CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Though 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' have lived together for centuries yet they have maintained separate identities. Concomitantly, there are many instances, where both communities have assimilated each other's beliefs and practices i.e., they have borrowed and adopted several cultural and structural features from each other. These range from various terminologies used in verbal and textual communication to high art. For example, the word 'Zat' is used by both communities to mean identity specifications based on birth (Madan 1989: 25). Apart from commonality of words of everyday use, many cultural similarities are also found. One instance is highlighted by D'Souza in his study of 'Moplas', where he expresses the view that "although the central and most important ceremony of a Muslim marriage is the ceremony of marriage contract called 'Nikah', for Moplas, this ceremony is not sufficient to enable the bridal couple to live as man and wife. The consummation of marriage can take place only after holding another function. This latter function is called 'Kalyanam'..." (D'Souza 1976: 157). Similarly, Ali (1976) also notes the custom of presentation (Joram), singing of songs by women (Bainam) and of the ritual purificatory baths given to bride and groom (Noani), all of which are easily comparable to similar customs observed by Hindus.

There are similarities at the structural level also. Ahmed (1976) points out that even in extra-familial kinship groupings there are striking similarities with Hindu practices. Examples
of commonality can also be found in the structure of joint family (Rizvi: 1976, Ahmed: 1976 & Conklin: 1976); in the opposition to preferential cousin marriage (Khatana: 1976, Aggarwal: 1976) and the prevalence of dowry (Aggarwal: 1976). These cultural and structural commonalties between these two communities imply a great degree of social interaction. It becomes pertinent at this juncture to analyse how differences between these two communities are organised? The reason is that it is the differences that demarcate the boundary. Furthermore, as de Sassure pointed out 'identity is wholly a function of differences within a system' (1974). What is relevant to ask in this regard is why differences need to be maintained? According to J. Donald, 'at psychic level, there is a fear....that without the known boundaries, everything will collapse in undifferentiated miasmic chaos, that identity will disintegrate, and that I will be suffocated or swamped' (1988). Even at community level differences help members in segregating 'us' from 'them'. It can be reasonably assumed then that difference is constitutive of identity' (Morley and Robins: 1995). In this regard, Madan (1981) and Mines (1976) assign an important role to religion as the structural basis for identity. Further, Madan in his study of Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir points out that for Hindus (represented by the single caste of Kashmiri Pundits) and Muslims (comprising a number of caste like groupings) it is through religion that difference is perceived.

However, Barth (1969:10) argues, 'boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information but do entail social
processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained’. He further notes, ‘ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance but quite on the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built. Interaction in such a social systems does not lead to its liquidations through change and acculturation; cultural differences persist despite inter-ethnic contact’. Barth’s model of ethnic identity has three basic elements. First, ethnic identities are based upon self-ascription and ascription by others. A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription, when it classifies a person in terms of his or her basic identity determined by origin and background. Second, the processes that generate social identity are more important than abstract social structures. This means focusing on what people do and how their actions help in generating identity. Third, rather than content of ethnic groups- the emphasis now shift towards the process of boundary maintenance and recruitment of members in an ethnic group. In the context of Hindu-Muslim interaction this implies that the notion of a community exists though the boundary separating them is osmotic rather than watertight. Then in social organization of difference, are all interactions across ethnic boundaries significant? It must be pointed here that not all interactions are equally significant. The reason is that all interactions across ethnic boundaries require rules that define the limits of interactions. Within these rules interactions are permitted with barest agreement about acceptable behaviour in common (see Jenkins 1996: 94).

In this context, how is similarity constructed? Specifically in the context of Hindu-Muslim interaction, how
do community members construct similarity within the community? Barth (1969) made a passing reference to the construction of similarity. He emphasized the importance of (a) shared overt diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity. Often such features are dress, language, form of house and general style of life. (b) Shared basic value orientation i.e., the standards of morality and excellence by which a person is judged. In other words, belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person and possessing a basic identity. It also implies a claim to be judged by members and to judge oneself by those standards that are relevant to that identity. With regard to Hindu and Muslim identities, Madan (1989) points out that through a series of shared cultural symbols including linguistic usages, dress, forms of salutation and other customs, distinctions are maintained. The distinctly shared cultural symbols of Hindus and Muslims respectively also project 'similarities' within communities.

