social order. Various studies were conducted on Muslim and Christian communities in various regions of the country. These studies revealed astonishingly great picture about their social organization. The claim of egalitarian great tradition is evidently contradicted in their own behavioural practices. Earlier studies conceptualize their differences in the dichotomy of ideal versus deviant behaviour. Robinson has convincingly presented this phenomenon as "all
everyday practices of Christian and Muslims that did not fit the universal textual tradition were viewed as deviant. The framework of the ideal versus the deviant dominated the study for long time". She further writes that the text was a part of something that there was no need of definition. The specific expression or a particular set of idea was given in a definite historical context or circumstances. Variations should be seen in this logical frame. The other conclusion is because of our frame of reference used to interpret history. She argued that Indian civilization was seen in the frame of Aryan theory, which holds the view, “that only Hindu Arya are indigenous to India. Christians, like Muslims are alien, since they cannot prove that India is either their Punyabhumi (scared territory) or their Pitrabhumi (land of their ancestors)”. Robinson also questioned the use of the terms conversion while studying Muslims and Christian communities. According to her “conversion is a fluid process of changing affiliations of religious beliefs and traditions.” As such, she advocates to employ a neutral sociological term to understand change of religion. Conversion to Islam has undergone various ways and thus gives justification to the validity of this statement. The findings of Satish Saberwal evidently support this view. He remarks: “The community so forming took on the religious practices of the man who had drawn them together- there was no particulars movement of conversion in the whole process...”. A major shift in the study of Muslim caste can be seen in the writings of Ghaus Ansari, Imtiaz Ahmad suggests that “Caste (in Muslims) was a highly localised phenomena and needed to be analyzed in the context of the local community”. Nasreen Fazalbhoy strongly opines, “The term Muslim in Indian context has tended more and more to conflate a social as well as religions identity. Less and less do people connect to the fact that there is as much diversity in Muslim population as there are in Hindus”. There is caste-based hierarchy among the Hindus and they do not hesitate to accept hierarchical order. But why Muslims do not accept hierarchical division
among them though they apply it in practice. In his study of Muslim caste in
Rural West Bengal Bhattacharya noticed “the consciousness of an egalitarian
great tradition made the Muslims avoid any explicit and direct reference to
social facts which were considered contrary to their Koranic Texts and Islamic
Ideology” 64. Variation in ways of conversion can be identified to be a cause
for variation in practices among Muslims residing in different regions. Intiaz
Ahmad adds the fact of the impact of local environment for creating
variations in practices among Muslims. He says in spite of the local variation
in the practice Muslims in India they live in the cardinal pillars of Islamic
phase (Intiaz Ahmad62). Supporting this line of argument Mandelbaum
writes: “In all regions, Muslims carry on their social relations in ways
characteristic of their locality”63. The discussions given here above provide
convincing reasons for variations in the practices of Muslims. Roy64 is right to
say that there is ample evidence that the Muslims in India display a variety of
practices.

In India, conversion to Islam is mostly from the people of downgraded
‘Dalit caste’ from Hindus. A very important social issue is whether the
conversion brings visible changes in the social status of the ‘Dalit’ and
downtrodden caste. Studies reveal, the answer is no. Intiaz Ahmad65 noted
that Muslims from Higher categories do not eat or drink with Lalbegi- a caste
Muslim scavengers shows that formal Islamic ideology rejects caste but in
actual practice caste is prominently recognized. N Jayaram66 finds that in
mass conversion the people do not experience changes in traditional norms
and relationships. The observation of Caplan67 provides reason in case of
group conversion: there is no inevitable disruption of ties between them and
members of the Hindus group in the region. And they practice endogamy and
thereby retain their caste pedigrees. Practices of untouchability continue to
exist in Muslims because, in the words of M.N. Srinivas, “Muslims are
themselves divided along caste line". Ram Gopal remarks that the low caste Hindu lived under many social disabilities. They got attracted to convert to Islam in the hope of getting relief from their age-old disabilities. But their condition continued to remain the same as it was before conversion. The notion of untouchability is non-Islamic character but it gained ground because of the influence of Hinduism. Kingsley Davis uses new concept to explain the phenomenon of cultural transfer as 'Hinduisation of Islam'. Zeyauddin Ahmad acknowledges the relevance of the views of Kingsley Davis and concluded that inter-religious marriage and several other factors contributed to a large scale of Hinduisation of the Muslims in India. He further elaborates, "though 'the philosophy of Islam centers round two basic principles: (i) oneness of God, and (ii) brotherhood among man.... but in actual practice, gradation among Muslims existed even from the days of Caliphs'. He mentions that "A number of Indian scholars have pointed to the presence of the caste hierarchies among Muslims often paralleling the Hindu system". This view finds acceptance from the scholars like Ghaus Ansari, Fazlur Khan and Zillur Khan.

