CHAPTER-VIII

CONCLUSION

The researcher felt academically obliged to study the level of social development among Sur japuri Muslims with particular reference to the states of Bihar and West Bengal. There exists a correlation between social development and religion especially in a multi-religious society like India. The study provides an insight into the socio-economic circumstances of one of the grossly marginalised sections of Indian society. Sur japuri Muslims were chosen to empirically study the developmental status of Indian Muslims because development differentials prevail between and among the Sur japuri Muslims vis-a-vis their Hindu folks in the same region, despite the fact that geographical and natural similarities are found in this eastern part of India. This development differential may largely be attributed to the state specific policies and programmes of the state governments of Bihar and West Bengal.

The sources of data are primarily secondary. However, empirical village studies have been conducted to reinforce the secondary data. Sur japuri Muslims are small agricultural community who were a part of the undivided Purnea district of Bihar. The researcher has devoted a full chapter IV to give a historical account of the region. Muslim rule, early European settlers in Purnea, British rule, partition of the country, post-independence rule, state reorganization; all these events have affected the life and social development of Sur japuri Muslims in a number of ways. Therefore, a full chapter has been devoted to record the salient features. The researcher has largely relied on the available historical records and
published material. The present work provides a detailed ethnographic profile of the Surjapuri Muslims in chapter V.

We resorted to participant observation which is of paramount importance for an exploratory research design of a study like this. Participant observation helps the researcher to gather sufficient first hand information from the respondents. The researcher encountered the two kinds of problems that is accessibility of and acceptability by the people under study.

A comprehensive village schedule was prepared to elicit the required response on community level variables. Focussed group discussions and interviewing technique proved to be very effective in collecting information relating to the social economic and political status of the people and infrastructural facilities available in the villages.

Hindus are a significant majority in all states except in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab where Muslims and Sikhs respectively outnumber them. Out of the fourteen major states, Christians are found in a substantial percentage in Kerala only. Muslims are found to be dwelling relatively more in urban areas than in the rural areas. Muslims are mostly self-employed and their share in regular paid jobs is very low. Hindu population is more employed in regular employment in urban areas. The work participation of Muslim women is extremely low. The landholding is relatively better among the Hindus than the Muslims. Besides, Muslims work in non-agricultural occupation in substantial proportion in the countryside. Muslims are the least educated of all when compared with Hindu and Christian population in India. Muslim women are the least educated of all the possible categories. Although, the Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) compares well between the Hindus and
Muslims in rural areas, yet it is highly lopsided favouring Hindus in the urban areas. On the whole, the Muslims are socio-economically worse off in all parts of the country. The deprivation in socio-economic development is more acute in Muslims than in Hindus but the degree of disparity is not uniform across states in magnitude as well as in direction.

Muslim males perform as good as or better than Hindu males in some states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujrat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Indicators for Muslim females inch very close to the corresponding indicators of development for Hindu females in these states except in Gujrat. Particularly, in Andhra Pradesh, Muslims seem to be better off than Hindus albeit, slightly. Kerala stands out as a unique state in the sense where the differences were very large in the past but have narrowed down recently. However, in the northern and eastern regions Muslims appear to be far behind than Hindus in educational attainment.

Three broad regions may be identified: Southern and Western states with Muslims level higher or about the same as Hindus and northern-central-eastern states in which Muslims fare very poorly. Madhya Pradesh is closer to the southern-western pattern than the northern-central-eastern region. At the extreme are Punjab, Haryana and north-eastern region with very high disparity.

When the performance of Muslims is compared in the states of Bihar and West Bengal (which fall in the eastern region), the relative position of Muslims in terms of educational status is better in Bihar than that in West Bengal. Educational status of Muslim females is better in Bihar than in West Bengal. Similarly, at the national level, economic development of Muslims is generally below the level of the Hindus. But
the pattern of differentials is not uniform across the states. The disparity is moderate in Bihar whereas it is moderately high in West Bengal.

Comparative sociology requires a study to be organically integrated with the upper and lower hierarchical levels of a sociological phenomenon, in order to become a truly genuine comparative study. It is more so of paramount importance when a comparative study is undertaken in sociology of development. The subject chosen by the researcher is a combination of comparative sociology and sociology of development. The development level of the sociological group of Surjapuri Muslims inhabiting the two geographically and administratively distinct entities cannot be ascertained without its comparison with the upper hierarchical level of the states of Bihar and West Bengal and India as a whole. Significantly, the development status of Surjapuri Muslims of the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal) cannot be evaluated without empirically investigating the grassroots level realities at the village and household levels. Four village studies two each in both the districts were undertaken by the researcher to make an intra district comparison of a single religious group living in two different geographical and administrative realms. The development level has further been compared with another religious group with a view to making it more objective and scientific.

