CHAPTER-II

Indian Muslim and Christian Society
India is a multi-religious society. Numerically, Hindus are the largest group to be followed by Muslims, Christian, and other minority groups. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Boudhs and Parsis are main minority groups. In India the term minority or majority is specifically used in context of religion. Muslims comprise a large section of India population. They constitute over 13% of the total population. Numerically the population of Christian is very small particularly in the context of population of Muslims in India. Their numbers does not even touch the mark of 3% of the Indian population. Though Christianity emerged as early as seven century prior to Islam, its expansion in India presents an opposite picture. Population of Muslim spread more rapidly than that of Christians.

Constitution of India grants equal social, economic, religious and political rights to its entire citizen irrespective of affiliation of person to any religion. Thus, just for the namesake, they are addressed as minority groups. But for all practical purpose they enjoy equal privilege. In India Muslims and Christians are mistakenly considered as alien. The cause of misconception is seated in their religious faith. The religion they follow has come from foreign country. The place of origin of Muslim religion is Arab country and Christianity has come from the west. But majority of the people who follow Islam or Christianity in India, are very much indigenous as any one who follow Hindu religion. Only few Muslims and Christians may have come from foreign country, but majority of Muslims and Christians were originally Hindus, who changed their religious faith by way of conversion.

The population of Muslims is about 13.08 crores, percentage wise they contribute 13.43% of Indian population. According to the Census 2001, 64.3%
of the Muslim population was 61.0% and 35.7% was rural (Census of India 2001)". The urban population of Muslims was more by 1.5% as compared to for the overall population. Muslims are distributed throughout India except Christian dominated few states of north-east region. Numerically largest numbers of Muslims live in four states. They are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Maharashtra. These states have at least one crore Muslims each. Uttar Pradesh has the largest Muslim population in India. According to the 2001 Census, 22% Indian Muslims live in Uttar Pradesh. Then comes the states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir which comprise Muslim population between half to one crore each. It is not that the Muslim live only in the state enumerated in the preceding lines, they are present in sizable number also in the state of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. Muslim population in each of these states is 3 to 5 million. Population of Muslim is low in the state of Haryana and Uttaranchal. The statistical figures show that the Muslim in India are not confined to any particular state or region. They are present in more than half of the state of Indian union with sizable numbers. Muslims are not completely absent in other remaining states; though numerically their strength is not so high compared against strength in earlier mentioned state. District wise distribution of Muslim population reveals that there are 20 districts where the population of Muslims is more than 50% of the total population of that district. There are nearly nine districts where the Muslim population accounts 50-75% of the total population of that district. Jammu and Kashmir encompasses eight such districts and Lakshadweep is the ninth, where 50-75% of the total population of the district is from member of Muslims Community. 13% of the total population or nearly 18 million people from Muslim Community live in these 20 districts. There are 220 districts where the population of Muslims is in the range of 10-50%. These 220 districts take into its fold at least 10% of Muslim population. 82% of the total Muslim
population lives in 240 districts out of total 593 districts of India. Remaining 18% of Muslims lives in 353 districts. In these 353 districts the percentage of Muslim population is below the national average of 13% of the total population of India (Madhu²). The numerical position of Muslim in various states and districts clearly demonstrate that at some place sizably they are very strong, making their position very valuable at the time of election. Their block voting often becomes a decisive factor to decide the fate of candidate in legislative and parliamentary election.

II

In India, the population of Christian is less than one fourth compared to the population of Muslim. They constitute 2.34% of the total population of India. They are scattered throughout the country with varying numbers. The largest concentration of Christians is in the state of Kerala. They comprise more than 20% of the total population of the state of Kerala. Kerala appears to have remained a hotbed for conversion. Muslims also occupy sizable section in Kerala. They cover more than 21 percent of the state population. In few states of the north east region the Christians preponderantly out number the non-Christian. In the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, the Christians constitute more than 90% of the population of the state. However, numerically the population of theses states is much smaller to that of Kerala. The total population of any one of these north-eastern states does not touch the mark of one-million people. Historically, the people of these states were tribal dominated and the entire tribal collectively converted to Christianity. In Christian dominated north-eastern states the political power revolves around the Christians themselves. Political contest is within the Christian and not with other non-Christian groups. Kerala is a multi-religious state. Christians there play an important role in the party politics of the state. In the states of northern and Central India, the population of
Christians is very marginal. Abhusaleh Shariff has presented comparative picture of Muslim and Christian population of that state where their presence is considerably visible. In his presentation, Shariff has not included the population profile of North-eastern states. Here the following tables give a comparative numerical position of Muslims and Christians as calculated and presented by Shariff.

**Table 1**

**POPULATION BY RELIGIOUS CATEGORIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes Less than one per cent of the state Population. (Table reproduced as presented by Shariff)³.
The population of Muslims and Christians as presented in the table here above shows that they are found in all states, though their numerical strength in not uniformly same. Since most of the Muslims and Christians are indigenous converts, the process of conversion has taken place in every part of the country. Somewhere, as in the state of Kerala and in North-East region it was more intense in comparison to the state of northern and central India.

