Chapter II

Research Design
Statistical analysis has been regarded as a necessity in sociological research. However, a number of sociologists even today do not seem favourably inclined towards statistics. They feel that human behaviour cannot be understood through computation and a humanistic approach must be adopted. This dilemma of choice between the statistical and the humanistic approach notwithstanding, the author was faced with the advantages and disadvantages in the "study of one's own society". Since Bijnor is the author's home district, the difficulty of conducting an "objective" sociological study was quite apparent. On the one hand, the author is a member of the 'upper crust' of the 'caste' hierarchy (Syed would be at a disadvantage if he tried to mingle with the Ailafs - for indeed, Syeds are held in great awe and no Ailaf would be insolent enough (so much) as to 'sit' in the Syed's presence. This caste barrier would hamper the relations between the researcher and the respondent and the study would suffer. On the other hand, the advantages of participant observation were quite clear. One could have easy access to all necessary information and could easily verify any information given by the respondents.
Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of various research techniques, the author decided to obtain factual data through an interview schedule and combine it with qualitative investigations to add a deeper insight to the problem. Thus, an attempt has been made to maintain a balance between the qualitative and quantitative methods without losing sight of the conceptual and theoretical aspects. The various methods used for the present study are presented in this chapter.

RESEARCH SETTING

Handloom is the biggest industry among all the small scale and the household industries of India. Even though this industry was given impetus to meet the domestic demand for cloth, gradually it developed to cater to the export demand of the country.

The specific product of the handloom industry is Khadi cloth. In preparation of this khadi cloth, the cotton thread (spun on the manual spinning wheels) is consumed. But sufficient quantities of such cotton thread against the requirement for khadi weaving is not easily available. The cotton thread produced by the spinning mills is utilized
in this craft, and hence, the production of mill-made khadi surpasses the production of hand-made khadi.

Khadi industry faced a setback because of the invention of power-looms. The powerlooms are power driven and the rate of production is higher while investment cost is minimized. As a result, the supply of the powerloom-cloth is cheaper than the cloth prepared by hand-looms. Similarly, the mill-cloth is cheaper than the cloth produced by powerlooms. Powerlooms have also been installed by several non-weavers (non-Ansaris) and this has affected the Ansaris considerably.

The quality and the quantity of the cloth which is required to meet the domestic demand cannot be produced by only hand-looms, or power-looms or cloth mills. Besides, thousands of people are earning their livelihood through these units and closure of any one of these units will result into increasing unemployment. Despite all these problems, the handloom industry provides daily bread to thousands of weavers in Uttar Pradesh, Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India.
Since the main objective of the present thesis is to examine the socio-economic organization of the Ansaris, it was necessary to select a particular district which was suitable for conducting such a study.

Bijnor district is historically well-known not only for its craftsmen and artisans, but also for a very large contingent of Ansaris. Whether the local Ajlaf population changed its appellation to Ansaris, continues to be a disputable fact. But, because of the concentration of Ansaris in this district and also because of the fact that they now appear to be far more prosperous than what the historical records tell us, district Bijnor was selected to undertaking the study. The head-quarters of district Bijnor are at Bijnor town. The total population of the district is 14,90,185 (census 1971). The district is famous for its various handicrafts, such as wood-work, brushing and khadi cotton. The entire khadi cotton industry is dominated mainly by Ansaris. Generally all members of the family are in one way or the other, involved in this Khadi making business.

The weaving industry in Bijnor district can be defined as a household industry, in which thousands of
artisan and labourers follow their traditional and hereditary craft of weaving within the precinct of their own home. In the past, this industry, on local demand, was confined to the production of khadi product only. But the boon in the export market boosted khadi production and the industry expanded under this demand. With this perspective, the present research is focussed at analysing the socio-economic organization of the Ansarís of Bijnor district.

Bijnor district has three major Ansari dominated towns. The respondents for this study were, therefore, selected from the following towns:

1) Nehtaur
2) Seohara
3) Kiratpur

1- NEHTAUR is a municipal town with a total population of 20,286. The town is dominated by a Muslim population of 14,059.

2- SEOHARA is a notified area with a total population of 22,822. This town also has a majority of Muslims with a Muslim population of 15,837.
3- **KIRATPUR** is also a notified area with total population of 25,147. This town is also Muslim dominated with a population of 16,251.

These three towns were selected not only because of the high population of **Ansaris**, but also because they are the main centres of the trade of weaving.

Apart from this, the researcher, being a resident of Nehtaur, is well acquainted with a number of responsible **Ansaris** (while this aspect has many advantages in making contacts, the researcher is not unaware of the problems of bias which may quietly creep in during field investigations).

**SAMPLE SELECTION**

In order to select a representative sample, the district census reports and municipal records were checked but separate data regarding the total number of the **Ansari** families was not available. The sample was obtained on basis of personal investigations. The primary investigation of all Ansari Mohallahs in each of these towns revealed that the number of the Ansari families in each town was approximately as follows.
Nehtaur  504 families
Seohara   257 families
Kiratpur  518 families

Total     1279 families

It was difficult to interview this huge population and, therefore, a random sample was selected in each of the towns. A random sample of 250 families (constituting approximately 20% of the total population of these three towns was obtained.