Categorization of people with respect to nobility of blood, ritual purity, occupational prescription, cleanliness, practice of endogamy, etc. concomitantly creates pillars of hierarchical order. As against Hindu caste stratification Mattison Mines suggests to use the term sub-divisional organization to capture the social variations among the Muslims. But Saberwal considers social subdivision among Muslims closely akin to Hindus caste system. He writes, "the Ashraf-Ajraf line was almost as sharp as that between upper and lower caste Hindus". Analyzing the social organization of Tamil Muslims, Mattison Mines states, "The highest ranks are accorded to Muslim who claim an origin foreign to India". Not only this he elaborates the Tamil Muslims distinguish themselves from the Muslims of North India.
(Mattison Mines??). As like the conflicting hierarchical position among the caste of middle range and lower ladder of the Hindu, the non-Ashraf Muslim caste display the similar picture. All the non-Ashraf Muslim castes are not accorded common position. Zarina Bhatti remarks “the non-Ashraf Muslim caste are both superior to some and inferior to others, thus incorporating a duality in their hierarchical status”78. The reference of practicing Islam from that of the textual ideals is conspicuously revealed in the Muslims of Matrilineal system. The Islamic orders prescribe patrilineal organization. Contrary to this, Leela Dube found matrilineal system in Islamic society. She writes: “Islam spread not only to several types of patrilineal social organization, but also to Indonesia and Malaysia where kinship was mostly bilateral and to a number of communities in south and south east Asia and Africa that lived by matrilineal principles of descent, inheritance and successions and were rooted in matrilineal ideology”79.

Caste like hierarchical orders is not a peculiar feature of only Indian Muslim; it is very much practiced by the Muslims of Arab world. Existence of hierarchical social order finds ample support from the Muslim scriptures. The notion of egalitarianism of Muslim does not appear to be a universal commandment of Islamic social orders. The prevalence of the notion of Kafa’a in the Muslims scripture is the case in point. Yoginder Singh Sikand emphatically narrates that “through the notion sought of Kafa’a, caste and caste -based social hierarchy were to be accepted as normative and binding by important sections by the Ulema”80. Elaborate descriptions on the notion of Kafa’a is found in a book ‘Fatwa-i-Jahandari’ written by the fourteenth century Turkish scholar Ziauddin Barani, a leading courtier of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi (Sikand)81. Barani was fervent champion of Ashraf supremacy. In his book Barani advocated to deny the Ajlaf even access to knowledge. Barani advised the
then Sultan of Turkey that it was the duty of the king to ensure that the Ajlaf remain subservient to the Ashraf. Sikand quotes “God himself, Barani claims, has decided that the Ajlaf be confined to inferior occupations for he is said to have made them low born, bazaar people, base, mean, worthless, shameless and of dirty birth”82.

The discussion in the preceding paragraph undisputedly establishes that casts or caste like system is intrinsic characteristic of the social organization of Muslim in general, specific among Indian Muslims in particular. Although Islamic texts proclaim to be egalitarian but at the same time it gives recognition to caste like placement in terms of Ashraf-Ajlaf etc. Like Muslims, Christians are more vehement to call themselves to be an adherent of the principal of social equality and common ritual status, but reality is altogether different. Castes like arrangement are prominently found in their social setup, and more clearly visible among the Indian Christians. In his editor’s introduction Harjinder Singh, quoting Alexander writes, “the Christians in Kerala live within caste-like framework.”83