In recent years, Anthony Cohen (1982, 1985 & 1986) has proposed a model of construction of collective identities which is symbolic in nature. His starting point is that 'community' encompasses similarity and difference. The sameness among 'us' and distinction from 'them'. This means that the sense of belonging to a community becomes most apparent at the boundary. Similarly, the recognition of culture and community arises from the awareness that things are done differently 'here' (among us) from 'there' (among them). Further, he elaborates that community is cultural. Hence, it is a mental and cognitive phenomenon. It does not exist in material sphere or in practical behaviour. Neither is community a structural
phenomenon. Rather it exists in the 'thinking' of community members. It is in this sense that community is a symbolic construct. Cohen cites three reasons for emphasizing the symbolic construction of community. First, symbols generate a sense of shared belonging. For example, shared rituals such as weddings or funerals can act as symbols of the community. Second, the term 'community' and its parallel in other languages is itself a symbolic construct. In the context of Hindu and Muslim relations terms such as 'Zat' connote boundary, hence also inclusion and exclusion. Third, community membership means sharing with other members a similar sense of things. In other words, there is participation in a common symbolic domain.

This does not mean total consensus on the meanings of symbols among community members. According to Cohen, 'what is actually held in common is not very substantial, being form rather than content. Content differs widely among (community) members' (Cohen 1985: 20). The significant aspect is their shared symbols which allow community members to believe that they belong to one community. Following the above argument, symbols of either Hindu or Muslim community have different meanings for various castes and biradaris (subdivision among Muslims) respectively. Therefore, the ceremony of Mundan (tonsure of head) may have different connotations for the Brahmins than to Kewats. Similarly, ceremony of Hakika (christening a child) may be perceived very differently by Sheikhs than it would be by Qureshis. However, in both cases, such ceremonies enable members to believe that they belong to Hindu or Muslim community. At the same time participation in such ceremonies
by different castes or biradaris project an appearance of agreement and consensus within the community. This means that there are two levels in the symbolic construction of a community. First, construction of a community through language, dress, ritual and other material forms. Second, through participation in symbolic domain, which is virtual. In other words, it is by 'thinking' about the community through the symbols that helps community members in constructing the image of the community. Furthermore, it is through participation in common symbolic domain that boundaries for members and non-members are constructed and emphasized. However, for the members the boundary symbolizes the community in two ways: (a) member’s sense of people’s perception outside the boundary i.e. public face; and (b) their own sense of community derived from their life and experience i.e. private face. For community members it is their own perception of community and not of people’s perception outside the boundary, which symbolize community. It is in this way that community is in thinking than in material sphere or in actual behaviour. This means that symbolic construction of community is the product of processes of boundary maintenance. That is, the social construction of (external) difference helps in symbolic construction of (internal) similarity.

Up till now, we have discussed identity, which is constructed through interaction with the other community. However, the individual is the basic unit of interaction. Community whether of Hindus or of Muslims, is generated out of interaction. This interaction could be within the community boundary or across the boundary. It then becomes important
to discuss the individual’s identity within the given social structure of Hindu or Muslim community.

The basic question of identity for individual is 'how social structure affects self and how self affects social behaviour'? This question is inspired by 'structural symbolic interactionism'. In this framework, society is seen as consisting of durable patterned interactions and relationships which are differentiated, yet organized. These interactions and relationships are embedded in an array of groups, organizations, communities and institutions. These are intersected by crosscutting boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, gender, religion and other variables. In addition, individuals are seen as living their lives in small and specialized networks of social relationships, through roles that support their participation in such networks (Stryker & Burke: 2000). These networks are embedded in social structures of the community. It is the social structure that determines the probability of an individual entering into a network of social relations. The influence of social structure becomes more significant when interaction is across the community boundary. The reason is that rules for such interactions cannot be laid. In such situations, the social structure of a community defines the limit of interaction. This is especially so with regard to Hindu-Muslim interactions in a rural setting.

