CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION:
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Demographic profiles
Irrespective of the fact that Islam prescribes a society with egalitarian orientation, the Muslim society of Calcutta has been found to be extremely heterogeneous in character. Accordingly members of this society are divided into different categories. They can be categorized on the basis of their ethnicity, sect, class, caste, mother tongue, regional affinities etc. Hence there is a difference between the text and the context - the norms of Islam and the actual social lives of Muslims of Calcutta. Calcutta is the capital city of West Bengal so it may be expected that Bengali Muslims are largely populated in Calcutta but contrary to this fact, it has been found in this study that the majority of the Muslims (families) of this city trace their origin in other Indian states such as in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat etc from where their ancestors came here through transfer of service, or for employment, business, education and the like. Actually, the Bihari Muslims greatly outnumber the Bengali Muslims in Calcutta. In a locality-wise observation, it has been found that vast majority of the Muslims of Rajabazar locality is Urdu speaking Bihari Muslims. Whereas Khidirpur locality is also dominated by Urdu speaking Muslims who trace their origin in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh but also is inhabited by a good number of Bengali Muslims and Muslims of other parts of India. This has happened in Khidirpur locality due to the fact that it is a port area which provides better employment opportunities in comparison to Rajabazar locality. So, it can be seen from the above discussion that Urdu is the mother tongue of majority of the Muslims in Calcutta. Urdu is largely used as the medium of verbal communication among them irrespective of the fact that they have their own specific mother tongues.

Social organization and the existence of Caste system
It has been found that the Muslims of Calcutta belong to different classes, ethnic, sect and occupational groups. The most important groups which have been observed to exist among them are the Ashraf group which consists of Sayyeds, Sheikhs, Mughals and
Pathans and this is considered as the elite group of Muslim society. The other group which is known as Ajlaf group includes Ansari, Quraishi, Iraqi and many other occupational groups. They are considered as converted Muslims and have indigenous origin (the existence of these occupational groups form the caste like structure in their society). It has been found that the Muslim society of Calcutta is largely dominated by the Sheikhs and Ansaris. They belong to both Shia and Sunni sects along with their respective sub-sects but the Muslim society of Calcutta is greatly dominated by the Sunni Muslims. Many of the Sunnis also are the followers of the Deobandi and Berelevi Schools which are distinctively Indian in origin.

It is a serious concern for social science research in India to determine whether caste system exists or not among the Indian Muslims. In this context, our study confirms the existence of caste like structure among the Muslims of Calcutta. Earlier studies on the Muslims of Calcutta also confirm this observation (Siddique, 1974; John Eade, 1983). Existence of caste like system has been found among them due to their practicing of traditional occupations which are also hereditary in nature. Many of them are members of their respective caste like groups based on different hereditary occupations. But it is a fact that in a metropolitan situation, it is not possible to carry out all of these hereditary occupations as some of these occupations are not needed or have no demand in a metropolitan situation. And it is also a fact that in a metropolitan situation anyone can take any type of profession irrespective of one's particular occupational group membership. This type of claim is more appropriate to make for a Muslim society which lays emphasis on egalitarian type of society. If the society is urban then it indicates that the society may be more mobile in nature affecting the rigidity of caste structure. But some professions are very much needed in each and every society as those of the butchers, barbers etc. It has been found in this study that most of the Muslim butchers of Calcutta are Qurashis, who are the traditional occupiers of this profession among the Muslims. Whereas Ansaris are the weavers but all the Ansaris are not engaged in weaving profession. Ansaris have a large number of population in Calcutta, so all the Ansaris can not depend on weaving profession to earn their livelihood. Ultimately they have engaged themselves in other professions also. But in spite of their engagement in non-weaving professions, they are considered as the members of the weaving community.
as sometimes 'Ansari' surname is tagged with their names and also it is so due to the fact that traditionally they are or their ancestors were engaged in this particular occupation.

In the context of the Bengali Muslims, it can be said that many of them are not well aware of their caste like membership. It has been found that many of them are unconscious about it and also in many times, they have explicitly refused to accept the presence of caste system in their society. But we have also found some cases of Bengali Muslims who have mentioned their titles or surnames as their caste. Actually they are members of titled lineage groups. There are many Bengali Muslims whose (Arabic) names suffix Hindu surnames that indicate their indigenous origin whose ancestors had converted themselves from Hindu religion to Islam in the past.

**Family and Marriage**

Both nuclear and joint families are found among them but the recent trend is in favour of nuclear family. Regarding marriage it can be said that monogamy is largely prevalent among them. Although polygyny is permitted in Islam on justified situations, we have noticed very few cases of this type of marriage among them. It has been observed in this study that the marrying age of males and females is increasing day by day. This is due to the fact that now they are getting higher education and want to get married, particularly the males, after being employed. So in these days, the size of the families is generally small as there is inverse relationship between the age of marriage of the couple and the number of children they have. They prefer small families with a view to proper upbringing and education of their children.

The provision of dowry is unislamic but it is commonly practiced by the Muslims of Calcutta. Similar findings have been corroborated in the studies made by Jehangir, K.N., (1991); Ashraf, Nehal (1997). It has been found in the present study that dowry is more prevalent among the Muslims of Khidirpur locality than their counterparts in Rajabazar locality. On class-wise analysis, it is evident that dowry is widely practiced among the lower class Muslim families in comparison to the families of higher classes. The nature of dowry which is prevailing among them is both of compulsory and voluntary type. In dowry they demand money, ornaments and household articles. Sometimes dwelling is also demanded in dowry as housing problem is very acute among them. The prevalence
of dowry among the Muslims is supported from other sources also. As reported in a daily newspaper (The Telegraph, Calcutta, 27 June, 2009, p.5) the Muslim religious leaders in India are planning a nationwide awareness campaign during Friday prayers against dowry. Several Muslim organizations also will take part in this campaign. They even have decided that if the campaign fails to show results, then the religious leaders may even think of issuing a fatwa against dowry.