III

The history of expansion of Islam in India is marked by confusion. The confusion erupted because of lack of differentiation betweens invasion of Islamic rules and expansion of Islamic Ideology. This is the result of ways in which things are looked at. In this regard we confront with two perspectives – the 'Historians and the Sociologists'. The Historian perspective holds the view that Islam entered Indian region not as religion but as ruler professing Islamic Ideology (Rizvi⁴). Therefore, they say, spread of Islam was a much later phenomenon. But Sociologists hold a different view. They believe the Islamic influence in India was the result of acculturative process (Y. Singh⁵, Dube⁶ and Saberwal⁷). Adhering to Sociologists perspective, it can be concluded that Islam came to India along with the Islamic rulers. The spread of Islam in India was through three processes, namely conquest, trade and Sufi movement. Conversion to Muslim started in eighty century with the arrival of Arab invaders. S.C. Dube believes that the word 'Hindu' appears to have been coined by invading Arabs around eighth century AD for the people living around Indus⁸. The arrival of Muslim in the year 712 AD was a milestone in establish Muslim rule in India. Mohammad-bin-Quasim invaded Sindh in 712 AD and established rule throughout the region to the west of Indus River, which is now called Pakistan. But Muslims had arrived in India much earlier to the establishment of Muslim rule. According to Sardar and Davies⁹ the Muslims first came to Malabar Coast of India in the concluding years of
seventh century. If the statement of S.C Dube holds true then “Islam first came to India by peaceful method, often with encouragement of Hindu Rulers”\(^{10}\). Hindu rulers gave them free hand to build Mosque and practice their religion. The process of conversion started through the marriage of Arab and Persian immigrants with non-Muslim women. Dube states: “This is how the Nawait (Natia) community of Konkan and Mapilla (Moplah) community of Malabar Coast emerged”\(^{11}\).

The first phase of Islamic influence corresponds with the Muslim Rulers who either invaded or ruled India. They can be summarized as follows:-

**CHART I**

**INVASION AND INFLUENCE OF ISLAM IN INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>RULER/INCIDENCE</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>712 AD</td>
<td>Mohammad Bin-Quasim</td>
<td>Conquest of Sindh Influence of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>997-7030 AD</td>
<td>Raids of Mahmud of Ghazni</td>
<td>Attack on places of Hindu faith (Somnath temple, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1192 AD</td>
<td>Muhammad Ghori</td>
<td>Creating foot hold by defeating Prithviraj Chauhan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Century</td>
<td>Sufi-movement</td>
<td>Influence of Islam to masses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1206 AD</td>
<td>Qutab-ud-Din-Aibak</td>
<td>Establishment of Slave Dynasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1296-1316 AD</td>
<td>Ala-ud-Din-Khilji’s reign.</td>
<td>Establishment of Khilji Dynasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1325-51 AD</td>
<td>Muhammed-bin-Tughlaq’s regime</td>
<td>Islam gaining ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1414-50 AD</td>
<td>Rule of Sayyads at Delhi.</td>
<td>Islam gaining ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1451-1526 AD</td>
<td>Rule of Lodhi Dynasty.</td>
<td>Islam gaining ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1526 AD</td>
<td>Rule of Babur Mughal Dynasty</td>
<td>First battle of Panipat. Islamic rule concretized by Mughals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above-mentioned fact shows a combination of events, which influence spread of Islam in India. Satish Saberwal\(^{12}\) has aptly summarized the expansion of Islam in India in his scholastic work 'The Making of Muslim in India Historically'. We sum up his writing by saying that the expansion of Islam in India was due to the various modes of conversion:

a) Influence of Religious Men.

b) Political Conversion, and

c) Coercion.

In the first made of conversion would come those religious men who practiced and propagated Islam and Islamic egalitarianism. They included the Ismaili and the Sufi Tradition. The lower castes among Hindus were particularly attracted owing to their egalitarian style. Low caste Hindus accepted Islam to escape from degrading oppression and exploitation at the hands of high castes. (Ram Gopal\(^{13}\)). The Sufi tradition, which involved intermixing of religious communities into its fold had a far bearing impact on Indian Population. Since such conversion was the result of personal motivation and not by force, it did not face much opposition in the society. The affluence of Muslim traders was also a motivating factor for conversion into Islam (Ram Gopal)\(^{14}\). Apart from this `influence' of `affluent' Muslim traders', some converted to Islam to gain economic or political favours. At times conversion to Islam was also to continue maintaining proximity to Muslim ruler. A.M. Shah\(^{15}\) attributes the conversion of Rathod and Rajput of Rajasthan to Islam into this category. Conversion also took place to escape disfavours at the hands of Muslim rulers. Saberwal's third mode of conversion is coercion. He recognizes it as a major factor for converting people to Islam particularly in Kashmir. According to him, coercion was aimed at Brahmins with the view that if they converted to Islam, the lower caste would automatically follow them.
Anyway there were many methods, processes and modes through which conversion to Islam took place. Cursory analysis of these methods, processes and modes show that emphasis was placed only on having to accept Islam and little importance was given to the medium through which these conversions take place.