Given the influence of social structure, the issue is why an individual chooses one course of action over another, when there is choice in behaviour associated with more than one position in network of social relationship? Stryker (1968 &1980) mentions that an individual’s choice depend upon two
factors. The first is the salience of an identity. This is understood in terms of the chance that an identity would be invoked in a variety of situations. The higher the salience of an identity over other identities, the greater is the probability of behavioural choice in accordance with that identity to be followed. The second issue is that of commitment to an identity. This refers to the degree to which a person's relationship with the other in a network depends on possessing a particular identity. The cost of commitment to an identity is measured by the cost of losing meaningful relationships with others. This means that though an individual possesses many selves depending upon the context and whom they interact with, yet the behavioural choice depends upon salience of and commitment to a particular identity. In case of Hindu and Muslim identity this means that course of action would depend upon his or her commitment to community identity. The salience of identity for a Hindu and a Muslim would depend upon his choice of action vis-à-vis his commitment to that identity.

Identities have role expectations attached to it. Identities are also internalized role expectations. Stryker (1980) points out that role expectations are attached to each social position in a network of relationships. An individual's choice of course of action depends upon the role expectation attached to an identity. In addition to the aforementioned, the role expectation of an identity also determines the individual's choice of course of action. This is true even for the interaction between Hindu and Muslim community. The discussion so far points out that identity not only involves 'attributes' but also 'relations'. It is important to mention that attributes are
intrinsic characteristics of people, community, objects and events. However, relations exist only when two or more entities are considered together (Knoke and Kuklinski: 1982). Relations are not intrinsic characteristic of either party taken in isolation, but an emergent property of connections and linkages between entities. Hence, identities are not simply given (attribute based), rather it is continually constructed and reconstructed through interaction with others.

**The Study**

The main objective of this research work is to analyse the given and constructed identities of Hindus and Muslims in the rural setting of Uttar Pradesh. In a rural setting, the life conditions for Hindus and Muslims are similar in many ways inspite of individual variations. Further, the pressures of the everyday routine behaviour increase the possibility of interaction between both communities. This possibility ranges from being next-door neighbours to helping one another in crisis situations. Such high levels of interaction have led some scholars to believe that there is more commonality in cultural practices of Hindu and Muslim communities than differences. Hence, there exists a common identity. However, others believe that it is the difference at the structural level which determines the interaction. In which case, an enquiry into the cultural overlaps between Hindus and Muslims in rural area has been carried out? Where and when do difference come to the fore? In other words, in which sphere of interaction differences arise due to identity? Obversely, in which areas do differences become the basis of identity? Moreover, how much choice does a Hindu or a Muslim individual have in deciding
the course of action? This becomes particularly important when the social structure of the community defines the limit of interaction.

In this study, Hindu and Muslim identities will be analyzed at the level of the commonalities and differences in the social structure and cultural practices of the both communities. The areas of enquiry include:

- Structure of family
- Rites of passage
- Marriage
- Education
- Occupation

The issues included in the structure of family are its size, form and existing property relations. Further, preferred size as well as form of the family have also been analysed for both the communities. Rituals associated with birth, religious initiation and death has been dealt within rites of passage. Analysis of systems of marriage ceremonies includes endogamy, genealogical purity and the prevalence of dowry. Though 'marriage' is part of rites of passage but here it has been examined separately. The reason is that marriage by itself signifies a wide range of cultural practices and social interactions of a community. Education has been investigated through the system of schooling, the kind of education and aspirations of parents. Similarly, pattern of occupation within both communities has also been delved into. This includes occupations that are caste/biradari based, the extent of
agriculture as a livelihood and of occupations other than working on land. In rural setting, education and occupation are two aspects where there are always certain amount of gap in existing and preferred levels. This feature of education and occupation has also been analysed at the community level. Finally, the status of women in both communities has been compared using the data from all the aforementioned areas of enquiry.