**Housing situation**

The Sachar Commission has observed that Indian Muslims particularly the urban Muslims are living in ghetto like situations. We have experienced the same in our study. It has been observed that the target population of the present study i.e., the Muslims of Rajabazar and Khidirpur localities are living in ghettos, with unsatisfactory housing conditions. Both of these localities belong to slum areas where more than half of the Muslim population is living in a typical urban slum situation consisting of houses known as Jhopris. Jhopri dwellers are found more in number in Rajabazar locality than in the Khidirpur locality. Many families are residing in buildings. But these buildings provide most unsatisfactory housing provisions for them. A common feature which has been observed in this study is that each of these buildings is overcrowded, where a large number of families live. Each of these families along with large number of members accommodates itself in one or two room based accommodation. In this context, it has been observed that Muslims of Khidirpur locality are, to some extent, in a better position in comparison to Muslims of Rajabazar locality as far as per capita availability of space is concerned. Majority of the Muslims particularly the Muslims of Rajabazar locality are residing in rented houses. A common feature observed in their housing pattern is that a large majority of them or their families are residing in single or two room accommodations. Such a housing situation exists in each of these buildings or slums or Jhopris which are devoid of minimum necessary amenities. It was observed that many of the upper class Muslim families reside in houses having better facilities. But majority of the middle class families live in substandard housing conditions. The situation of the lower class families in this regard is miserable. Generally most of these families reside in houses which are without minimum physical facilities such as open space, personal toilet,
kitchen, electricity, water etc. They have to use common latrines and bathrooms so there are always large queues outside latrines and bathrooms. Minimum of decent family life is impossible in such housing situations. The living space for these families is so scarce that the children particularly male children are asked to play outside home. We have observed a good number of boys who used to play in the streets or in the nearest playground for all the time. So an educational environment always is missing in their families. For different reasons (religious affinity, security etc) they are by and large inhabitants of these isolated settlements which are overcrowded, noisy, impoverish and dirty. The sanitary provisions provided by the civic body for these localities are short in supply. Particularly the number of sweepers provided for these localities is fewer in number in accordance with the population density of these localities. All these make the social environment of their living localities as areas as unhygienic and inhuman. Living in such type of unhygienic and unsatisfactory housing conditions where social environment is so polluted, no one can expect a better prospect for the next generation.

Educational status
In a metropolitan situation there is no sign of massive illiteracy but majority of the Muslim population is lowly educated. As it has been observed in this study, most of the respondents are educated only up to primary or below secondary level. Although illiteracy is quite pervasive among the Muslims of older generation of this city but it is also a fact that modern education is gradually becoming more acceptable to the Muslims of younger generation in Calcutta. And the guardians of these younger Muslims are doing their best to impart them modern education. The present study has observed that Muslims of Khidirpur locality are economically and educationally more advanced than their counterparts of Rajabazar locality. This indicates a very significant correlation between literacy and economic status. The illiterates and Din-E-Talims are found more in number in Rajabazar locality than those in Khidirpur.

Occupational structure: Economic and educational condition
The occupational structure of members of the sample families shows that they have highest representation in business which indicates that they are rightly known as a business community. Although they have representation in government and private
sectors but the growth in their representation is very slow. Unemployment is maximum among them. The present study which is a class based study has found that Muslims belonging to upper and middle classes have a good representation in all lucrative occupational categories, i.e., government service, private service, business and profession. But this section of Muslim society has a tiny representation in the total Muslim population of Calcutta whereas the vast majority of the Muslims of Calcutta have lower class status who are overwhelmingly self-employed in the low paid unorganized sector and also are engaged in semi-skilled, unskilled and casual types of work. A good portion of foot path hawkers, taxi drivers, fruit sellers, tailors, plumbers, painters, mechanics, fitters, electricians, welders, transport agents etc of Calcutta are Muslims. According to the Census of India, 2001, Muslims constitute 54.1 per cent of the total self-employed household industry workers of Calcutta whereas Hindus represent 45.2 per cent of that population. The Census Report also noted that 3.1 per cent of the total Muslim population of this city are self-employed as household industry workers whereas it is only 0.7 per cent for the Hindus. They have low income from these occupations. This economic backwardness in turn is causing educational backwardness. It happens so because many of these lower class Muslim families which can not afford the expenditures of modern education prefer to send their children for madarsa education. But their education in madrasa remains incomplete because as a whole madarsa education lacks to provide the knowledge of modern sciences which are endowed with modern education. So education in madarsa except the religious one is incomplete and substandard to meet the present day need. And once the child is eight or nine years old, many of the Muslim parents concerned by poverty and resource less ness and also influenced by some extra earnings, put their children as trainee in family profession or in some other kind of income earning occupation to raise their family income. Along with economic backwardness, there are many other factors which are to blame for their educational backwardness. Lack of motivation towards education, lack of educational environment in the family, and educational status of the parents was also found to be decidedly related with their educational backwardness and ultimately with their economic backwardness.
Feeling of deprivation

Many of them are well aware about the fact that it is their poor educational background due to which they are largely unemployed. But according to them, there are several other discouraging factors which have been found to result in a lack of motivation for formal education among the Muslims. Muslims have nominal representation in government services and relatively no share in defense and intelligence services. They have a strong feeling that on several occasions they are generally discriminated by the government and private sectors in providing employment during the process of recruitment in spite of having adequate qualifications. However, this fact cannot be established simply because it is very difficult to prove discrimination. But even today caste, religious identities are vital in our society; where nepotism, bribery, and other type of malpractices are very common and economic prospects are by and large limited, so the claim of discrimination cannot be discarded completely. In this context, it can be mentioned that the Central Government of India constituted a Commission in 2006 to find out the number of Muslim employees in all government institutions, including the armed forces. Now\(^1\) the ministry of Minority Affairs under Central Government of India will ask public and private sector companies to do a religion-based headcount of their employees as part of an effort to end discrimination. The current move is part of the build-up towards the constitution of an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) to stop discrimination.