Converts in Christianity are usually from the people of low caste. Summing up the writings of Alexander, and Wiebe and John-Peter, Harjiner Singh84 concludes that both studies exemplified the ways in which the string of untouchability is manifest with the Christian community. Alexander85 remarks that in most of the cases material benefits was the dominant motive for conversion. Hence such conversion very often fails to bring change in their religious beliefs and practices. Tharmangalam also holds the same view. He observed, “the vast majority of Dalit Christian experienced little mobility and gained no real improvement in their caste or social status86. Wiebe and John-Peter87 attribute the patron-client relation as to be the cause of perpetuation of degrading social status of Dalit converts. Even after conversion Dalit continue their traditional occupation, which, socio-economically brought no
improvement in their status. Alexander also noticed similar situation about status of Dalit converts. He writes that even after conversion, the lower caste continued to be treated as Harijan by all sections of society (Alexanders). By and large the Dalit or say the people of lower caste are bonded labour, as such subjected to many social disabilities and religious discrimination. Conversion to Christianity did not change their economic position. As a consequence, Dalit Christian remained very poor and under nourished. The area of mobility is also restricted. The Dalit Christians have the mobility only within their respective caste (www.wikipedia.org). Tharamangalam firmly states that conception of caste undisputedly exists among Christians. He says, “caste is an important determinant of all social intercourse and commensality among Christians”. Various studies describe the fact that Dalit Christians are forced to live in separate locality. Higher caste Christians do not visit their quarters nor dine or drink water with them. Wiebe and John-Peter and Alexander observed that even after conversion the lower caste converts continued to be treated as Harijans. This kind of discrimination between Dalit and higher caste is found in the religious ceremonies and organization of Catholic Church. Alexander found that the problem of caste is reflected in the organization of Catholic also. Within the church, there are separate Dioceses for various ethnic groups.

VI

The discussion so far and presentation of fact based views and opinions of scholar of the social science conclusively establish the following three points:

One, caste or caste like social division exists in Muslim and Christian society.

Two, existence and perpetuation of caste among Muslim and Christians is not solely the impact of Hinduism, sub divisional order
existed independently having section and support of their respective religious text, and

Third, the caste like hierarchical order among Muslims and Christians is not common and unified throughout the country. It varies from region to region.

Acknowledging the existence of this kind of fact, Imtiaz Ahmad emphasizes that “caste (in Muslim) was a highly localized phenomenon and needed to be analyzed within the context of local community”\textsuperscript{94}. The observation of David G. Mandelbaum also underlines the importance of regional studies of Muslim society (Mandelbaum\textsuperscript{95}). Characteristics of locality influence the social relation of the people of any group. This applies for Muslims and Christian also. Much confusion has cropped up about the social organization of minority communities in India because of our preconceived vision of categorizing this community as a whole and also partly because of looking to them through Hindu lens. Inter-actional system and the behavioural practices of the Muslim and Christians are not identical everywhere. The real understanding of these communities is possible by making so many regional studies on them. This would help us to sort out the common features and at the same time we come to know the variations ingrained in their behaviour and social practices due to environmental influences of their locality and region. Guided by this kind of conceptual approach, this study focuses its attention on the Muslim and Christian community of Sagar town in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

VII

This study tries to understand social organization and basic institutional structure of Muslim and Christian community through deep understanding of their actual behaviour and social practice. Behaviour of any community is influenced by the textual prescription of their respective
religion. Behavioural norms, value on worldly matters as well as supernatural powers and the belief system about object of life and its major events find shape from, and also conditioned by, the ideological precinct of religions. Our concern here is to know the impact of textual prescription on the behavioural frame of the followers of the religions. There are many confusions and misconceptions about the organizational set-up and the behavioural frame of the Muslim and Christian society. The actual behaviour does not tally with religious prescription. It is important for us to know how a society exists, how does it function, what are the sustaining forces which gives persistence and continuation to the society, the arrangement of people in different group in a composite whole and its effect on the behaviour of members of different group. Understanding of this kind of reality about any community helps us to know the relation among the constituent community and its effect on the unity and integrity of the nation as a whole. Wrong or half truth information about any community portrays distorted picture about that community and which in turn may cause mistrust and may become a factor for mutual misunderstanding and suspicion among member of different communities. Detail study of each community at local level brings out real picture about their organizational set-up and behavioural pattern.

People have by and large very little awareness about Muslim and Christian societies, leave apart the question of Muslim and Christian community as a whole. We don’t know much about those communities of our city or region. The study of Muslim and Christian society of Sagar town may help to present a clear and authentic picture about the life style and the behavioural frame of these two communities. Besides this knowledge drawn from the region wise study will provide a platform to compare and contrast the lifestyle of the people of these two communities living in different parts of the country. I have no hesitation to admit, though I have many close friends
from these two communities, my knowledge about them was very limited prior to this study.

As a guiding force for the research, following hypothesis was framed:

I  Emancipation from the social disabilities was strong motivation for conversion to Muslim and Christian religion.

