CHAPTER-II
RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Research design is generally meant for setting up the research in such a way as to derive systematic and logically sound conclusion. Among its various aims, one of the important aim is to decide the data to be collected, the sample to be selected and the manner in which the collected data to be organised, and this is all for the purpose for providing conclusive answer to the problem posed as well as to economize the research.

As researches differ in terms of purposes, so designing of research can not be uniform. Some researches may aim at exploring and describing phenomena while others may involve diagnostic and experimental objectives. An exploratory research is mainly concerned with gaining familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it, often in order to generate data or to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses. Whereas descriptive studies aim at portraying the characteristics of a particular situation or group or individual (with or without specific initial hypotheses about the nature of these studies). An exploratory study would always be descriptive. While descriptive study may not necessarily be exploratory. Diagnostic study involves the purpose of determining frequency with which it is associated with something else (usually but not necessarily), with a specific initial hypothesis. And the objective of experimental study is testing a hypothesis of casual relationship between variables.¹

This study is broadly concerned with exploring the level of social development among the Surjapuri Muslims. A comparative study of the community in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur
(West Bengal has been undertaken. This has been done since, there exist extreme similarity among the Surjapuri Muslims in terms of natural resources and cultural and historical factors cross cutting political boundaries. The differentials in social development among this group can largely be attributed to the State specific policies and programmes of the respective state governments. Being a study of a community which has hitherto remain unexplored, it may be called an exploratory and descriptive study.

Social development is often conceptualized at the national or the state level. Various indicators developed for its measurement are useful for cross-national comparisons but rarely give an idea of variations within a country. However, since in India disaggregation to the State level has been possible at least for the major states for which relevant data are available, regional variations have been observed. But there are variations within states as well. In addition to spatial variations (rural-urban, inter-district, inter-agro-climatic zones), differentials have been observed across social groups, notably, religion and caste groups.

Religion has been a major factor in social stratification. Though predominantly Hindu, India has a large Muslim Population. In addition to theological differences, there are variations in lifestyles and political and historical factors that would have created differentials in education, occupation and other economic conditions among populations belonging to various religions.²

Social restrictions and degree of discrimination on account of religion may be attributable, at least in part, to cultural and historical factors and hence could differ from region to region or state to state. Besides, in the multi-tiered structure of governance in India, it is the state government, rather than the central government that has a major
responsibility in the social sector. Therefore, the policies and programmes of the state governments are expected to play an important role in social development. The delivery systems as well as the efficiency of programme administration could also vary across states.3

Thus, inter-state variations in both the level and the social group differentials in human development are plausibly caused by differences in natural resources, cultural and historical factors and state specific policies and programmes.5 This work basically addresses to examine the extent and nature of differentials in social development among the Surjapuri Muslims in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (west Bengal).

It was thought necessary to examine the extent of social development among Indian Muslims with particular reference to state of Bihar and West Bengal. We therefore, undertook a study of social development differentials according to religion. Though such a study is often simplistic and may not be advisable but it is hoped that such an analysis would provide an insight in understanding the contemporary Indian society in a better perspective. The other rationale for state level study is that the social development differentials among the Surjapuri Muslims can largely be attributed to the state specific policies and programmes of the state Governments of Bihar and West Bengal.

Chapter III has been devoted to the above area of the present work. The sources of data are basically secondary. Efforts have been made to present latest statistics from available sources.

Surjapuri Muslims have an interesting past. They were a small community. Surjapuris, who had been a localised agricultural community had seen many historical upheavals. Historically, the Surjapur reason was a part of the undivided Purnea district of Bihar. To understand present
position of Surjapuri Muslim a study of historical account of the region was undertaken covering glimpses of early history. Muslim rule, early European settlers in Purnea, British rule, partition of the country, post Independence era, state reorganisation and creation of new districts in the state of Bihar and West Bengal. All these events have affected the life and social development of Surjapuri Muslims in a number of ways. We therefore devoted a full chapter IV to record the salient features. We have heavily relied on the available historical records and the published material:

The developmental study of Surjapuri Muslims would be incomplete without knowing who they are? What patterns of social life they are accustomed to? And What has been their economic position? To answer these and many other similar issues, the present work provides for a detail ethnographic profile of the Surjapuri Muslims in chapter V. The discussion is based on official records and data as well as published literature.