Conspicuous consumption

This study has also revealed that Muslims are emphatic in observing their socio-cultural practices consistent with their religious norms. For such a religious community to whom religious norms are mandatory, anything which prevents them from observing such norms creates a strong reaction among them. It has been pointed out in this study that nearly about half (46.0%) of the lower class Muslim families are located below poverty line. Majority of the Muslim families has no fixed income or has a poor income from their lowly occupations. As a result they generally cannot fulfill their basic needs adequately and are in a hand to mouth existence which compels them to borrow on several occasions to observe social and religious ceremonies. The habit to live beyond

\(^1\) Paul, Cithara in *The Telegraph*, (10 October, Saturday, Siliguri, 2009), p.1.
one's income, to be spendthrift, not to save and invest for the future are also the characteristics of Calcutta Muslim culture. Their hospitable nature, irrespective of the fact that they earn very little to maintain their families, makes their economic crisis more acute. This leads many to borrow and fall into a debt trap. Most of them lack the social security provisions for the future. All these facts collectively keep them so far from developing a modern economic base which is so necessary if modern reforms are too brought about in their society. These habits for conspicuous consumption and lack of planning for future prevent many of them to take a leading role in the sphere of business and industry.

Such type of families are found more in Khidirpur locality than in Rajabazar as they are much dependent on the port industry to earn their livelihood which has become a sick industry at present. Whereas in Rajabazar locality most of the Muslims are self employed and they have better savings habits than their counterparts of Khidirpur locality.

**Pattern ofExpediture**

The pattern of monthly family expenditures of the respondents shows that in general most of the families have highest expenditure on food and family maintenance (expenditures on clothing, medical, entertainment etc). This indicates that they can provide lesser amounts on education of their children. Class wise, it has been found that the upper and middle class families have highest monthly expenditure on food and education whereas expenditure on family maintenance comes after that. Whereas, in most of the lower class Muslim families, monthly expenditure on education is less than the expenditures on other items and as major portion of their monthly income is expended to meet the necessity of food and maintenance of the family, they can't afford much on education. They even borrow money for family maintenance, for observing festivals and social ceremonies. They are compelled to consult doctors in government hospitals. Majority of such families have no savings. It has been observed in this study that very few Muslim families, particularly lower class Muslim families, were given financial assistance by the governmental departments for their business or self-employment purpose. Identical remark was made in the Sachar Commission Report in 2006 in this regard.
Intra-community or inter-ethnic relationships

It has already been mentioned that Muslims of Calcutta are divided into different categories on class, ethnic, linguistic or occupational lines. But we have found that in spite of these differences, they generally share good relationship and usually attend each others social ceremonies. But the sectarian relationships are not so warm and sometimes are strained in nature. It has been found in this study that the Sunnis are more concerned in this regard as many of them even do not want to keep relationships with the Shias. But these relationships are not as bad as we generally find in some other cities of India.

One of the objectives of the present study was to find out the impact of their diverse identities on their marital pattern or relationships. The Muslims in our study have been found to be stratified with caste like structure but it is not a closed society as cases of inter-ethnic or inter-class marriages take place frequently. Although they prefer marriage within their own ethnic, linguistic, caste or occupational group but it is also a fact that many of them have no objection in inter-class, inter-ethnic and inter-linguistic marriages. Whereas inter-sect (Shia-Sunni) marriage is not liked by them but few cases of such marriages were also observed in this study in which brides were from the Shia community. From the class point of view although upper class Muslims, particularly Ashraf groups, even now wish to value their respectable ancestry through a code of internal marriage but at present many of them are also found to some extent liberal to marry out their daughters to those boys who are educated and well employed irrespective of their belonging to other or even lower class, ethnic or occupational groups. Thus the rules of ethnic/caste endogamy exist in their society but with a lesser amount of strictness. So it can be said that relationships among these Muslim groups is fast changing at least in so far as marriage is concerned.

The type of relationships which exist among the Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims in Calcutta depend on some situations. It has already been mentioned that Bengali Muslims are outnumbered by non-Bengali Muslims particularly by the Bihari Muslims. It is also a fact that in spite of their same religious identities, both Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims are culturally different from each other. Both of these groups complain against each other and have many areas of tension. Bengali Muslims are largely concerned about the conservative attitude and unhygienic life styles of the non-Bengali Muslims particularly
those of non-Bengali lower class Muslims. Whereas non-Bengali Muslims complain that
the Bengali Muslims do not follow Islamic practices properly. Particularly they do not
observe purdah appropriately. They also criticize Bengali Muslim culture of rural Bengal
where Muslim women take bath in ponds. They also condemn those Bengali Muslims
who keep their Hindu surnames with their Arabic names. In this respect, one example can
be cited here. During the fieldwork, the researcher was being introduced with a Bihari
Muslim for an interview by his Bengali Muslim friend. The Bihari Muslim who was an
engineer by profession asked the introducer his name as he did not know his name
although he knew that the introducer was his neighbour. When he heard the Hindu
surname of the introducer, he vehemently criticized the Bengali Muslim for keeping the
Hindu surname. He also criticized Bengali Muslim culture in this respect for keeping the
Hindu surnames with their names even today which should be discarded. So, inter-
linguistic marriages are not occurring with the same frequency due to adjustment
problems. But it is also true that cases of inter-linguistic marriages are increasing in these
days in comparison to the past. But in spite of this, majority of the Muslims do not like
this type of marriage as it creates cultural adjustment problem. Muslims of Khidirpur
locality are much more liberal in comparison to their counterparts of Rajabazar locality in
regard to such type of marriages.