In Nehtaur, Seohara and Kiratpur, every fifth family head was selected for interview. The population distribution and the percentage of sample selection, are given in Table I.

Every household, whether joint or nuclear was considered as one unit, and the head of the household was interviewed. The age of the respondents ranged between 21 years and 60 years. Out of the total sample 92% respondents were married and 8% were unmarried. All the respondents were SUNNI Muslim Ansaris and followed the Hanafi School Jurisprudence. A minimum number of the respondents was educated at the school, college and Univer-
sity levels, most of the respondents were illiterate as they had not been educated even at the Madrasa level. They could neither read nor write Urdu. Only 27.2% respondents were literate (Table II).

THE NON-ANSARIS CONTROL GROUP

As per the census (1971) break-up Ansari families outnumber the families of the Ashraf. While undertaking an analysis of the socio-economic structure of a particular group, it is important to compare the data of the sample with that of the control group.

Therefore, a control group of non-Ansaris (from amongst the Muslim population of the three areas under study) was selected. During a preliminary survey, it was observed that many Ashraf were serving the Ansaris as supervisors and labourers. It was then essential to determine the economic status of a sample of the non-Ansari castes.

Their economic status was determined in terms of their occupation and income. The study reveals that 20% Ashraf worked as farmers. Out of these farmers 5% were
independent farmers who cultivated their own land. The remaining did not own the land but worked as cultivators for others. Among other respondents, 18% were cloth merchants and were clients of the Ansaris in cloth supply. 31% were either jobless or had too little means to provide a livelihood so that they had to seek employment with the Ansaris as a supervisor, manager or wage labourers. 16% were tailors and barbers and rickshaw pullers.

Thus, another random sample of 50 non-Ansari Muslims was like-wise selected. This sample was designated as the control group. The sample selection was as follows:

Nehtaur N = 20 families
Seohara N = 10 families
Kiratpur N = 20 families

Respondents for the control group were selected from among the Muslim non-Ansari population. Due care was taken to avoid selection of control group from the upper economic class of non-Ansaris. Hence, all attempts were made to select the control group from the lower economic class of non-Ansaris who had a higher 'caste' status than the Ansaris. The control group consisted of people who were
either employees of the Ansaris or those who belonged to the lower income group.

Such a selection was necessiated because of the very nature of the hypothesis which sets out to examine the impact of economic class mobility on the caste status mobility of Ansaris. The selection of the control group from the upper economic strata of non-Ansaris would not have served as an indicator of their actual regard for the Ansaris. Thus in order to verify and examine the relationship between class and status, the control group of non-Ansaris was selected from the lower income group. In this way the comparison between the Ansaris and non-Ansaris group would be more fruitful.

In an attempt to analyse the socio-economic status of Ansaris of Bijnor district, it was necessary to compare the results with a non-Ansari sample. Therefore, a non-Ansari sample was selected and interviewed for the purpose as described above.
The detailed interview schedule was formulated in terms of four indices to assess the socio-economic status of the sample. The four indices were as follows:

1) Economic organization, occupation and education
2) Family, marriage and divorce
3) Political Participation and Mass-Media
4) Religiosity

In all 82 items were included in the schedule. The questions in the first index were asked to elicit information regarding occupational, educational and economic organization of the Ansaris. It was assumed here that socio-economic class/status differences among Ansaris were directly related to their 'caste' identity. Thus, a "poor" non-Ansari would enjoy a higher status than the 'rich' Ansari. The economic class was derived on the basis of income as follows:
UPPER CLASS

Income of family head (plus other members of the family) totalling to more than Rs. 2,000/- per month.

MIDDLE CLASS

Income of family head from Rs. 499/- to Rs. 1,999/- per month.

LOWER CLASS

Income of family head below Rs. 499/-. Occupational differences were broadly divided into two categories: Weaving and non-weaving occupations and these were further subdivided as follows:

Weaving: handloom workers, powerloom workers, handloom owners, powerloom owners.

Non-Weaving: Farmers, shop-keepers, teachers, labourers etc.

Education has also been considered as an important factor in providing a better life-style. (Lerner 1958; Levy 1966; Kahl 1968; Inkles 1969; Halsay 1970; Ahmad 1976; Sethi 1976; Singhi 1979 and Sharda 1981). It is believed that
educated parents are able to guide their children more fruitfully. Uneducated parents have relatively less control in directing their children towards educational or occupational career planning. Hence, some scholars have contended that the absence of education hinders progress (Patai 1967; Hate 1969; Kapur 1970; Singhi 1976). It is with these empirical findings that education is used as an independent variable in the present study. This index included questions about their educational background at five levels:

1) Madrasa
2) Education upto Vth class
3) Education upto High School
4) High School & graduate
5) B.A and above.