Second, the identity of an individual has been analysed (a) by looking at the interaction pattern and (b) by mapping an individual's choice of interactants in different situations using the social network approach. The assumption underlying this analysis is that all individuals in all circumstances make choices in deciding the course of action to maximize their benefit. In the context of this study, a Hindu or a Muslim individual selects interacting partner in everyday situations. Their choice depends upon the perceived amount of utility they can get out of an interaction. However, there are various external factors which influence the choice of individuals. For the analysis of interaction patterns, a hypothetical utility function model has been constructed. Interaction data collected during fieldwork has been analysed on the basis of that model. The unit of analysis in this case is community and castes/biradaris.

As we just said social network analysis techniques have been used to map individual's choice of interactants in various empirical situations. These situations are economic (agriculture and non-agricultural occupations) and political (local election and panchyat cases). Social interaction is
mapped for various crisis situations such as familial crisis, medical crisis or immediate/intermediate crisis. In addition, networks of friendship have also been analysed. Respondents were asked to name five close friends along with their caste/biradari. The objective was to collect data on non-institutionalized interaction pattern. In other words, it was intended to collect data on those interactions which are outside the ambit of routinised interaction based on caste/biradari, class and community membership. So that difference, if any, between institutionalized and non-institutionalized interaction could be highlighted.

**METHODODOLOGY**

This study is based on primary data collected through fieldwork and on secondary sources. Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques have been used for data collection. In qualitative method, two approaches were employed to collect data from the field. An interview schedule was administered to collect facts and opinions of respondents on structural features of both the community. Information on customs and rituals associated with various cultural practices were also gathered. This was designed to highlight the commonalities and differences in structural features as well as cultural practices of both communities. The areas covered in the interview schedule were structure of the family, distribution of ancestral properties, rites of passage, education and occupation, apart from socio-demographic profile of the respondents. Recordings of interview were not resorted to, as most often respondents became apprehensive about the motive of interviews. Extensive notes were prepared
after each interview. I have tried to be as objective as one can be during the process. However, I cannot rule out the possibility my own personal biases creeping in notes. During the initial days of fieldwork, in village Mani Kalan, snowball technique was used to reach respondents. However, once villagers accepted me as a researcher, respondents were selected by using stratified random sampling technique. However, snowball technique was not employed in second village (Samdaha). The reason was that both villages are not very far off from each other. Further, village Mani Kalan has a big market, so people from Samdaha come for shopping. Some people from Samdaha also had shops in this village. This made people of Samdaha aware that someone has come form Delhi, who is conducting interviews with people. The sample size for village Mani Kalan is 112 and for Samdaha 116. The total sample size for interview schedule is 228 respondents.

The other approach used as qualitative research technique was that of participant observation. During the entire fieldwork, I stayed in the very same village where I was collecting data. This gave me an opportunity to be part of the village life and make observation as an insider. Initially a certain level of reluctance was there as villagers were somewhat apprehensive of my presence. Later on, when they were convinced about the purpose of my stay, they even invited me on occasions such as caste panchyat meetings for settlement of marital discord, in marriages and for distribution of ancestral property. I was also invited to Nautanki (cultural expositions). I made visits to the village Haat (weekly bazaar) as well. The initial motive of staying in
the village was to conduct interview as per the time availability of the respondents. It was only later on that participant observation method was adopted to collect data. One of the objectives of using participant observation method was to capture the nuances of interaction between Hindus and Muslims in everyday life, which was not coming across in the in-depth interviews. This is true as in the case of joking relationship between many Hindus and Muslims or the behaviour of Hindus in a Muslim marriage or vice versa. Though questions on marriage were there in the structured interview schedule, however answers to such questions were always ideal in nature. Only through participant observation it became clear that there is certain gap between the responses to the questionnaire and actual behaviour. One of the benefits of using both these qualitative methods was to crosscheck the validity of data collected through the interview schedule.