Many lower class Bengali Muslim families who are residing for many years in Urdu
speaking Muslim dominated slum areas have adopted Urdu as their language for
interaction. Their assimilation with Bihari Muslim culture is prominent. So at present,
Urdu is increasingly becoming important as a means of communication among the
Muslims. When the Urdu speaking Muslims and Bengali Muslims were asked regarding
the government’s preference for any particular Muslim group, they expressed different
opinion which contradicted each other. It seemed that there is an underlying tension
between the two groups as many non-Bengali Muslims believe that Bengali Muslims are
favoured for their mother tongue whereas Bengali Muslims think just the opposite. But a
widespread opinion is found among the general Muslims that Bengali and the OBC
Muslims are in a good position to attain government services, loans, higher education,
benefits of developmental schemes etc due to their good educational background and due
to the existing reservation policy particularly for the OBC Muslims.
Inter-community relationships

Calcutta is famous for its communal harmony. Here all the religious communities particularly both Hindus and Muslims live harmoniously. But occasionally this harmony is disturbed by the incidents of communal riots which occur in other parts of India. The Hindu Muslim relation at all times has remained stressed in India. This situation still continues. There are several reasons for the continuance of such situation. These have been discussed earlier in this thesis. Briefly it can be said that this uneasy relationship exists due to the deep rooted feelings of suspicion; identification of the Muslims as the followers of a religion which came in India with the foreign invaders; the thought that the Muslims are to blame for the partition of India; the pan-Islamic nature of the Indian Muslims and the unfriendly relationship between India and Pakistan. Some other factors accentuate this deep-rooted distrust among the Hindu-Muslims. Many Hindus think that majority of the Indian political parties and leaders appease the Muslims on different issues as they intend to use them as a vote bank. By being appeased, many times they vote in elections as a bloc. This, it is apprehended, strengthens the feeling Muslim fundamentalism. Some Muslim and Hindu leaders’ provocative action increase this inter-community distrust. The spread and involvement of the agents of ISI (Pakistan) in the recent bomb blasts in different parts of India have worsened the situation for the Muslims in India. All these incidents have given birth to religious intolerance among the Hindus and Muslims. Secularism in India has been badly affected by this religious intolerance that ultimately has brought discord in the social environment of India. Current Muslim situation in India has become vulnerable due to this tension in social environment where they face the problems of lack of security, unemployment, and social or political isolation. The Census Reports and the Sachar Committee Report, 2006 confirm all these happenings.

All these have affected the Hindu-Muslim relationships in Calcutta also. We have observed that the fear of communal flares-up continuously worry the Muslims. But as far as living in this metropolitan city is concerned, they do not have much to complain about. Minority sentiment based on collective deprivation prevails among them but they do not generally have any strong communal propensity. Calcutta is well-known for its communal harmony which leads to a peaceful co-existence of different religious
community members. It may be noted here that similar remark was made by Siddique (1993).
The present study has confirmed that Muslims of Calcutta have good relationship with the Hindus. Although some Muslims do not have any relationship with the Hindus - even few of them dislike Hindus - but as a whole they maintain friendly relationship with the Hindus. Muslims of Khidirpur locality are connected with their fellow Hindus in healthy relationship whereas this type of relationship to some extent is absent in Rajabazar locality. The main reason behind this is that Khidirpur locality is inhabited by a mixed population where opportunity of Hindu-Muslim interaction is greater than Rajabazar locality as it is a predominantly Muslim locality where possibility of Hindu-Muslim interaction is lesser. It has been observed in the present study that the upper and middle class Muslims have good relationship with the Hindus in comparison to the lower class Muslims. It has been identified in this study that the Muslims of lower class are comparatively more segregated in social relationships with the Hindus as they have less opportunity for intimate interaction with them. So in general it can be said that the relationship of the Muslims with the Hindus are both friendly and detached.
It may also be mentioned here that social relationships are more prominent than economic relationships as far as the Hindus and Muslims are concerned. An average Muslim is not interested in politics as he does not have time for politics. He has to spend much of his time to earn his livelihood. It was observed that Muslims of Khidirpur have more social interaction with the Hindus than the Muslims of Rajabazar. In Rajabazar area, economic relationships are more frequent compared to social relationships with the Hindus.
Hindu-Muslim marriage is favoured by few but majority of them do not like this type of marriage as it is likely to increase communal tension. Even those who support have different opinion relating to the religious identities of the marrying couple. Some of them have no objection if the marriage occurs between a Muslim girl and Hindu boy but vast majority of them has no objection to marriage between Muslim boy and Hindu girl. Higher class Muslims like this type of marriage more than the members of lower classes. Muslims of Khidirpur are more liberal than the Muslims of Rajabazar in this regard.
Several cases of inter-religious marriages have been observed in the present study in Khidirpur locality in which Hindu girls have married Muslim boys.

Many of the Muslims would accept living in mixed localities with an expectation of getting a good cultural atmosphere where both the Muslims and Hindus can know and understand each other's culture better which ultimately will improve communal harmony. But there are many Muslims who prefer to live in predominantly Muslim locality. This is in order to maintain religious affinity as well as for social security particularly for their women. A huge difference in opinion has been found among the Muslims of these two localities regarding their attitude to mixed localities. Lesser number of Muslims of Rajabazar locality prefer to live in mixed localities in comparison to Muslims of Khidirpur locality. Muslims belonging to younger generations prefer to live in mixed locality in comparison to the Muslims of the older generations. A higher percentage of older generation particularly third generation Muslims preferring to live in Muslim localities is a matter which deserves to be probed more intensively. Religious affinity is the most significant reason in this respect but personal security also plays important role for which maximum of them want to live in predominantly Muslim localities.