IV

The history of Christianity in India is older than that of Islam. The spread of Christianity in India can be categorized in two phases. The first phase of spread of Christianity was in the days of Jesus. St. Thomas, who was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus, came to India in 50 AD. He came by sea route and landed in Kerala coast. Under the influence of St. Thomas, the upper caste Namboothiri Brahmins of Kerala coastal area converted to Christianity.

The descendants of Christians converted by St. Thomas are called as Syrian Christians or Christians of St. Thomas or simply Thomas Christians. They are considered as the earliest Christian community of India. Some Christian traders and merchant were attracted by the wealth of India. They came for trade in fourth century under the leadership of Thomas of Cane and settle in Kerala coast. These Christians are known as Catholics or Jocobities (Local term is Knanaya Christians) or Southern Christians and they now claim to be descended directly from Syrian merchants. They considered them pure blooded and superior to northern Christians. The spread of Christianity in the early phase remained nearby the coastal areas (Tharamanglam). For a long period, roughly few centuries, nothing significant happened in terms of spread of Christianity in India.

The Second phase of Christianity in India can be attributed to the arrival of Portuguese in Goa coast in Sixteenth Century. The second phase
was much aggressive in terms of conversion. They tried to bring Syrian Christians or Thomas Christians under the authority of Roman Pope as well as aggressively converted lower caste people to Christianity. The Portuguese influence led to institutionalization of Roman/Latin rites over Syrian rites. Though, initially the Syrians conceded to the Authority of Roman Pope but later some Syrian revolted and re-established their link with Patriarch of Antioch. They reaffirmed their faith and confidence in Syrian rites and were known as Jacobites. The remaining Latin Christians were further bifurcated into two the Romo-Syrian or Syrian Catholics and Latin Catholics. The Romo-Syrians or Syrian Catholics were the Syrian Christians who were partly allowed to continue to practice their Syrian rites. The Latin Catholics were the Christians converted by Portuguese and who accepted the authority of Roman Pope. This is how the Catholics came to India and spread Christianity in India.

When the Roman or Latin and Syrian brand of Christianity combinedly called Catholic brand was spreading tentacles in India in sixteenth century, there was a major shuffle taking place in Europe. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, of Germany, there was a wide spread protest against the hegemony of the Roman Pope and their protégé. This protest moment led to world-division of Christianity into two parts, namely, the Catholics and the Protestants. Those who protested the hegemony and supremacy of Pope were called Protestants and the rest were called as Romans Christians. To spread Protestant (Evangelical) message to India, two Germans were commissioned by the Lutheran King of Denmark. They (Ziegenbalg and Pluetschan) writes D. Dennis Hudson, "...had come to address 'Pagan' and 'Moors' with the Protestant message and were the first Europeans sent to India for that express purpose" (Hudson).
In the proceeding line it has been well established that there was deliberate attempt by Muslim and Christian rulers, priests and missionaries to spread their respective religion into few boundaries. The outcome of this kind of expansion is conversion.

The conversion is an important point to understand the behavioral system and social practices of the people of these two communities, Conversion to Islam and Christianity have been a continuous process in India. From the point of view of conversion, Indian Muslims and Christians can be broadly divided in the following three-fold categories.

**CHART II**

**CATEGORIES OF CONVERSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVERSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Caste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classification given above is one scheme to understand the prevalence of caste structure and variations in their social practices. There could be some other model of classification. But in the absence of any appropriate classification scheme we have tried the one, which is capable to capture and explain the social reality of our field situation. The information in the study of society is so varied and so complicated that sometimes an investigator finds no option but to evolve newest of terms to give expression to complex social reality. The classification presented here is one such direction to give clear expression to social reality of the present study. The statement of Henderson gives justification to such attempt. He asserts, "Almost any classification is better than none" (as reproduced by Merton). 18
V

The purported usage of Caste and social inequality excessively with Hindus has created doubts to link caste with non-Hindu groups and communities. The confusion lies in the genesis of the term ‘Caste’. Caste originated from Portuguese word ‘Casta’ to define social groupings in India. Regarding original and first use of the term ‘Caste’, Mandelbaum writes, “Both Indian and non-Indian writers have use the term ‘Caste’, originally from the Portuguese for the prevalent social order in India as well as the component groups within that order”\textsuperscript{19}. Since this kind of social order in which one group is placed over another existed among Hindus, the term Caste got ‘entrenched’ with the Hindu social systems. To associate caste exclusively with Hindus and dissociate from non-Hindus is a false belief. Words of Sir Denzil Ibbetson comes to our rescue, where in he says, “Caste has no necessary connection with the Hindu religion”\textsuperscript{20}.