II Change of religion did not bring corresponding change in the social status of the untouchables and downtrodden Dalit caste.

III In actual practice the behaviour of the people of Muslim and Christian community is different from the textual behavioural prescription.

IV The cultural practices of Hinduism continued even after conversion to other religion.

V Hierarchical division among Muslims and Christians is quantitatively strengthened by the notion of caste hierarchy of the Hindu.

VI Textually untouchability is a non-existent element among Muslims and Christians. But conversion of untouchable from Hindu has made its existence quite perceptual.

VII Possibility of continuation of the cultural practice is more in case of mass conversion as compared to individual.

VIII Change of religion does not make corresponding change in the ideological frame of converts.

This study is based on first hand information collected from Muslim and Christian respondents. As mentioned earlier some locality of Sagar town is settled on community line. Some are exclusively Muslim dominated locality
and some are fully Christian dominated area. Muslims have by and large a
tendency to settle in clusters, though the educated and service class Muslim
freely reside in Hindu dominated locality. This attitude of cluster settlement is
not very strong in Christians but they also prefer to settle in and around the
residence of the people of their own community. Community wise settlement
made my job easier to select respondents for this study. First, I selected two
localities, one each settled by Muslims and Christians. The population of
Christians in Sagar is much less as compared to the population of Muslims.
There are as many as six heavily Muslim dominated localities whereas the
numbers of locality with Christian settlement is only two. In Muslim locality,
the number of household is quite large. In both the localities Christian
settlement the number of household is not very high. The highest number is
around 200 households. When a researcher thinks to do research he confronts
two basic problems, one, the problem of selection of topic or subject and the
second, the problem of section of field area.

My awareness about the religion and behavioural practices of Muslim
and Christian was very less. I had my some close friends from these two
communities. Through discussions with them I knew only about their
Mosque and Church, that Mosque is the place of worship for Muslim and
Church for the Christian. I knew also about their important festivals and
ceremonies. My friends used to talk about equality and egalitarian concept of
their religion. It was also perplexing for me to digest how do they maintain
equality in a heterogeneous population exhibiting marked socio-economic
inequality. My friends were from relatively high socio-economic strata. But
majority section of Muslim community was very poor. I wanted to know was
what is it that is binding the galloping unequal section in a common
harmonious platform. My friend never talked about social divisions among
them. I used to make enquiry from persons of lower economic category to
know their opinion about equality and egalitarianism. I found, they were so scared to talk anything, which was contrary to their respective religious prescriptions. They would generally ask me to meet Maulwi or Mufti to get answers of all my queries and doubts. From the articles and books on Muslim and Christian society written by social scientists which I read during preparation for my Masters Degree course in Sociology, I found that all was not well in Muslim and Christian society. The real functioning of Muslim and Christian society is seized with the problem of inequality and hierarchical division as is prevalent in Hindu system. Some studies based on first hand information from field narrated the existence of inhuman practices. Some of the practices and behavioural interactions with downgraded converts were so inhuman that it can very well come within the purview of violation of Human Rights. This doubled my interest to do research on social life of these two communities for completion of my Doctoral degree. This is how I selected the topic for my research work. As I was born in Sagar, completed my education in Sagar, this city become the place of my natural selection . field area. It is worthwhile here to quote Prof Y.B. Damle who said, "...the relevance of research depends upon the professional competence and the awareness of social reality which is certainly necessary for choosing the problem for the study". Studying social lives in the perspective of religious prescription is not without problems and challenges. A.M. Shah rightly enumerates: "...the problem of understanding religions in the day-to-day life of the people and of understanding the process of change in every religion remain a sociological challenge. Religious identity is defined not only by the situation of conflict encountered in a plural society, but also by what goes on within every religion. A study of the latter is as important as that of the former." T.K. Oommen provided an elaborate explanation about the conception of society. I found his views aptly relevant to formulate my research scheme. Oommen says: "It is more rewarding to
characterize society as on event, a process, an inter-human reality, a conceptualization which can well account for the autonomy as well as the reciprocity between structure, culture and agency. Caste among Muslims and Christians has been here treated as a sub-system of total system of Muslim and Christian society. Mandelbaum gives a logically satisfying explanation about the place of sub-system within a larger system of society. "A social system," quoting Mandelbaum, "consists of a set of groups whose members together perform certain functions that they do not accomplish as separate groups. The group are thus inter dependent, and they are interdependent in a particular arrangement. Caste system is a kind of social system, which involves a special quality in the order of interdependence. It is a quality of persuasive inequality among the component groups."