Regarding communal tensions, respondent Muslims think that religious activities, pre-riot tension, anti-social activities etc are factors in disturbing communal harmony. But, to them, political leaders play most vicious role in this regard. Religious disputes count sometimes but most of the communal disturbances are shaped by the opportunist activities of political leaders of both the communities. Most the respondents opined that the major portion of the Calcutta Police do not perform their duties effectively during communal riots in Calcutta. They are of the opinion that the activities of the police during the riots are inadequate and partial as they are pro-Hindus.

Majority of the Muslims have been found to be suffering from a sense of alienation. Sometimes such situations are artificially created. But there are many who do not agree with the opinion that the Muslims remain aloof from the larger society. They consider it as blame on their community by the communal forces. Muslims of Rajabazar locality have been found to be more alienated than the Muslims of Khidirpur which indicates that a mixed locality provides a better social environment for promoting mutual understanding and tolerance. Generation wise, older Muslims or the Muslims of third

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generation are more alienated than the members of the younger generations. Nowadays Muslims of younger generations have their Hindu friends and they jointly take part in socio-cultural activities and community welfare works.

The factors behind the sense of alienation have been identified. These are due to the fact that they have limited access to participate in community affairs. They also feel deprived as they get lesser opportunities in employment, loan for self employment, and share in political power etc. Several incidents of communal riots also affected the Muslim psyche very badly and they turned into big sufferers in every sphere of socio-economic life. Sometimes, they do not mix up with the Hindus as it may threaten their sense of identity. It has been found in this study that many Muslims have developed a complex due to their educational backwardness, poverty, unemployment and isolated living habits. This complex of the Muslims has forced them to remain aloof from the larger society.

**Mobility Factors: Intergenerational, Occupational and Educational Aspects**

The aspirations for socio-economic mobility among the Muslims of Calcutta is noticeable as they desire better education for their children in an aim to make them capable so that they can compete in getting jobs. Acquiring of better employment will ultimately bring upward social mobility for them about which they are well aware.

As they belong to a highly religious-minded community, they like that their children should be religiously educated to some extent so that they can understand their religious codes and can fulfill their religious requirements. In the past, religious education was highly preferred but at present majority of them desire modern education. It has been found that the economically backward Muslims show their interest in religious education as it costs not as much as modern education which is affordable for them. But even then, they show their interest in having modern education for their children. So whenever they succeed to earn more or raise their income, they are spending it on modern education of their children.

Female education was neglected in the past but at present they have a positive attitude towards education of their female children. So it is a fact that at present they are providing better education to the females and it is gaining momentum. But even now higher education for males gets more importance than higher education for females.
In the present study a class level analysis on a three generational basis was done to find out the educational and occupational mobility that has occurred among the Muslims of Calcutta.

**Educational mobility**

To find out the educational mobility among the three generations of the Muslims of Calcutta, a comparative study was made between the educational levels of the respondents’ fathers’, respondents’ and respondents’ sons’. It has been observed in the present study that the respondents’ generation has upward educational mobility in comparison to their fathers’ generation. In fathers’ generation, illiteracy was greater in magnitude and among the literates, majority of them are educated from primary to below secondary level and only a few are educated above secondary level. Comparatively in the respondents’ generation, the extent of illiteracy is lesser. A majority of them are educated higher than secondary level. And among these educational groups, graduates have the highest representation. Many of them are post-graduates also. So it is quite clear that there is an upward educational mobility in the respondents’ generation in comparison to their fathers’ generation. In the sons’ generation, very few of them are illiterates and many are graduates or post graduates. So, it can be stated that the level of literacy is rising increasingly generation after generation. Presently the members of the sons’ generation are very much interested in higher education with an aim of getting the advantages of modern higher education. So a large majority of them are now students in schools and colleges.

We have also studied the educational mobility of each generation on the basis of their class status. It was observed that lower class members of each generation are lagging behind compared to the other classes. It is a fact that the literacy rate is increasing day by day in the lower class Muslim families also as their children are getting admission in schools. But many of them can not continue their study. So in some middle and particularly in the lower class Muslim families even now there are a substantial number of drop-out cases. Scarcity of economic resources is a basic issue but lack of interest or motivation (in maximum cases, it has developed from economic crisis) also plays an important role to create this situation.
Occupational mobility

To find out occupational mobility with reference to three generations, a comparative analysis of the major occupations such as government service, private service, business, profession, skilled labour, casual or daily labour, cultivation, housewife (homemaker) etc of the respondents’, their fathers’ and grandfathers’ has been done which provides an idea about the significant changes in occupations that has taken place in three generations.

Respondents’ grandfathers were employed in public service, government service and skilled labour sector. But majority of them were occupied in cultivation and business. Their engagement with cultivation points out their rural background. Whereas in the respondents’ fathers’ generation business became the most leading occupation in comparison to the previous generation. The number of government and private employees has increased in this generation in comparison to the previous generation. While in other occupational categories, there are no significant changes. In the respondents’ generation, the number of the government service holders and professionals has increased whereas the number of businessman, private service holders, skilled and unskilled workman has decreased in this generation in comparison to the previous generation. Although business activity has decreased but still this activity is owned by a good number of Muslims of this generation. So, it can be mentioned that business activity has remained as the most popular form of economic activity for the Muslims of Calcutta since past.