SURJAPURI MUSLIMS, BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

The Surjapuri Muslims are a linguistic group speaking a corrupt form of speech. The Surjapuri dialect is a border form of speech, Bengali in the main, but containing expressions borrowed from Maithili. The character of this dialect is described as follows by Dr. Grierson:-

“The Western limit of Northern Bengali extends into the Purnea district. That language may be taken as occupying the eastern third of the district, that is to say, the whole of Kishanganj and eastern half of the Sadar sub-division. In the Kishanganj sub-division and in the Kasba, Amor and Balrampur thanas, the Musalmans, who are said to be of Koch origin, speak a mixture of Bihari and Bengali, closely
resembling the Koch-Bengali of Malda. This dialect is known as Kishanganjia or Siripuria (Surjapuri)."  

The district of Kishanganj has been created from the erstwhile district of Purnea a couple of years ago, as a result of the up-gradation of old Kishanganj sub-division of its parent district as an independent district. And in the year 1956, in view of the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission, implemented by the Bihar, West Bengal Transfer of Territories Act, 1956, an area of 759 square miles with a population of 277,288 was transferred to the West Dinajpur district of West Bengal from the Kishanganj Sub-division. In the area transferred to West Dinajpur district of West Bengal, the Surjapuri Muslims were in overwhelming majority.  

The district of West Dinajpur in turn, with effect from 1st April 1992, has been divided into two parts i.e., Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur. Uttar Dinajpur is largely constituted of the area transferred from Kishanganj sub-division in 1956. Therefore, the historical past of the districts of Kishanganj and that of Uttar Dinajpur is the same. The Surjapuri Muslims can be found in several districts of Bihar such as Kishanganj, Purnea, Araria, Katihar and several districts of West Bengal such as Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, New Jalpaiguri and Malda. They can also be found in some border districts of Bangladesh such as Rajshahi, Bogra and Pabna. But they are predominantly found in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal).  

TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION  

There are two types of sources available for the collection of statistical data to make an empirical analysis. These sources are  

(1) Primary sources
(2) Secondary sources

In the case of primary sources, the researcher collects data personally through interview, questionnaire and/or participant observation methods. With regard to the secondary sources, the data is collected from the already published reports. This study is based on both primary sources and secondary sources. But the thrust is more on the Secondary sources of data.

SECONDARY SOURCE

Social development manifests in a number of dimensions such as in human health, longevity, literacy and a certain level of standard of living. Indicators of social development in India are provided by various agencies. For our purposes, the principal sources of data are the decennial censuses, the various rounds of National Sample Survey, the Central Statistical Organisation, official statistics, Human Development Reports by the UNDP, UNFPA, various state governments, research organisations like the NCAER, IGIDR, EPW and Individual researchers.

However, much of the data base by various agencies provide average social development figure. The average HDI figure masks much of the variation across different regions and groups of people, especially in a large, diverse and plural country such as India. It is thus important to obtain a picture of the levels of living of the disadvantaged regions or groups of people in a country in order to evaluate the success of national development programmes in improving the life of the less well off.

There is evidence of substantial income disparities among various religious groups. Unfortunately, until recently socio-economic data on social/religious basis was not generated by government agencies. This is consistent with the refusal to collect information on caste basis. The basic
and false premise is that you can wish away differences by just refusing to measure them. Differences according to religion and caste simply do not exist then. There is also unwillingness on the part of the Indian academic community to explore these issues in detail, especially, specially at a time when ‘Created’ facts about the majority and minority religious groups are commonly used in political discourse. The only exceptions are attempts to study the demographic behaviour of religious groups, itself a subject of immense falsification. Social science researchers, have been irresponsible by refusing to study where the members of India’s many religious groups stand in a variety of social and economic indicators.

But there has been some change recently. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) have collected data according to caste and religion.

The NSSO, an autonomous Government agency, has compiled and published the socio-economic data according to religion that it collected during the course of its national surveys of consumption expenditure during the 50th and 55th rounds in 1993-94 and 1999-2000.8

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) conducted a survey of 33,000 rural households during 1994 to create a Human Development Profile of India. It was a multi-purpose survey spread over 1,765 villages and 195 districts in 16 States in India. Multi-stage stratified sampling techniques were used to draw a representative sample. About 90 indicators of human development that reflect various dimensions of levels of living-income and assets, employment and wages, consumption expenditures, literacy, morbidity, under nutrition, demographic rates and health care utilization were taken into consideration. This survey was (henceforth referred to as NCAER/HDIO
survey, 1994) was commissioned by the planning commission and financed by a consortium of international organizations such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) / International Development Research Centre (IDRC). This survey estimates indicators relating to education, health and material well-being at state level for different social groups. Such disaggregation is necessary to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the Indian population and the diversity of experience. Data generated by the NCAER/HDI survey, 1994 and by the NSSO in its 50th and 55th rounds of surveys in 1993-94 and 1999-2000 provide the base for this study.