VIII

Next to the conceptual frame, field area occupies important place in Sociological research. Field area is not only a description of physical space and geographical location. It is the sum totality of the environment, which determinately play role in defining existence of a group and the environmental effect on the organizational structure and behavioral practices. Sagar is one of the important towns of Madhya Pradesh. Culturally, Madhya Pradesh encompasses four divisions, Bundelkhand Region, Mahakoshal Region, Malwa Region and Tribal Region. However some adjoining districts of Utter Pradesh also fall in the cultural map of BundhelKhand region. There is a huge tank in the heart of the city, which is known as 'Sagar'. The city derives its name from that tank. From all directions Sagar town is surrounded by hills and forest. This specific location makes the climate of the city pleasant and fascinating.

There are three things for which Sagar is known throughout the country. They are the University, Military Base and the Police Training
College. Dr. Hari Singh Gour University, formerly known as University of Sagar was established before independence, in the year 1946. It was the only university in central India for a long time and was known for its academic excellence. It still attracts students from distant places. The picturesque beauty of the university is its location. It is established on the hilltop of Patheria Village. Though administratively, it is not included in Municipal Corporation area of Sagar, it is rather in Pathariya village, but for all practical purpose it is considered as a jewel of Sagar town. Sagar is also famous for its Military base. The Military base of Sagar is among the largest in Bundelkhand region. Sagar has another glory in the form of Police Training College. The PTC is a training center for police officers ranking from subinspectors of police, Deputy Superintendents of Police and officer like Indian Police Service probationers who are recruited through central examination conducted by Union Public Service Commission.

Sagar occupies nearly 10252 sq km and the population was 20,21,783 as per Census of 2001 (Sharma and Solanki)\(^ {100} \). There is a vast diversity in terms of people following different faiths. Though majority of the people of Sagar belongs to Hindu fold but Muslims and Jains also constitute a major share in distribution of population. The followers of Sikhism, Christianity and Buddhism also find place in the religious distribution of population. Sikhism and Christianity are professed by roughly equal number of people in Sagar town.

Being in the center, Sagar is well connected by rail and road links. Trains for major cities of India halts at Sagar. Road link Sagar to important cites and towns. The nearest airport from Sagar is Bhopal, which is the Capital of Madhya Pradesh and is approximately 200 kms.

Administratively, the divisional and the district headquarters are situated in Sagar town. Five districts fall under the Sagar division. They
include Sagar, Damoh, Panna, Chattarpur and Tikamgarh. The district of Sagar comprises eight Tehsils, namely Sagar, Rahli, Garhakota, Deori, Kesli, Banda, Khurai and Bina. The administration of the town is done through, Municipal Corporation which was first established in 1983.

The main source of income for the people of Sagar is agriculture. A species of wheat from Khurai, one of the tehsils of Sagar is known throughout India for its quality and taste. Other crops sown are oilseeds and soybean. In the name of industry Sagar has few cottage industries like, Agarbatti and Beedi making factories. Because of abundance of availability of Tendu leaves in and around the dense forests of Sagar, the Beedi industry of Sagar is thriving. Though economists attribute the backwardness of Sagar to these two industries but they still remains main source of employment for the people of Sagar. In the course of my research work, I found that some of my respondents were also employed in these two industries.

IX

For the purpose of collection of data for my research work, I had chosen two colonies, which had predominantly Muslims and Christian population respectively. Such kind of studies, which involves eliciting behavioral practices of people professing different faith, requires locations, which has concentration of people professing particular faith. My chosen location fulfilled these criteria. Extracting information from people of particular religions is a sensitive matter. Also many of my informants gave information on the condition of maintaining anonymity, and I am obliged by their faith in me. Hence any direct linkage to the exact location is avoided. But just to appraise the area of research, I had chosen two colonies, which I called respectively the Muslim colony, and the Christian colony. The Muslim colony lies in the center of Sagar town and the Christian colony is in the periphery of Sagar town, which is down the foothills of Patheria village. Though Muslim
and Christian people preponderantly occupied these two colonies but there were houses of people from other communities also. To extract actual behavior within the respective community I chose a cluster of house from each locality, which covered mostly the residence of respective community. For the purpose of identification of area of research and to avoid actual identification, I shall call these two clusters on the basis of the colonies in which they lied. Hence my field area came to be known as Muslim colony and Christian colony.