Attitudinal Factors: Responses to the Process of Change and Modernity

Social change is such an expected phenomenon from which no society can escape. The form, pace or extent of social change may not be same for all the societies as these societies exist in different level of development. But it is a universally accepted fact that each and every society experiences social change. There is no way to escape from it. But it is also a reality that every society or community takes care for preserving its distinctive identity by following their own cultural norms and values. The same can be said about the Muslims community of Calcutta which is, not at all, an exception to this reality. They
also follow their traditions pertinently according to their religious norms and values. It is their minority identity which makes them very much sensitive towards their religious norms and practices. But in spite of the fact, changes are noticed in some areas of their traditional practices such as in the system of marriage, talaq, family planning, purdah etc. Changes have been observed in their aspiration towards child education. The present study indicates some interesting results of social change which are being occurred among them who are the members of a tradition bound society.

**Educational aspirations**

Muslims of Calcutta are largely going through a change in the aspect of educational aspiration. In comparison to the past, when education was not aspired by most of them (families), at present they find education compulsory for their children. Now they are much interested in providing modern education to their children as they increasingly recognize that modern education is an essential component for a safe and sound future. So the change in their attitude towards education is quite noticeable. But it has also been observed that the change in this respect is not the same for all the Muslims who are stratified on different lines. In this context, it can be said that just aspiration for realization of a certain goal is not sufficient. Although it is very much needed but realization of the aspiration (ends) is not possible without adequate means, i.e. resources. It has been found in our study that a great number of lowly placed families of this community do not have adequate resources to provide modern education to their children. As a result, they remain restricted to such occupations for which higher education is not a necessary qualification. The lack of educational atmosphere along with the poor educational background of the parents combined with economic hardships of these families has worked against their social mobility particularly educational mobility. Although higher status Muslim families are expending maximum of their income for imparting modern education to their children but they represent a very small portion of Calcutta Muslim society. Majority of the Muslim families in Calcutta are economically poor because of which expenditure on education does not have first or even second position in the monthly expenditure in most of these families. Muslim families with good economic background generally prefer private English medium schools. Affluent families
generally are against sending their children to madrasa as according to them madrasa education is irrelevant at present as the degrees and diplomas conferred by Islamic educational institutions are not considered as required qualification for recruitment in banking, health, civil services and many other government and private sector services. They even do not prefer Urdu medium schools. So a change is noticeable among the Muslims of Calcutta regarding the type of school in which they want to enroll their children for modern education. Irrespective of being a conservative community, a good number of Muslims families do not put objection to sending their children in co-educational schools. Muslims of Khidirpur locality particularly of higher classes are liberal in this regard than the Muslims of Rajabazar locality. Despite their living in a complex and dynamic metropolitan situation, the Muslims in Calcutta rigorously follow religious norms and practices. They would like to provide their children at least some basic religious education/knowledge. Majority of the Muslims particularly higher classes Muslims make arrangement in home to impart religious education to their children. Another major cause for this is the overlapping timings of these two types of schools. So generally one can not carry on with both types - one for religious and other for modern education. But in spite of all these difficulties and drawbacks, educated Muslims are found much in greater number now in the present generation than in the previous ones.

Change in attitude toward female education

The right notion of purdah, according to Islam, is that women should be modestly clothed when they come out in public. One of the major causes for female illiteracy or low educational level is conservatism which manifests itself through the observance of purdah. Our findings in this respect corroborate the observations made by Siddique (1984). Although there is no check in the movement of women within their localities but generally they are not permitted to go outside without purdah. Purdah poses lot of restriction on women’s development particularly on their educational achievement and taking up employment. We have observed this type of situation, to some extent, prevails among the Muslims of Calcutta. This type of restriction on women’s movement creates a conservative mindset which restricts their interaction not only with their community members but also with the larger society particularly with the females. A conservative
mind set and the prevalence of purdah together give birth to a situation of illiteracy or low educational level.

Location of schools plays an important role in educating the females. Although the situation is changing day by day but till now, particularly in a metropolitan environment, many Muslim families put restrictions on their female children as they prefer to send them to those schools/colleges which are situated within their localities. In this regard, Muslims of lower classes are more concerned. Still today male education is preferred by many Muslim families but gradually this situation is going through a change in these days as Muslims of younger generation support female education. They think that girls should be educated but they need not to be educated to the level of the boys. This type of mentality regarding female education is adversely affecting the Muslim women in particular and the Muslim society of Calcutta in general. Many Muslims of lower class think that females do not need service as they have enough household work. They also think that females will be married out, so expending money on them is misuse of money. So it has been observed in this study that lower class Muslims are the most conservative in the context of female education. Even those who are providing modern education to their daughters do not favour their employment. So a good percentage of the females remain unemployed in spite of their qualification. In this respect it can be said that in modern era one of the major factors for giving women freedom and security is to permit them to take up gainful employment. Segregation of women from the economic activities not only limits them in a low status but also they are demoted to an inferior social role. Muslim women are thus compelled to play a subordinate social role. We also have found that some parents permit female employment but restrict it to certain professions, mainly teaching profession. Except few, all of the employed women migrated to other localities for service and they enjoy higher status in their family and also in their society. So, the situation regarding women education and employment is going through a change particularly in the area of female education as many of our respondents opined that if the mother is educated, then imparting of education for the child becomes easy. So at present, education of the females plays an important role in the marriage negotiation or in their selection as brides.
Attitude towards traditional values