However, the data provided by these agencies and organisations conceptualize the social development of Indian Muslims at the National and State levels. These estimates are useful for cross-national and inter-state comparison and rarely given idea of variation within a state. But there are variations within state and within districts as well. Comparative study of social development of a community cross-cutting state boundaries requires a reliable and detailed data base. Unfortunately, the existing database in India is deficient in many respects. The database at the group and district level in different state in India is poor.

This study is a modest attempt to compile and analyse district level data for Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur from secondary sources relating to education, health and material wellbeing. The Surjapuri Muslims being in overwhelming majority in these two districts, it can be inferred that the data base of these districts represents roughly the social development level for the Surjapuri Muslims.
In order to overcome this shortcoming (to consider the district data to represent the Surjapuri Muslims, the majority community), a synthesis of 4 village studies, two each in both the districts, has been presented in chapter VII. The principal purpose of this village studies is to validate the study by making intra-district comparison and by further disaggregation of the district data.

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

To supplement this study, primary data were collected through participant observation and 4 village studies were undertaken. The village studies (2 in each districts) was conducted across the two districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur. The aim of the village study was the understanding the ground level realities of the Surjapuri Muslims and providing validity to the research through further disaggregation of the district level social development indicators on the basis of religious group.

1. **Participant Observation: -**

   Observation is an integral part of any scientific inquiry. Indeed “Science begins with observation and must ultimately return to observation for final validation”. Thus, every researcher does observe the unit being studied in one way or other. Moreover, exploratory researches are not possible without participating in the life of the people being studied or watching them closely. Participant observation helps researcher to gather sufficient information before staring to investigate according to specific problems formulated. It also serves the purpose of pilot study. Accordingly we start our enquiry with uncontrolled participant observation.
While employing participant observation technique, a researcher, generally, faces two kinds of problems. One is the problem of accessibility and acceptability among the people being observed. If the researcher is accepted by the people, the second problem arises. It relates with the possibility of influencing the behaviour of the people by the presence of stranger that is researcher. Expressed somewhat differently, the people may become conscious in revealing information needed by a researcher. In order to surmount these problems, researcher often hides his identity and purpose, fortunately the present researcher did not face these problems due to being “insider”. We have not merely participated in socio-economic, religious and political life of Surjapuri Muslims only in Uttar Dinajpur but also of the Surjapuri Muslims in the district of Kishanganj. This exercise enriched our data as well as helped us in identifying major aspects related with social development of Surjapuri Muslims.

VILLAGE STUDY

A comprehensive village schedule (see Appendix-I) was made to elicit community level variables. The basic aim of the village studies is the understanding of ground level realities and providing validity to the community level comparison of Surjapuri Muslims in the two districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal) a detailed village schedule was canvassed across the 4 sample villages (2 each in Uttar Dinajpur and Kishanganj). The schedule covered economic, social, infra-structural (with emphasis of health and educational facilities) aspects of the villages. The village studies was based on the premise that the social development data at the district level does not exactly represent the development level of the Surjapuri Muslims.
Comparison at the level of districts of different social development indicators serves only a limited purpose if different social groups are to be studied. The district level social indicators cannot be said to be truly representing the Surjapuri Muslims in each district. This socio-economic comparison is largely between two geographic areas ignoring the religious identities of the people concerned. It only provides a rough clue of the state of affair of the community in both the districts. Further because of poor data base at the district level, the comparison fail to capture details such as the complex social, economic and infra-structural fabric of the region. The two indicators of social development, health and economic wellbeing, are influenced by a number of factors and returns on them are not always explicit nor tangible within the socio-economic environment.

Over the time, interesting new approaches to study social development have evolved. One such is the ‘participatory appraisal method’ where the investigator undertakes field studies on predetermined topics and issues. We launched four such village studies during 1998, to overcome shortcomings and complement the findings of the secondary sources of data. The ‘qualitative data’ gathered in the village studies that reflect the social, cultural, and economic environment of the villages successfully compare the level of social development among the Surjapuri Muslims in the districts of Kishanganj (Bihar) and Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal).

The series of 4 village studies was based on the premise that the district level indicators do not exactly represent the development status of the Surjapuri Muslims in each districts and because of poor data base and poor quality of data, many crucial aspects remain hidden or camouflaged in analyses of quantitative information.
METHODOLOGY OF VILLAGE STUDY

Since qualitative research offers flexibility in using different approaches, a combination of techniques that suited the objectives of the study was selected. The specific research techniques used were as follows:

(i) Collecting information relating to the social, economic and political structure of the village with special reference to the infrastructural facilities related to health and education.