A cursory counting presented the number of Muslim household in Muslim locality as to be around 300. It was not possible to include the entire 300 odd households of that community. It was decided to take every third house. First, the list of the entire household was prepared and every third was marked to be included as respondents for research. Thus we included 100 households from the Muslim community. We wanted to include same number of household from Christian community but that could not be materialized because of the lesser number of households in Christian locality. The total number of household in Christian locality was 208. Now me had the problem of deciding the number of Christian respondents. If we go by the number it was also to be 100 households but that would have disturbed our sampling mechanism, which we followed in selection of Muslim household. After sufficient mental exercise, I decided to give importance to the sampling mechanism, which we had applied, for Muslim. This reduced the number of Christian respondent to 70. Information was collection from seventy households, but the information given by four respondents were subsequently found not to be correct and authentic. Though at the third of phase of fieldwork attempts mere made to meet the heads of those four households, for one reason or the other they appeared to be reluctant to give complete information. At this final stage we considered it not appropriate to
replace these four respondents. Hence the number of Christian respondents stood to remain 66.

X

The total period of my fieldwork can be roughly divided into three phases: the phase of pilot study, the phase of intensive fieldwork and third the phase of final checking and updating. After finally deciding about the topic of the research I made a pilot survey of the field area with a motive to get myself equipped about the broad features of their social organization and interactional system. The initial period of filed work lasted about four weeks. Since I lived in Sagar right from my birth I knew few person of both the communities. I renewed my relationship with these people whom I knew during school days. I clearly explained them about my research topic and solicited their help in collection of data. They unhesitantly came forward to extend their help. By now those friends were doing some jobs, they asked me to come early morning and in the evening after the completion of their duty. Informants from the Christian community fixed Sunday for my meeting with them. I used to move in the locality along with informants. The informants were inhabitants of the same locality. They knew almost every person of their community. In a very informal way I met persons of both the community and intentionally used to raise issues pertaining to their religious and social practices. The information thus gathered through initial survey proved very useful to prepare research design and more particularly to prepare schedule.

After completing initial enquiry I constructed long schedule running into nine printed pages. The pilot survey made me to know many issue, which were earlier not in my mind. In order to get detailed information about those people I noted down in my diary as a reference to use at the time of actual fieldwork. Meantime, I got an appointment as Lecturer in Department of Sociology, Dr. H. S. Gour University on contractual basis. Subsequently I
was awarded fellowship from ICSSR for pursuing my Ph.D. work. I left the teaching job and devoted my time only on reading related literatures and fieldwork. Appointment as temporary lecture and subsequently a fellowship from ICSSR assured my stay in Sagar. This made me to devote long time for my fieldwork. Thus the period of fieldwork roughly covers eighteen months. In July 2004 I had to leave Sagar to take up a permanent job as Lecturer in Sociology, in Banasthali Vidyapith in Rajasthan. But I was happy that by that time I had almost completed my fieldwork and I needed only to classify and tabulate the data.

In the process of arranging and tabulating the data I found some gaps in some concerned strategic issues. I utilized my summer vacations to revisit the field area and stayed in Sagar for one and a half month during May to July in 2005. This can be refereed to as third phase of my field, which was employed in checking and updating data.

Information obtained from field enriched my knowledge about actual arrangement system of Muslim and Christian and the interplay of sustaining forces, which directed and controlled intra-community as well as inter-community relations. Though by this time I have come to know many valuable things about their social organization and life style through reading literature mostly based on the information of the actual field, I must admit that the fieldwork provided much more new information which were still not clearly known to me. Here it reminds, me of Prof. M.N. Srinivas who emphasized the importance of fieldwork in social research through a statement, "No amount of book knowledge is a substitute for field experience".  

The information obtained through fieldwork becomes so vast and diverse that it is impossible for a researcher to use all the materials in writing
thesis. A researcher intentionally avoids using all material in writing there is of their being defamatory or hurting to one or the other section of people. The problem is more acute in the study of sensitive issues like religious practices and behavioral pattern as is the case in present study. Srinivas rightly visualizes the problem of this nature, "A researcher is not able to write or publish all the material he has collected, as some materiel might be defamatory or embarrassing" (Srinivas\textsuperscript{102}). Realizing the limitation of researches while arranging the riches of field material P.V. Young mentions, "The wealth and variety of social reality are well nigh indescribable. Even a complete study of a segment of this complex reality could entail such an overwhelming mountain of data that it would require more than a students' lifetime to gain a glimpse of the proverbial forest though seeing clearly its trees" \textsuperscript{103}.