It has been observed that Bihar is one of the most backward states of India in terms of education, health, income and consumption. Per capita income and consumption in Bihar ranks the lowest among all the states and Union Territories. Incidence of poverty is astronomically high. Consequently Bihar gets a very low score in terms of material wellbeing and literacy.
The state of West Bengal, though maintaining an average level of social development, is much below several other states. Various scholars have ranked the different states according to their level of social development. Shiv Kumar and Tilak have ranked Bihar as low as 14th whereas Pal and Panth have ranked it as a 15th state in terms of development. West Bengal has been rated as an average state according to composite index of social development. Shiv Kumar and Pal and Panth have accorded a relative position of 7th to the state of West Bengal while Tilak has assigned the 8th rank to it.

West Bengal where about 8 per cent of the Indian population lives has remained one of the poor states of India. Approximately 27.6 per cent of the population in the state of West Bengal lives below the poverty line. Per capita income is as low as Rs. 1946 only. The position of the state in terms of per capita consumer expenditure is also very pathetic. Incident of poverty in West Bengal is slightly lower at 27.6 per cent. However, the rate of decline in incidence of poverty is higher than the country as a whole. Despite this the state still gets a low score in human development in terms of material wellbeing.

The overall enrollment rate for the state of Bihar is slightly higher (72.68 per cent) than that of West Bengal (69.09 per cent). In both the states the enrollment rate is higher for boys than girls. It is 94.23 per cent (Bihar) and 76.3 per cent (West Bengal) for boys whereas it is 50.90 per cent (Bihar) and 61.47 per cent (West Bengal) for girls. It is also clearly discernible that enrollment rate in Uttar Dinajpur (52.95 per cent) is much lower than that of Kishanganj (71.19 per cent). The developmental attainment of Surjapuri Muslims has comparatively been assessed on the
parameter of enrollment rate, in relation to the Hindus as well as respective districts and states.

The dropout rate in the states of Bihar (65.53 per cent) and West Bengal (63.22 per cent) as well as in the districts of Kishanganj (64.39 per cent) and Uttar Dinajpur (59.89 per cent) is quite high. The relatively low dropout rate in Uttar Dinajpur may probably be attributed to its low enrollment rate. The various reasons for high dropout rate include: economic deprivation of the family, compulsion for the child to go to work to supplement family income, lack of financial provision to support education, indifference towards education due to lack of educational background among the members of the last few generations, child labour being more remunerative, school curricula are not attractive, absence of provision for mid-day meal.

The estimated value of mean years of primary school in Bihar and West Bengal is almost equal at 2.54 and 2.47 years respectively. The value mean year for boys is higher than that of girls in both the districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur. Uttar Dinajpur maintains the dubious distinction of being at the lowest ebb among all the districts of West Bengal in terms of mean year of primary schooling. The teacher-student ratio for Bihar in 1986-87 was 60 and for West Bengal it is 41. Besides, the teacher-student ratio is 72 for the district of Kishanganj and 32 for the district of Uttar Dinajpur which indicates towards better quality of teaching in Uttar Dinajpur. However, better teacher-student ratio may be because of low enrollment rate in Uttar Dinajpur.

The district of Uttar Dinajpur has higher literacy rate (39.29 per cent) than Kishanganj (22.22 per cent). It is 49.79 per cent among the males and 27.87 per cent among the females in Kishanganj. Uttar
Dinajpur is placed at 33.12 per cent for males and 10.38 per cent for females. Nevertheless, in both the districts illiterates outnumber literates both among males and females. In Bihar only 26 per cent of the rural population has a primary school within the village whereas 79.71 per cent of rural population has a primary school within habitation in West Bengal. These figures are 18.64 per cent and 82.31 per cent for the district of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur respectively. Geographical proximity of school seems to have much influence on realized enrollment and literacy rates. This is not to say that socio-economic factors do not play their role in enrollment and literacy rates.

Education is a major catalyst to bring about socio-economic and techno-cultural changes in society. Education affects quality of life and enables to derive the maximum benefit out of the prevailing conditions. The social development of Surjapuri Muslims of the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal) can be stated to be satisfactory to a great extent when they fare better on this important dimension of education. The researcher has analysed the development of Surjapuri Muslims on the basis of enrollment rate, dropout rate, mean year of schooling, level of literacy, teacher-student ratio, availability and geographical proximity of schools.

The state of medicare facilities in the district of Uttar Dinajpur is better than that of Kishanganj. This is depicted by the number of hospitals and dispensaries administering the allopathic system of treatment. Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur have 4 and 7 hospitals and 97 and 20 dispensaries respectively. Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur are equally placed in relation to each other, but they are far better than their respective states when the number of hospital beds available is
considered. The position of Kishanganj is worse than Uttar Dinajpur if the absolute number of welfare centers is taken into consideration but they are similar when the number of welfare centre per lakh of population in both the districts is comparatively studied.

Health facilities in the district of Kishanganj in terms of the number of sub-centers, primary health centers and community health centers serving per lakh of population are far greater than the facilities available in Uttar Dinajpur. However, the quality of health services may not comparatively be assessed on the basis of available data which are far inadequate for the purpose. Leaving aside the condition of both the districts vis-a-vis their respective states, the situation of the districts of Uttar Dinajpur is better than that of Kishanganj when the number of doctors and paramedical personnel is independently taken into account.