(ii) Focus group discussions.

(iii) Interviewing eminent persons.

(iv) Interviewing school dropout children.

Three issues, namely health, education, and social security were chosen as the focus of the study. The qualitative study was planned in two villages in each districts during June-July 1998. The village selection was based on:

(i) Village size (villages with about 200 to 300 households).

(ii) Religious composition (one predominantly Muslim and one predominantly Hindu village in each district were chosen).

(iii) Of the two villages in each districts, both were to belong to the same agro-climatic zone of the district and situated in relative physical proximity. The rational was to compare the social development of two communities keeping the maximum physical variables constant.

SIZE OF THE VILLAGES

We adhered to the small size village criterion because the efficacy of intensive studies falls with large population or large villages when an attempt is made to study multiple issues. We also tried to choose villages
nearer to the researchers village, because nearer villages were more acquainted with and had easy accessibility. As the researcher is well conversant in Bengali, Hindi as well as Urdu, there was no problem in interacting with the villagers.

A detailed profile of the village was drawn on topics decided on earlier, namely health, education, society, occupational structure. The key informants, government officials, health and education personnel were interviewed to gather information on the location of the village, social mores and customs of the groups, occupation, employment opportunities, and social and economic interaction amongst the groups. Visits to the school, health centres-private, government, traditional and faith healers, *anganwadi*, night school centres, public distribution centres were made where open interviews and conducted to collect information.

Focus group discussion formed the pivotal part of the study. It was through this process of group discussions that we were able to capture data on perceptions and behaviour regarding health, education, treatment patterns, social security issues. Four to Five group discussion were arranged in each village.

The group discussion proved to be extremely useful in eliciting wide range of information and insights that are inaccessible in more traditional methods. The transcripts of all the individual focus group discussions conducted in all the four villages were analysed for three topics separately health, education and social security.

Semi-Structured interview schedules (see Appendix-II) were canvassed among children (both boys and girls) selected randomly in the age group 10–14 years who were dropout of school before completing elementary education. The answers provide some very interesting insights as far as demand side constraints and perception are concerned. These
micro level investigation can play a crucial role in the formulation of policies and programmes.

THE LIST OF THE VILLAGES STUDIED

Table: 2.1. Number of households of villages studied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE / DISTRICT</th>
<th>VILLAGE</th>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS</th>
<th>NO. OF MUSLIM HOUSEHOLDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KISHANGANJ (BIHAR)</td>
<td>(1) SINGHIA</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) HAWALDANGA</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTTAR DINAJPUR (WEST BENGAL)</td>
<td>(1) GAISAL</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) NANDOJHAR</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems Faced During the Work

Before describing the problem which we faced during this work, we would prefer a very important question which may strike to the mind of any reader. The question is why did we select the Surjapuri Muslims of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur? There were four important reasons of it. One was the reason of exploring a Muslim Community which has hitherto remained unexplored. Community study was thought to be essential for understanding Indian Muslims at micro level as well as for filling up gap in the literature of Indian Sociology. Two, the districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur have highest concentration of Surjapuri Muslims. So it became our choice for study. Three, the study of Surjapuri Muslims cross cutting the boundaries of Bihar and West Bengal clearly reflects the impact of State specific policies and programmes (the other variables of natural resources, culture and history remaining the same) on the development of a community. Fourth, we were well acquainted with the region and the community. Keeping in mind the problems which a researcher often faces in a new place, we preferred to study the Surjapuri Muslims of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur.
Available data on different social development indicators in Bihar and West Bengal are not exhaustive. Data base for Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur is very poor. Some data are not available, others become quite old by the time these are published and available to each users. Moreover, the state of Bihar is currently divided into 52 districts (including the districts of Jharkhand). Out of these 10 districts have been formed after the 1991 census. The district of Kishanganj is one of those 10 districts, which were created after the 1991 census. Similarly, the district of Uttar Dinajpur has been carved out from its parent district of West Dinajpur only in 1992. Therefore, data presented and analysed here have been gleaned from various sources including the census of India. For the aspects, where data for the new districts of Kishanganj and Uttar Dinajpur is not available, the data of its respective parent district of Purnea and West Dinajpur have been used.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


(2). Ahmad, Aijazuddin (1994), Muslims in India, Vol.I., Bihar, New Delhi; Inter-India Publications, p.8

(3). Id at p.9.


(9). Id. at pp. 5-6.