The existence of caste and social inequalities among Muslim and Christian religion is denied on the grounds that their religious prescriptions are based on egalitarian principles. But a rich variety of studies have been done and truck loads\textsuperscript{19} of literatures available to prove the existence of caste among Muslims and Christians of India. These studies have tried to explain how and in what ways the inter-actional pattern and behavioural system of members of these two communities characterizes and supports the presence of caste among them. Presented below are discussions on some of the studies, which depict the prevalence of such practices.

VI

The Social organization of Muslim community appears to be homogenous for an outsider. Cursory attempt to know about internal division among them may prove futile. Some of the sociologists who studied Muslim
community found that even the members of the community deny existence of any kind of social division in their community. But various studies reveal the prevalence of social divisions on various grounds. Ranjit K. Bhattacharya\textsuperscript{21} rationalizes theirs this behavior of blunt denial of division, as adherence to Islamic principles of brotherhood and equality. The egalitarian value as enshrined in the great tradition of Islam, forces its members not to speak of any kind of division among them.

Islamic world is traditionally divided into two well-known groups, namely Shi’\textsuperscript{a} and Sunni (Sardar and Davies\textsuperscript{22}, Andrew Egan\textsuperscript{23}).

In India, there is another division known as the Bohara’s, which constitute the third sect. Thus, there are three main divisions of Islam in India:

i. Shi’\textsuperscript{a}

ii. Sunni

iii. Bohara

Shia’s were the members of ‘fourth Calipha’ Ali’s Party, ‘Shi’at Ali’, known world wide as Shia’s. The followers of this party believed in hereditary rule and opined that Ali should be the successor of Prophet Muhammad. The other group or sect is Sunni, which is derived from Sunnah. It roughly means orthodox Muslims. They viewed that the succession issue should be resolved by either election or selection. They were opposed to hereditary rule (Sardar and Davies)\textsuperscript{24}. Thus the whole of Islam was divided on the succession issue or on hereditary basis of succession of power.

Numerically, the Sunni’s have largest populations. Their presence is all over the world. Then comes Shi’\textsuperscript{a}’s. They confine only part of Iraq and Iran and they have very negligible population in other parts of the world including India. The populations of Bohara are very less, as compared to Sunni and Shi’\textsuperscript{a}. They are mostly present in India and consider themselves
descendants of Yemen traders. Majority of Bohara's are involved in trade. They are wealthy groups and most of them are settled in urban area. The level of education is also high in this particular community.

The spread of Islam from Arab to other new areas gave another dimension to their division. The Muslims of India are divided on the basis of origin. In her study of Kausali Muslims, Zarina Bhatti25 found two main sections of Muslims on the basis of descent or foreign origin. They were the Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs, traced their descent to Arab countries while the non-Ashrafs were alleged to be the converts from Hinduism.

Zeyauddin Ahmad26 presents a four-fold classification of Muslims of India:

i. The Ashrafs: Trace their origin to foreign land-Arabia, Persia, Turkistan or Afghanistan.

ii. Hindus of higher birth who converted to Islam.

iii. The clean occupational caste, and

iv. Converts from untouchable castes, Bhangi (Scavengers), Mehtar (Sweeper), Chamar (tanners), Dom, etc.

He combined the second and the third classification and termed it Atraf or Ajlaf. The third was known as Arjal.

Thus the reduced three-fold categorization of Muslims of India, are:

i. Ashrafs,

ii. Atraf or Ajlaf, and

iii. Arjal.

The Ashrafs literally means nobles. They occupy highest position in the social hierarchy. Ashrafs are believed to be descendants of Arab settlers. (Ghaus Ansari27, Louis Dumont28, Imtiaz Ahmad29 and Mattison Mines30). The next two categories of Muslims are converts from Hindus. Mostly, they are the occupational Caste.
The Muslims in Ajlaf category are placed next to Ashraf in the hierarchical ladder. Ajlaf includes groups of people doing variety of traditional jobs. Most of the converts from high and middle or loc range of castes of Hindus are designated as Ajlaf. The lowest in this hierarchical frame are addressed as Arjal. The category of Arjal includes those converts who were doing unclean and unhygienic jobs during pre-conversion time. Most of them continued their traditional occupation even after conversion to Islam. They included the castes such as Halalkar, Lalbegi, Abdal and Bediya.

The category of Ashrafs further constitutes four social divisions. They are:
1. Sayyad,
2. Sheikh,
3. Mughal, and
4. Pathan.

They trace their origin from Arab, Persia, Turkey or Afghanistan. Quoting Ghaus Ansari, Mandelbaum31 writes that in Uttar Pradesh, the Sayyads are accorded highest place among Muslims. They are considered as "princes". Sayyads claim their descent from Fatima, daughter of Prophet Mohammad and her husband, Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam. Hence they are treated pure and superior group by all Muslims. Sheikhs, who comes next to Sayyad are called "Chiefs" and believed to have descended from Arab ancestors who were among the first followers of Prophet. The Mughals and the Pathans are ranked below the Sayyads and the Sheikhs. Both belonged to the descendants of those who came from Mongol and Afghanistan to conquer India.