Growth rate of population in Uttar Dinajpur is higher than the corresponding growth rate for Kishanganj. Though, growth of population is influenced by fertility and mortality rates which are contingent upon health care facilities, women in the child bearing age, knowledge and attitude of couples, contraceptive use, yet the growth pattern of population in these districts merit an independent study in the light of alleged migration and infiltration across the Bangladesh border.

Number of females per thousand males is 933 and 929 in Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur respectively. The sex ratio is higher than not only from the states of Bihar and West Bengal but also from India as a whole. This higher ratio may conveniently be attributed to the religious values of Islam which create positive attitude toward girl child. In fact the mean age at marriage for girls for the states of Bihar and West Bengal and for both the districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur is lower by
approximately 2 years than the legally prescribed marriageable age of 18 years in the country. The incidence of child marriage is greater in Bihar than in West Bengal consequently, the district of Kishanganj is worse than Uttar Dinajpur when it is assessed on the parameter of child rights.

The state of West Bengal fares better than the state of Bihar when looking into crude birth rate, crude death rate, infant mortality rate and life expectancy at birth. On the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) index, state of Bihar has the value of 5.2 which is higher than the national average of 4.9. The TFR for West Bengal is 4.3 which is lower than the national average. The district of Kishanganj stands ahead of Uttar Dinajpur in population stabilization.

The per capita income of Bihar is the lowest among all the states whereas West Bengal lags behind 13 states and Union Territories in terms of per capita income. In both Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur economic activities are not much diversified. Hence, the workers engaged as cultivators and agricultural labourers account for more than 80 per cent of the total main workers. The total dependency ratio for Bihar and West Bengal is 94.2 per cent and 79.86 per cent respectively. However, the same for Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur is 2 per cent and 8 per cent higher than the total dependency ratio for their respective states as a whole.

The relative level of development of West Bengal as measured against the index of development constructed by Council for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) is much better than that of Bihar. The districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur are found to be equally developed on this scale. However, the district of Kishanganj is in much better condition
than Uttar Dinajpur when they are compared in relation to the level of development of their respective states.

West Bengal is more densely populated than Bihar, likewise Uttar Dinajpur has also higher density population than Kishanganj. The level of urbanization in West Bengal is pretty higher than Bihar and Uttar Dinajpur is also more urbanized than Kishanganj. Both the districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur have 4.78 and 4.64 number of banks per lakh population which is much less than the national average and the average of their respective states of Bihar and West Bengal. Fertilizer consumption per hectare is higher in West Bengal (95 Kg.) than in Bihar (58 Kg.). Fertilizer consumption per hectare is very low in Uttar Dinajpur which shows the pathetic level of agricultural development.

It can be generalized that West Bengal is far ahead of Bihar in terms of education, health and material wellbeing of population. Bihar has higher enrollment rate than West Bengal but that is offset by higher dropout rate. The level of development of West Bengal is higher than that of Bihar in most of the parameters.

The district of Uttar Dinajpur has material wellbeing decidedly better placed than Kishanganj. However, Kishanganj is more developed in most of the other indicators of social development in areas such as health, agricultural development, urbanization etc.

Paradoxically, Uttar Dinajpur is ahead of Kishanganj in education and material wellbeing but it pathetically lags far behind the overall level of development of West Bengal. The researcher concentrated his focus on the study of social development of Surjapuri Muslims inhabiting the two districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur with the help of village studies.
Their level of development has comparatively been studied in relation to the Hindu community of these two districts.

It may conclusively be stated on the basis of the village studies conducted by the researcher that keeping in line with West Bengal being better developed than Bihar, the Hindu dominated Nandojhar Village of Uttar Dinajpur is the most developed of all the villages under study. The Muslim dominated Singha Village of Kishanganj ranks second on the relative index of development of all the four villages. Hawaldanga, the Hindu dominated village of Kishanganj is poorly developed and ranks third among all the four villages undertaken for the study.

Paradoxically enough, though West Bengal is far ahead of Bihar and its district of Uttar Dinajpur is also better placed in terms of education and material wellbeing than Kishanganj of Bihar, yet the Muslim dominated Gaisal Village of Uttar Dinajpur is the least developed in all dimensions of all the four villages which were studied. The relative better development level of West Bengal has not trickled down to this village of Surjapuri Muslims i.e., Gaisal of Uttar Dinajpur.

However, the developmental disparities cannot summarily be explained wholly on the basis of religious affiliations. A more valid explanation may be explored in terms of the socio-economic policies of state Governments and the Central Government. Geographic and demographic factors and peoples participation in decision making may also be revealed when further such studies are undertaken.

The researcher hypothesises that the relative deprivation and lower level of development of Surjapuri Muslims of Uttar Dinajpur is because of the adoption and formulation of the socio-economic policies of the
state Government concerned which do not result into equitable and egalitarian development of all the sections of society.

It is, at the last, recommended that formalistic socio-economic policies and their particularistic enforcement for the benefit of a dominant social group at the cost of a section of society which is already marginalised to a great extent, are to be stringently done away with. Otherwise, it may result into accumulation of discontent and frustration among the persecuted and the dispossessed which is extremely harmful for the wellbeing of the nation.