Marriage

Although Islam permits polygyny on reasonable situations but most of them do not like this type of marriage as a husband can not treat his wives equally. In such a situation, there is lot of quarrel and torture in the family. It has been found in this study that Muslims of lower classes, to some extent, favour polygyny than the Muslims of higher classes. Whereas at present, in comparison to the past, they are facing lots of problem in getting suitable matches for marriage. Unmatched educational level of the couple and their unequal social status; employment, ill health, lowly family income of the boy etc are some of the problems which the Muslims of Calcutta are facing acutely in these days. Presently higher status Muslim families give maximum credibility to educational achievement of a boy in his selection as son-in-law whereas in the past, family status of the boy was preferred most. But even now, lower status Muslim families prefer family status of the boy for this purpose. Earlier, in the selection of a girl as daughter-in-law, the most demanding criterion of the girl was her family status. But at present, education of the girl is highly preferred by higher status Muslim families while lower class Muslim families still now prefer family status of the girl in this regard. So it is understandable that there is a change in their attitude towards female education but the change is not so significant particularly among the lower class Muslims. Some changes in norms of marriages are noticeable recently among them which also influence the Muslim society of Calcutta. For instance, the fatwa of Dar-ul Uloom has given a formal seal of approval in favour of cyber marriages through teleconferences, email and voice mail for the marrying couple who are residing far away from each other to save their time and money (The Telegraph, 11 July 2007, p.7, Calcutta). At present women are also acting as Gawahs or witnesses to solemnize a nikah, a role which had always been the sole domain of men. Islamic scholars are permitting it as according to them there is nothing “un-Islamic” about women acting as Gawah (The Telegraph, 13 August 2007, p.4, Calcutta). Nowadays Muslim marriages are also being conducted by women qazi. Although Muslim religious leaders described such marriages as illegal as according to them a male qazi is authorized to solemnize the marriage but many Muslim religious scholars came forward...
to defend the practice of such type of marriage as female qazi is conducting the marriage in the presence of adequate number of male or female witnesses. So at present, there are several cases when convention of Muslim marriages is being contravened (The Telegraph, 14 August, 2008, p.4, Calcutta).

The age of marriage has been increasing for both male and females as it was found in this study that child marriage is virtually absent among them and even many times cases of late marriages are happening as there is a common understanding that marrying at proper age and also after being employed will help them to control their family size and to live comfortably.

**Family planning**

Generally there is a widespread belief that Indian Muslims do not prefer family planning. But it was observed in our study that they support family planning. Nowadays they are positively oriented to observe family planning including abortion. Generally, Islam does not like abortion. But it has been found that many Muslim families practice abortion on medical ground sometimes even for family planning as according to them Islam permits abortion on appropriate occasions. It has also been found in our study that females are ahead of males to favour small families. Educated and rich Muslims favour family planning. This fact is also corroborated in studies made by Jehangir, K.N. (1991); Mistry, Malika, (1995). Muslims of first generation who are more educated than their predecessors are the largest supporters of small families. Thus education plays a vital role in determining the size of family as it was found that educated Muslims prefer smaller families and the degree of support for family planning increases simultaneously with the increase in educational level. This observation agrees with the findings of Khan, M.E. (1979). So, at present family planning is widely practiced by the vast majority of the Muslims. But there still remains a misconception among many of them that family planning is unIslamic. The same observation was observed by Khan, M.E. (1979). And regarding the form of family planning, it can be said that although they generally use medicine, contraceptives but the self control method is the most popular form of family planning practiced by them.
Preference for male child

Although there is a change in their attitude of first choice for male child to female child as many were found to welcome the birth of girl child (same observation by Ashraf, Nehal, 1997) even many of them welcome the female child as “Lakshmi” (Hindu goddess of wealth) who may bring prosperity in the family but still now a good portion of Muslim population prefer male child and the main reason behind this attitude is maintenance of their family line. The preference for male child is found more in the lower classes Muslim families. This observation agrees with the study made by Brijbhushan, Jamila, (1980). The prevalence of dowry, purdah; the restricted movement of the females etc are some reasons for this preference. Some of them also mentioned that females can not help their family in economic crisis as generally they are not the earning members of the family.

Purdah

Muslim society is famous for purdah system. But although its prevalence is decreasing but purdah is still preferred by most of the Muslims. This corroborates the study made by Jamila Brijbhushan (1980). We have found that purdah results in isolation, seclusion and veiling for many Muslim women and it generates conservatism. Purdah debars a large number of women from economic activities outside the home (this observation agrees with that of the Peter Van Der Veer, 1996). Conservatism which originates from purdah observance also checks the educational advancement of Muslim women. It was observed that purdah is favoured more by the Muslims of Rajabazar locality than their counterparts of Khidirpur locality. Lower classes Muslims favour purdah much more than their counterparts of higher classes. Our study shows that the less educated Muslims are more attached to purdah than the higher educated Muslims which indicate that acquiring of higher education gradually decreases the magnitude of purdah observation. There are some reasons due to which the strictness of purdah observance has been reduced to a considerable extent in these days among them. Modernization is the most important factor which has played a vital role to bring change in their attitude in this respect. As it hinders education and employment of Muslim women and also it is due to the influence
of other communities, the strictness of purdah observance is gradually decreasing among them.

So, there is a substantial change in the extent of purdah observation. Rigidity of purdah is decreasing day by day. It is absent in many families though many more follow it with different magnitude - strict or partial. The partial observance of purdah has two forms - some families prefer it but due to modernization they observe it partially and the other form is that some families dislike observing it but social compulsion prompt to observe it to some extent. Less educated families are more prone to follow purdah. So it can be said that attainment of higher education gradually decreases the degree of strictness of purdah observation (similar observation was made by Khan, M.A., in his study of the Muslims of Aurangabad City, 1995). In this respect, the case of Papiya Sultan Alam of Calcutta can be specified here who was the first woman police officer from West Bengal through WBCS. After completing MBA she appeared in the police service. Her educated and liberal parents have always protected her from any type of social criticism. And after marriage her husband supported her working outside. Her in-laws are also very encouraging but in the beginning they had reservations on allowing her to wear trousers to work but after realizing that it is not possible for a police women officer to play her role efficiently wearing Kameez and dupatta they permitted her to go ahead. In this respect another example can be cited of the few Muslim girls of Khidirpur locality (Ekbalpur) who chose to become boxers in the face of severe criticism and opposition by the neighbours and relatives but who were able to carry it with because of the support of their parents (Debashis Bhattacharyya in The Telegraph, 2005, 26 June, Calcutta). We can mention here that Zubaida Khatoon, a 23 year-old Muslim girl is working as the first Muslim woman professional taxi driver on the streets of Calcutta (The Telegraph, 2008, 24 June, Calcutta). Muslim society in India progressively is going through a path of change in the area of women education as conservatism is loosing its hold day by day. In this respect it can be mentioned that the Nadwa-tul-Ulema, one of the India's oldest and most conservative institution of Islamic learning, has opened its doors to women for being trained to become muftis or jurists. Already some females have got admission in the course which is affiliated to this Islamic institution. In this regard, Islamic scholars