Other than this widespread but broad divisions, we find other subdivisions among Muslims. In his book, Mandelbaum32 mentions a Ghaus Ansari's study which says prevalence of at least twenty sections of Sayyads. Sub-grouping occurs in Sheikhs also. Ghaus Ansari's study, which found
place in Intiaz Ahmad\textsuperscript{33} article, reveals the existence of sub-division in Sheikh's into Qureshi, Ansari, Kidwai, Usmani etc. The basis of this division is the source of their descent to Arab tribe.

The evaluation of this division as caste involves satisfying many characteristic criteria of the caste. One criterion amongst them is membership by birth. Ranjit K. Bhattacharya\textsuperscript{34} found that the basis of membership to various groups were determined by birth and hereditary. Intiaz Ahmad\textsuperscript{35} quotes in the introduction of his book about similar observations regarding membership to social division determined by births, which was found by Pratap C. Agrawal while studying Meas of Rajasthan. The Meas had a distinctive stratification system and the various groups were hierarchically ranked. The membership to this ranked division was decided on the basis of birth to the particular group. The membership to a particular group was thus fixed. This has direct impact on occupation, marital system, and hierarchy.

Studies reveal the prevalence of the concept of heredity-based occupation among Muslims. Particular occupation attributed to particular group was widely practiced among non-Ashraf castes (Zeyauddin Ahmed\textsuperscript{36}, Ranjit K. Bhattacharya\textsuperscript{37}).

The Ashrafs, the Ajlaf and the Arjals of Bihar according to Zeyauddin Ahmed are divided on the basis of hereditary based occupation. According to him, Sayyad and Sheikh were the priestly class and Mughal and Pathan were the warrior caste. He further adds that in Bihar, the Mughals are called Mullick, which means chief or king. Among the Arjal's, all are occupational caste and each group is associated with a particular occupation which is fixed on the basis of birth.

Zeyauddin Ahmad further writes that the Arjal castes like Atishbaaz are makers of fire-work, Julaha's are weavers, Qassab's are butcher. The
children of these caste groups are expected to pursue trade associated with their caste. Bhattacharya supports the idea of hereditary based occupation among occupational castes and writes that Shah, Momin and Patna of West Bengal Muslims were associated with occupations of mendicancy, weaving and painting respectively. But he has a divergent finding in terms of occupation of Ashraf, where as Zeyauddin Ahmad attributed hereditary occupation to Ashrafs of Bihar, Bhattacharya opined that the higher ethnic groups (Ashrafs) do not claim any hereditary occupation.

The preference of Marriage within their own groups is widely practiced across different castes of Muslims. Ghaus Ansari\textsuperscript{38} found while studying Muslims of Uttar Pradesh that there is a tendency among Ashraf castes to preserve purity of blood. This is done by marrying within the groups. Zeyauddin Ahmad\textsuperscript{39} partly supports the view of ritual purity and pollution. Purity is maintained by remaining endogamous. But he adds that there is tendency among Ashrafs of Bihar to have more than one wife. The first wife is taken from the same Ashraf group and thus purity is maintained. But there is no restriction for man to have second or third or more wives from any particular caste. Neither the progeny of second or third or later wives nor the wives themselves enjoy equal rights and status as compared to progeny of first wife or the first wife herself.

The hypergamous marriage for second or third wife has given births to a new caste called Malzerda (progeny of low caste women). The abolition of Zamindari system has brought an end to such practice and now Ashrafs adhere to remain monogamous. Imtiaz Ahmad\textsuperscript{40} confirms through his study of Sheikhs of Allahabad, the tendency of Ashrafs (here Sheikh) to remain endogamous in line of purity and pollution. He uses the term 'har gor' (meaning preservation of purity of blood and bone) for Sheikhs to maintain
pure by remaining endogamous. Siddique and Bhattacharya observed that the Muslims maintain purity of blood by remaining endogamous. The tendency to remain endogamous is not confined only for the maintenance of purity of blood. Desire to match culture, religious traditions or economic status also compel to remain endogamous (Mattison Mines).

Among Muslims, there is a tendency to define a group within which marriages can take place. M.N. Srinivas noted that the Sayyads are divided in endogamous groups known as 'Kufa' or 'biradari'. Yoginder Singh Sikand also talks about existence of 'Kafa’a' as groups within which matrimonial alliance can take place.

Although the Ashrafs are the nobles with foreign origin but there are marriage restrictions within them. Bhaty found that the marriage between Sayyad and Sheikh and between Mughal and Pathan was conceivable but the marriage between Sayyad or Sheikh and Mughal or Pathan was not accepted by the society. Views of M.N. Srinivas also needs to be mentioned here when he says that though, Sayyad men are allowed to marry a Sheikh girl but a Sayyad girl is not expected to marry a Sheikh boy. Thus, the views of Bhaty in terms of marriage between Sayyad and Sheikh is partly supported and partly restricted by Srinivas’s observations.