XI

The methods employed in the present study are a combination of analytical perspective received from the books written by social scientists and sociologists and some often used sociological technique. I collected information through a combination of various tools and techniques. Basic information about household composition education, income and occupation of the member were collected through purposively constructed schedule. Household is considered to be the smallest social unit of any community for all practical purposes. Here we follow the definition given by Theoderson and Theoderson to identify the household. They described that a household comprises "all persons who live in the same dwelling unit. The dwelling unit may be a house, an apartment or other group of rooms or a room. According to the census definition (of USA), a household includes not only family members but also persons who are not related to each other, if they share the same dwelling unit. A person living alone is also considered a household"\textsuperscript{104}. 
Household information was collected through door-to-door survey. Younger or women members of household generally hesitated to give information about their socio-economic condition. This I resolved by making a point to obtain information generally from the adult male member of the household. My acquaintance with them for a pretty long time before the actual administration of schedule proved quite fruitful to acquire the desired information from them. In spite of my intimacy with them I found people were generally hesitant to reveal some delicate aspects of their relationship with people of different groups from their own community. Almost everyone avoided giving clear answer about hierarchical division and practice of untouchability. This made me to restructure my information-gathering plan. I decided to get information on delicate issues through informal discussions with individuals and very often in groups. I was conscious to not to bring the real intentions seated behind the discussions with them. Usually my discussions with them used to be on general topics like climate, politics and conditions of law and order, etc. In course of the discussion I looked for the appropriate occasion to raise the real issue pertaining to their behavioral practices. This technique was very useful. This brought much useful information, which normally they evaded or completely denied. Besides informal personal and group interview, I also arranged formal interview with some informants and collected respondents through interview schedule.

Since few informants were my school days friends, I attended their marriage and other socio-religious ceremonies. Some kind of information cannot be obtained either by schedule or discussion. My participation in their festivals and ceremonies helped me to know many delicate points in its actual working. The information relating to religious doctrine and behavioral prescription was obtained through formal interview with religious priests.

Information based on field work needs to be substantiated from the descriptions available in religious books and scientific writing. I collected
information from many secondary sources. Data on population employment condition, education etc. are based on reports and booklets published by the government and other agencies. Internet was another useful source for collecting basic data about socio-economic condition.

Method of, and mechanism of collecting information is the most important aspect of sociological research. Like physical sciences, sociology also claims to be a science. In a very simple way it can be said that a subject becomes science when it employs scientific methods for data collection and analysis. Maintenance of objectivity with a firm commitment to his views and research design are prerequisite conditions for scientific method. Here the view of O'Donnell deserves mention to characterize the phenomenon of objectivity in the realm of researchers' commitment to a particular set of ideas about research. He writes, "The scientist must be objective; he himself need not be neutral in his views on the subject matter, but he must ensure that his investigation is carried out in such a way that any personal view do not influence his research (O'Donnell)\textsuperscript{105}. Though a researcher remains conscious to meet the requirement of research as is prescribed in their respective discipline, he is often forced to limit the scope of his research looking to the constraints of time and resources. Utmost care was taken to make this research objective value free and scientific.

XII

The information obtained through secondary sources and data collected from the field have been presented in the following seven chapters. The First Chapter gives primary information about the problem of the study and field area along with synoptic survey of the literature relating to the study on Muslim and Christian community. The description about field area and method of research is also been included under the title named 'Introduction'.
The Second Chapter referred to as Indian Muslim and Christian Society, gives systematic accounts of religious faith in textual behavioral prescription and actual practices of Muslims and Christians in India. Socio-economic profile of the Muslim has been carried out in Chapter Three. This chapter is based on the material collected from door-to-door household survey. Similar description has been made for Christian in the succeeding chapter, which is Chapter four Chapter Five deals the fact of caste and untouchability as found among Muslims and Christians of Sagar Town. The Chapter six encompasses the social behavior in the frame of intra-community and inter community relation in actual practice and have been analytically discussed in the perspective of human rights. Discussion on this issue has been presented in this chapter under the title 'Views, Practices and Human Rights'. The last chapter has been addressed as Conclusion. This chapter gives systematic account, which emerged from the discussions done in earlier six chapters.
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