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rightly said that this initiative would go a long way in the emancipation of Muslim women as Maulvis have by tradition enjoyed monopoly over the right to issue fatwas, or religious decrees, which were often intended to curb women’s rights. All this could change once women become muftis and earn the right to issue their own fatwa (Tapas Chakraborty, The Telegraph, 2009, 16 July, Siliguri, p.1).

Talaq
Although Shariat approves talaq on reasonable grounds but most of the Calcutta Muslims dislike the observance of talaq. They think that it produces injustice to women and also it creates many associated problems to the concerned family. Particularly, the female respondents are most vocal against it as they are the worst sufferers. Muslims of Khidirpur locality are more against talaq than the Muslims of Rajabazar locality. Lower classes Muslims are against talaq in comparison to their counterparts of higher classes. Whereas Muslims belong to second generation are most vocal against talaq as they have to bear the burdens of talaq as most of them are the mothers/fathers of the divorced female. There are some cases of talaq but also some other cases were noticed from the female side when some Muslim females particularly from the lower rung of the society had walked out from their bad marriages. Reena Martins in her study in Mumbai metropolitan city has found some similar cases (The Telegraph, 2nd May 2006, Calcutta, p.15).

Maintenance for divorced women
Regarding maintenance of divorced women, the respondents have a divided opinion. Half and half is the response for favouring or disfavouring maintenance for the divorced Muslim women. Women are its supporters while majority of males are opponents of this provision. Muslims belonging to the first generation are to some extent good supporters of this provision in comparison to the members of other generations. Muslims of Rajabazar are more conservative in this respect in comparison to their counterparts of Khidirpur locality whereas Muslims of higher classes support the provision than the Muslims of lower classes.
Personal law

There is a negative attitude among the Muslims of Calcutta towards the enactment of uniform civil code in India. Only few are its supporters. Males are particularly vocal against it whereas a sizeable percent of the female population want its enactment as it may ensure equal status with the males. Muslims of Khidirpur are to some extent in a favourable mood than the Muslims of Rajabazar towards the enactment of the uniform civil code. From the point of view of class, it was found that lower class members are more against it than their counterparts in other classes.

Equal status in Muslim personal law

Although majority of the Muslims opined that Muslim personal law provides equal status to both Muslim males and females but one big section thinks that Muslim females have a subordinate position in the Muslim personal law. Muslim males and females hold just the opposite opinion in this regard as majority of the female respondents finds that Muslim personal law provides them unequal status against the males whereas majority of the males opines that Muslim personal law provides Muslim females an equal status as it provides to them.

Reformation of Muslim personal law

In such a situation, majority of the males wants to retain the existing Muslim personal law whereas a large number of the female respondents demand equal status in Muslim personal law. Therefore they want some needed reformation in it. But in general, there are more supporters for retaining the original form of the Muslim personal law. Muslims of Rajabazar in particular and Muslims of third generation in general are more conservative regarding the reformation of it. Class-wise analysis indicates that upper class Muslims are more liberal whereas Muslims of middle class are more traditional in this regard. It is a well known fact that reformation of Muslim personal law remains a contentious issue in spite of the Supreme Court Judgment on Shah Bano case in 1985. During our discussion on this issue, many of them even opined that the Mughal dynasty in particular and the Muslim rule in general in Indian subcontinent ruined due to the introduction of Din-E-Ilahi by Emperor Akbar. So, they are very much against any type
of reformation in the MPL. But we have also found that a sizeable Muslim population of Calcutta is in favour of some reform in Muslim personal law.

So from the above discussion, it can be briefly concluded that Muslims society of Calcutta has a heterogeneous nature in respect to their socio-cultural and economic attributes. Socially and culturally, they belong to different groups. Economically they can be classified into many categories and among which the lower class category is largely populated in the Muslim society of Calcutta. The present study has observed variation in their opinion and attitude towards several aspects of their socio-economic life. This study has found that economic condition largely determines the social and cultural aspects of human beings. We have found that the economic condition of the Muslims of Calcutta largely determine their opinion and attitudes towards social change. It is a fact that they belong to a tradition bound community so they are not so change oriented but it has been found in this study that several changes have been initiated by them but their differential attitudes and opinions towards social practices depend on their different class status.

Although the lower class Muslims are not so much change oriented as the Muslims of higher classes but they also want to be benefited by some of the modern changes. But their bad economic condition does not permit them to do so. So a paradoxical situation exists in their thinking and in their doings which leaves them in a frustrating situation from where some of them are trying their best to come out from this situation and they want to go ahead by means of hard labour. Others are living their lives in an accepted way of life that is with a disadvantaged and subordinated status in the society. All these happenings affect their relationship with the larger society. Their relationship with the larger society is harmonious but sometimes it is avoidance type which means a voluntary form of self-segregation. Sometimes this relationship is aggression type when they striking out against subordinate status by seeking redress for social injustice caused by discrimination.