The restrictions for marriage are at times guided by the hierarchical position. The divisions of Muslim society into various groups have already found place in this thesis. An analysis into the division leads to the concept of hierarchy. The various divisions in Muslim society are placed in hierarchical order. The main broad division of Muslim society into Ashrafs, Atraf and Arjal is practiced by many. Ashrafs are accorded highest status by Muslims on account of their foreign origin. The Ajlaf comes second is hierarchical
ranking and are placed below Ashrafs but above Arjal. Their claim of superiority over Arjal is due to their origin from pre-conversion clean caste of Hindus. The last and the lowest status in ladder of hierarchy are accorded to Arjals who are considered as converts from unclean caste and they continue to practice their pre-conversion occupation (Zeyauddin Ahmad\(^{45}\)).

Hierarchical ranking of various groups on the basis of foreign versus indigenous dichotomy has got favours from the studies of many social scientists and sociologists. The descendants of Ashrafs consider them pure by virtue of having foreign blood, through Arabs. They are supposed to be person of noble birth. “Like the Sayyed, Pathan and Mughal”, writes Intiaz Ahmed\(^{46}\), “the Sheikhs also occupy a fairly high social position within the idealized scheme of social hierarchy among the Muslims”. The hierarchy among the Muslims is so much clear that Intiaj Ahmad is compelled to compare it with Hindu social system. The Sayyad, Sheikh, Mughal and Pathan, according to Ahmed\(^{50}\), “Constitute a category of social groups somewhat analogous to the \(dwi\)ja caste among Hindus”. While studying the Sheikhs of Uttar Pradesh, he found that the Sheikhs are further divided into various sub-groups and each sub-groups is hierarchically ranked. The hierarchy of sub groups, Intiaz says, is determined by multiplicity of factors likes affiliation to Arab tribe, closeness of the tribe to Prophet Mohammad. According to him, even place of origin like Arabia, Persia, and Afghan helps in creating hierarchy. He summarizes the conditions for determination of hierarchy by saying the more close the tribe was with Prophet Muhammad, the higher rank they are accorded. Also people from Arab origin receive higher status than say Afghan origin. The study of Zarina Bhatte also supports the foreign-indigenous model of superiority between Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs. For the sake of marital alliance, the Ashrafs are further divided
and hierarchically placed as Sayyad-Sheikh at one end to Mughal-Pathan on another. The non-Ashrafs, according to Bhatty, are placed one over the other on the basis of clean and unclean job and secondly in her word’s “proximity of occupation in a physical sense to the Ashraf castes”51. Bhatty observes that there is no commensal relationship between Ashrafs and non-Ashrafs.

According higher position to people of foreign origin also finds support from the study of Moplah community by Victor S. D’Souza52, Muslim Tamils by Mattison Mines53 and Bengal Muslims by Ranjit K. Bhattacharya54. Bhattacharya further observes the restriction on commensality among the various groupings. The Sheikhs according to him do not dine with Patna and Momin. This he attributes to the concept of purity and pollution. Bhattacharya noted that the Sheikhs used the term ‘Paksaf’ to explain why low caste (here ethnic) Muslims are low, as they do not observe certain ritual practice or perform ablutions after urination.

The practice of ‘paksaf’ in terms of cleanliness or performance of ablution or certain rituals gives support to the idea of existence of a kind of untouchability among Muslims. Quoting the survey by Census of India 1901, by Ghaus Ansari, Zeyauddin writes that there are certain “…castes like, Malakhar, Lalbegi, Abdal and Bedia who are forbidden to enter the mosque or to use the public burial ground” (Zeyauddin Ahmad55). Bhattacharya as mentioned in the preceding paragraph has already mentioned the existence of untouchability, terms it as lacking ‘Pak saf’. Study by Siddique56 shows that the higher group Muslims do not drink or eat with Lalbegis, who are the scavenger caste among Muslims.

Various studies from different part of the country quoted in the preceding paragraphs convincingly prove the existence of caste and
untouchability among Muslims. To sum up, Mandelbaum has rightly observed "Muslims in all regions of India class themselves into endogamous, hereditary groups which are ranked in relation to each other".

VII

Christianity in India is growing slowly but systematically. The Christians are numerically a small community. They comprise nearly 2.31% of the total population of the country. They are scattered throughout the country having heavy concentration in small states of North-East and in the state of Kerala in South. There are two branches of Christianity - Catholic and Protestant. Population wise, the Protestants outnumber the Catholics. With few exceptions, all the Indian Christians are converts. The process of conversion to Christianity has a long history. It started from first century with the arrival of religious proclaimers in South. People were impressed by the virtues of Christianity as were narrated to them by foreign religious proclaimers.