The data collected through qualitative methods were quantified and calculated to get aggregate percentages. The unit of analysis for such data was caste/biradari and at the larger level, the community. The findings from quantitative method are justified by responses of 'why' questions. For example, the preference for type of family has been quantified on the basis of preference for 'nuclear' or 'joint' family. The reasons cited for preference has been used to substantiate the findings of the qualitative methods.

The interaction between Hindus and Muslims has been analysed at the inter- and intra-community level. In other words, interaction between different castes of Hindus and biradaris of Muslims has also been analysed, apart from
interaction between Hindu and Muslim community. The underlying hypothesis is that the hierarchical position of a caste/biradari influences the interaction across the community boundary? For example, does Khan/Pathan biradari have more interaction with Rajputs? Or do Brahmins have more interaction with Sheikhs? During fieldwork it was observed that many Hindus and Muslims who have the same hierarchical position in their own community had less number of prohibitions in their interactions. One got the impression that the hierarchical position of an individual belonging to other community determines the level of inter-community interaction. So Rajputs would have more open interaction with Khans/Pathans than with Qureshis. I came across instances where Khans/Pathans were permitted even in the kitchens of Rajputs. This analysis has been done on the basis of analytical model, discussed above.

At the second level, the interaction in specific situations between both communities has been analysed. For this purpose social network method has been used. An individual's interaction in specific situations has been mapped on the basis of this data. These maps indicate the position of an individual within the network of relations. The connectivity of an individual within a network determines the importance of individual within a particular social network. This in turn decides the access of individual to resources. Individuals then behave as the nodal point for the flow of resources. This gives them power to decide the direction and future of interaction. In this regard it is important to mention that direction of interaction is determined by access to resources. Hence, persons with fewer resources would initiate the interaction in
most of the situations. Such interaction would generally terminate at persons with more resources. In other words, persons with more access to resources becomes the 'node' who determine the identity of other person in interaction.

Data on interaction between Hindu and Muslim was collected during second visit to the field. For this purpose a supplementary interview schedule was prepared. This had list of situations such as rites of passage, marriage, occupation, education and various crisis situations. Respondents were asked to name and categorize the persons they interact with in such situations. By category of persons I meant neighbours (residential or occupational), kins, distant relatives, persons of own caste/biradari, persons from other caste/biradari (upper or lower), village elders, employer and friends. If the names and categories were more than one then order of preference was enquired into. Then the person named in the supplementary questionnaire was asked the same thing. If they also named the first person as interacting partner then interaction was considered reciprocal otherwise unidirectional and/or asymmetrical. At this point it is important to point out that supplementary questionnaire was administered only to ten respondents from each class i.e. upper, middle and lower class.

Though both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in this study, yet methodological limitations surfaced. First, the sample has a genderwise skewness. Despite developing a rapport with villagers, it was very difficult to interview female respondents of any age group. The reason was that though women interacted with men living in
their village, but neither the Hindu nor the Muslim women were permitted to talk to strangers. Further, even middle and lower caste/biradari and class women were also not allowed to talk with me, though they use to go out of their homes to work in fields. Hence, one cannot say that 'Purdah' was an issue at least with middle and lower caste/biradari and class women. In a total sample of 228 respondents there are only five females.

Second, in quantitative data collection for social network analysis, people were not willing to reveal the names of people who they interact with for any kind of economic support. The reasons were: (a) Taking loan or help for any purpose is considered an dishonorable act by people. The usual response to such questions would be to mention the category of people such as neighbours, relatives or kins, but without naming them; (b) Respondents were of the view that once I know the name I would ask that person about the same. This will not only bring disrepute to that person, but would spoil relation between them. It was only after lot of persuasion that respondents divulged the name of the person.