Questions in the second index were directed at eliciting information regarding the structure and size of the family, forms of marriage, preferences and patterns of divorce.

Family is a primary institution of socialization. In India the traditional family is an extended family in which husband, wife, in laws, unmarried daughters, sons and their wives, and sometimes other relatives, live...
together. Pannikar (1961) contends that Indian social structure revolves round two fundamental institutions - the 'caste' and the 'joint family'. But expanding industrialization and westernization have affected the structure of the joint families (Goode 1963). Hence, the traditional joint family structure of the Ansaris deserves detailed study to see how far the system has been affected by the modern forces.

Marriage is an important institution. Marriage among Muslims is a contract and not a sacrament as among the Hindus (Misra 1964).

Spouse selection among Muslims is generally based on 'kufwa' which denotes some conditions of the suitability of the husband for his wife or vice versa. These conditions, though varied are generally regarded as faith, lineage, esteem, financial suitability and occupation. On the basis of these attributes, every group attempts to marry within its own marriage circle. Thus, the search of kufwa ultimately results into endogamous marriage within a particular group - such as the Syeds, the Shaikhs, the Mughals and the Pathans who strictly follow the principle of kufwa in mate selection. In these Muslim groups this doctrine is followed to maintain the purity of blood.
Among Ansaris this principle of kufwa is a means to maintain group homogeneity or perhaps an attempt to emulate the Ashraf groups.

Hence, the outlook of the Ansaris on marriage is different than those of the non-Ansaris. A majority of the respondents were married but a small number was unmarried. The interview schedule was designed to bring out facts about spouse selection and marriage preferences.

The questions in the third index were designed to understand the participation of the respondents in politics and in elections at local level, state level and national level. It was also sought to gain information about the support extended to political parties and criteria for casting votes for a particular candidate or party.

Experience and observation reveal that Ansaris, especially in Uttar Pradesh, are politically conscious and participate in politics actively.

Mass-Media refers to communication outside the primary group interaction and subsequent movement outside the biradri. Mass-media provide a vital source of information in contemporary society. Newspapers, radio, television
and cinema are the media and news to a large section of people in the distant of the country. Exposure to mass-media develops an outlook and provides a critical vision on political, economic and social affairs. With this intention, questions in this index were asked relating to exposure to mass-media.

The fourth and the last index included questions regarding religiosity of the respondents.

Sociologists have regarded religion as an important institution of society. Durkheim (1961) interprets religion as a great power in human society. The religious bonds tie men to each other and thus human-beings develop a feeling of mutual belonging which Durkheim calls "solidarity". According to Max Weber (1963) religion operates by way of "legitimation" which means that religion justifies the exercise of power in society.

Religion, is, however, considered as an ordering principle in human life. It organizes the individuals's experiences in such an institutionalized way that the human acts become sacred. Thus, to marry becomes a sacrament,
to work becomes a worship and to die in a war becomes a passport to a happier afterlife. It is incumbent on every Muslim to follow the five farz (Namaz, Roza, Zakat, Haj and Jihad).

In order to understand their religious involvement, the respondents were asked questions pertaining to their religious life. All respondents were "Sunni" Muslims and followed the "Hanafi" laws of jurisprudence.

The interview schedule was translated into Urdu because the majority of the sample was Urdu speaking. Apart from this, information was obtained by the author himself who moved about freely in the various towns as a guarded participant observer.

PROBLEMS OF FIELD WORK

Contact with the selected respondents was made through common personal friend. In the beginning many respondents tried not to disclose their income or give wrong information for fear of income tax raids. Some had to be assured and re-interviewed a number of times. Many respondents also feared that the author was an agent of family planning.
agency and tried to mislead by giving wrong information about the number of children etc.

There were others who thought the author was a government agent, seeking to help the downtrodden, and so, poured out the woes of sorrow and the failing efforts of the government who has neglected them and was taking no steps for their betterment. Some respondents were hard and rudely rebuffed the author when he requested them. It, therefore, became necessary to locate such responsible persons from the community who could help in assuaging the fears of the respondents and could make them cooperate.

Another problem faced by the author was the constant interference of other members of the family or neighbours who, would be only too eager to answer questions - or so to say put words in the mouth of the respondent. Sometimes the respondent, who had already been interviewed, would accompany the author to the neighbour's (next respondent's) house and noisely interfere with the interviewer's responses.
NOTES

1. HOUSE-HOLD INDUSTRY has been defined in census (1971) as an industry which is run by head of the household and/or by the members of household working in their own home. The household industry is small and quite unlike the large scale registered factory. However, power, steam or oil engine are used in household industry. The main criteria of a household industry is the participation of one or more members of a household.

2. Since no date was available in the census report regarding the population distribution of Ansaris, the present author made personal door to door investigations in the Mohallas to collect this information.

3. See Appendix - D

4. JIHAD is one of the Islamic duties which is performed to defend Islam whenever it is under attack.