The spread of Christianity acquired a new momentum in sixteenth and seventeenth century with the arrival of Portuguese, British and other western traders and preachers. They employed persons with an assigned job to convert Indian people into Christianity. Missionaries were sent to speed up the process of conversion. Kind, sympathetic and service oriented behaviour of missionaries brought desired result. More and more people started attracting towards Christianity.

The arrival of Protestant in India was very late. Conversion to protestant took place in Goa in the early years of eighteenth century. Inspite of late arrival, the Protestants because of their dedicated army of missionaries and zeal for conversion, had larger number of followers than that of Catholics.
Christianity believes in equality and commonness of mankind. Caste or caste-like social division has no place in the idiom of their religious dictum. In spite of this, divide on the caste-line and caste related discriminatory behaviours are vividly present among Indian Christians.

Indian Christians form various groups. In India, all the Christians are affiliated to one or the other group. Each group is accorded a specific hierarchical place in their organizational system in terms of degree of superiority or inferiors. Each group in expected to observe the behavioral norms prescribed for their group. This kind of social frame exhibits the character of caste system of Hindus. The Christians apply this prescription in actual behaviours. Still they often deny the existence of caste among them. Existence of this type of social reality makes us to know what a caste is? Do the term caste realize its meaning only in the context of ritual based hierarchical system of the Hindus? Sociologists would say, 'No'. Caste finds meaning through its materially desirable attributes. Explaining the existence of caste among non-Hindus, Tharamangalam defines Caste in terms of “a set of primary characteristics such as hereditary membership and endogamy”\textsuperscript{58}. He elaborates that, “both Christians and Hindus share a common ideology, thus caste does exist (in terms of the configuration of major characteristics) among Christian without any necessary linkage with the theological ideas of purity and pollution or Karma and Dharma”\textsuperscript{59}.

Mass conversion is also a major factor to perpetuate caste system among the Christians. Mass conversion, Tharamangalam says, meant that people become Christians not singly but collectively as caste. It involved little disruption of the social structure of the groups or of their relationship with their neighbours.\textsuperscript{60} Tharamangalam gave justification of his statement by giving example from real situation of Keralite Christians. There exists clear divide between Syrian Catholics and later Catholics. Syrian Catholic considers
themselves very high to that of the later converts. Tharamanglam states: "The root of the hierarchical division between the two communities, however, is their different caste origin, different caste identities and different status assigned to them". He remarks this division between Syrian and later converts can properly be treated as caste.

Existence of this kind of situation is not confined in the state of Kerala only. Quoting D'Costa, Tharamangalam writes that the Catholics in Goa are divided into six castes and several sub-castes. Protestants are also not free from the clutches of caste hierarchy.

Ideologically, Catholics are termed as to be an orthodox, and Protestant do not give any re-cognition to caste, but in practice, they are very much conscious of it. Tharamangalam reports that Protestants of Goa maintain a pattern of segregation even in church worship. In Tamil Nadu and Karanataka, there are separate churches for the Dalit converts. Depicting the situation of caste ranking in Kerala, Alexander remarks that, "even after conversion into Christianity, there was no change in their status as untouchables".

The discussions made so far clearly establishes that hierarchical ranking along caste line is an intrinsic feature of the organizational system of Christians of India. Hierarchical ranking is one of the necessary attributes of caste system. And, this attribute is vividly present in the organization system of Indian Christian. Endogamy is another important attribute of caste. Indian Christians seriously follows the rules of endogamy at the time of settlement of marriage. Tharamangalam assertly remarks "Christian in general practice follow caste endogamy". However, "The endogamous units among many Christians tend to be caste clusters such as clean castes and Dalit caste rather than single caste".
It is evidently proved that the Indian Christians follow the rules of endogamy exactly in the manner it is observed by the people of Hindu castes. Thus the Christians meet the second requirement also, which is necessary to qualify to become a caste-based society.

Hierarchical ranking of the people through the observance of the principle of purity-pollution is third and last necessary attribute of caste system.

While according place to the different groups in the hierarchical order, the Indian Christians are meticulously conscious about the ritual based purity-pollution scheme. Studies made on Christian communities of different regions demonstratively prove the convincing role of the notion of purity and pollution on placement to different groups in caste hierarchy.

The intra-community relation of the Christians of Tamil Nadu is intensively governed by the notion of purity. The Udaiyans maintain visible distance in their relation with Uddiyans who work as a farm or domestic servant under the farmer. Uddiyans are an untouchable caste. Udaiyans do not enter the untouchable colony (Wiebe and John Peter). This narration reveals that purity-pollution concept play a role to govern the behaviour of Indian Christians. Dennis Hudson also found that Tamil Christians maintained segregation guided by the notion of clean and unclean. The provision of separate seating arrangement for ‘Shudra’ and ‘Pariah’ Christians is a living example of the operation of the symbolism of purity-pollution among Christians. Hudson made a concluding remark that they “retained distinction between the clean and unclean classes”.