Third, my stay in villages for participant observations had its own shortcomings. After a few weeks in the villages, villagers accepted me as one of them. Thereafter being asked for interviews became a status symbol for the villagers. So people started coming on their own to be part of the study. In other words, they wanted to be interviewed. Refusal was not acceptable to them. As villagers would complain "what is my fault, why I am not being interviewed". Selection of respondents as per the pre-determined criteria became
difficult. In such a situation the only alternative left was to postpone the fieldwork in that village and move to another village, and then restart the fieldwork in first village after sometime. This led to a break in the continuity of fieldwork.

Fourth, the 'Tola' (colony) of my stay in the villages had important bearing on the quality of responses. For example, in village Mani Kalan I was staying in a colony dominated by lower caste/biradari people. Respondents from upper caste/biradari would associate me as belonging to lower caste/biradari. They were curious as to why I should be staying with Jahil (illiterate) and Gawar (rustic) people. The response in a majority of cases were aimed at blaming the lower caste/biradari for all social ills. Some also questioned me for interviewing such people. They believed that in any case people from lower caste/biradari would not have answered most of the questions. In village Samdaha I was staying in upper caste colony. Upon knowing this fact the responses of middle and lower caste respondents were mostly keeping with the normative framework. They hesitated in freely expressing their opinion. One solution to this problem was to change place of stay after completing the interviews with one caste/biradari but it was not possible to do so because of non-availability of rented accommodation in rural areas. Last but not the least, under or over reporting by respondents cannot be ruled out in any survey.
**The Sequencing of Chapters**

**The Setting:** The following chapter deals with the setting in which this study is located. In the first section, the demographic, economic and social features of both the villages have been analysed. In this section asset based class positions of respondents have been calculated. This has been done to validate the nexus of caste/biradari with class position. However, this in no way denies the fact that there are a few lower caste people who are rich, and vice versa. The second section of this chapter deals with the relations of agricultural production. Other relations of production have not been analysed because they are in very small numbers in the both villages. Existence of sub-social system at the level of ‘Tolas’ has been analysed in this section too.

**Commonalities and Differences between Hindus and Muslims:** For the analysis of commonalities and differences in structural features and cultural practices of Hindu and Muslim community the chapter has been divided into several sections. Each deals with different aspects of structural features and cultural practices. This chapter deals with family and kinship, rites of passage, marriage, education, occupation and the status of women. It is important to point out that discussion on the status of women is based on the data collected for aforementioned aspects of community.

**Social Interaction: An Analytical Model:** In this chapter an analytical model has been constructed to examine the interaction pattern between Hindus and Muslims. Intra community interaction have also been analysed using this
model. This model is based on an individual's choice of a course of action in different social situations. The influence of ascriptive attributes on an individual's choice of a course of action has been considered while constructing the model. Data collected on interaction in different situations has been then analysed on the basis of the model. Finally, analysis has also been carried out to understand the influence of hierarchical position of caste/biradri in interaction across community boundaries.

The Net-Working: Various types of network of relations existing in different social situations have been analysed. Social network method has been used to scrutinize the interaction in different social situations. This chapter has been divided into three sub-chapters that examine networks based on economic, political and social interactions. Each sub-chapter has, further been divided into various sections. The unit of analysis in this chapter is the individual. However the result is presented as an aggregate of individuals' responses. That is, responses have been categorized in different classes i.e. upper, middle and lower class. In this regard, it is important to point out that the mapping has been done for ten respondents from each class.

Overlapping Distinctions: This chapter sums up the study by collating the findings of different chapters. Further, it tries to paint the dynamics of cultural identity of Hindus and Muslims in rural Uttar Pradesh. 'Overlapping distinctions' between Hindu and Muslim community in rural setting have been analysed in this chapter. Finally there is a section on the future directions and limitations of this study.