Customary separation on the basis of purity-pollution of the Hindu system continues to exist even after conversion to Christianity. Narrating the customs and practices of Protestant Christians of Goa, D. Dennis Hudson
writes that Paraiyas and Pallans both eat beef but they do not inter-dine because of customary separation. It is rightly said, traditions die-hard. The recognition of caste superiority continues to operate the system of social arrangements of the Indian Christians. Conversion has not been able to destroy the age-old hierarchical ranking constructed through the idiom of purity-pollution. Even after conversion, Alexander\textsuperscript{71} writes, that Brahmin converts are given highest rank and caste like Pulyas and Parayas are placed at the lowest ring of the hierarchy.

Instances can also be found about observance of bodily pollution exactly in the line of purity-pollution concept of the Hindus. Jacobite Christians do not allow the women to attend church during their menses. Similar pollution is also observed at the time of childbirth. Tharamangalam reported that, "...they abstain even today from attending church for a period of 40 days after childbirth"\textsuperscript{72}.

Now, it can be conclusively said that caste system does exist among the Christians of India. They may not call it a caste. They may use an alternate term to refer to the divisional system among them. They do give justification in various forms for existence and continuation of hierarchical system. But the fact remains unchanged, that caste system is surviving among Christians and the caste has continued to play decisive role to give shape to many important aspects of their social behaviour. Statement of Tharamangalam strengthens this argument, who while quoting Fuller says that "...recruitment by hereditary membership is more important for caste identity"\textsuperscript{73}. The origin of caste is the main cause to create differentiation between Syrian Christians and later converts of Kerala. Syrian Christians trace their origin from the higher ladder of the Hindus.

Caste is given importance even for conversion to Christianity. Protestant Christians recruited their membership in TamilNadu almost
exclusively from particular caste groups. This kind of practice led Wiebe and John-Peter to say that, "...the social organization of the protestant church in India today can only be understood with reference to caste consideration."\textsuperscript{74} Tharamangalam\textsuperscript{75} reported that Protestant Christians of South maintain segregation even in church worship.

Caste and Untouchability go together. Caste system exists among the Indian Christians so is the untouchability. The practice of endogamy has resulted to make clear division among Christians in terms of clean castes and Dalit castes (Tharamangalam\textsuperscript{76}). Segregation is maintained in residential settlement and seating arrangement. "Dalit Christians are physically segregated in their quarters or chairs" (Wiebe and John-Peter\textsuperscript{77}). Separate arrangements of seats are made exclusively for Dalit Christians. Tharamangalam\textsuperscript{78} states that denominational segregation is a widely practiced social feature in the Christian society of Kerala.

Presence of the notion of untouchability becomes prominently clear in commensality. The Syrian Christians do not dine on the same table along with Dalit Christians (Tharamangalam\textsuperscript{79}). Conscious efforts are made to avoid appointing Dalits as priests in church organization. Tharamangalam\textsuperscript{80} reported a concrete case where a popular and experienced Harijan convert was not preferred for the appointment of higher rank priest in a church of Tamil Nadu. This created strong resentment among Dalit Christians, but the decision of church authority remained unchanged. It appears to be the well-considered policy of church authority to avoid giving higher post to the Dalit converts in the priestly organization of church. The statement of Wiebe and John-Peter gives credence to this argument. They write. "No Parish Priest with an untouchable background has ever served in the Kovilnoor Parish"\textsuperscript{81}. Though Dalit Christians are competent but are not considered worthy to be appointed in the higher ecclesiastic posts. In course of his study of
Christianity in South, Alexander found that Pulayas (Dalit Christians) were never appointed as a priest in Marthoma Church.

Provision of separate church for Dalit Christians is a common feature in many parts of South India (Wiebe and John-Peter). Untouchability is strongly practiced by the Indian Christians. So much so the higher caste converts expect the Dalit converts to observe those behavioral disabilities, which they carried before conversion. Alexander has narrated the observance of a behavioral practice, which commands, “In the presence of rich Syrian Christians, the Harijan Christians had to remove their head-dress”.

The behavioural practices as exist in reality among Indian Christians makes one point very clear that, in the words of Alexander, “Even after conversion into Christianity, there was no change in their status as untouchable”. The conversion appears to have brought only a change in religious faith. This is aptly true in case of the Dalit Christians. The prevalence of caste consideration rigidly restricts their free mobility. That is why, Tharamangalam concludes that, “…the real majority of Dalit Christians experienced little mobility and gained no real improvements in their caste or social status”.

Both the religions, Islam and Christianity, came from foreign countries and flourished in India. Theologically both the religious are believed to be ingrained with high ideals of equality, purity and universal fraternity. Contrary to these high textual prescriptions, Indian Muslims and Christians carry all those social evils, such as caste, casteism and untouchability, which are considered negative aspects of Hindu religion and Hindu social system.
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