Chapter III

Results
ANSARIS AND NON-ANSARIS

The present investigations were carried out to understand the social and economic organization of the Ansaris of Bijnor district and to analyse the impact of economic development and social mobility generated by economic prosperity. The subsequent changes and readjustments which followed as a result of education, political awareness and mass-media, also merit attention. The emerging hypothesis, that due to economic betterment and new opportunities, the Ansaris have moved up in the economic hierarchy but, as a group (with a collective identity) have been able to acquire a respectable position in society, was duly verified.

In order to verify the above stated hypothesis, comparisons of the non-Ansari sample were carried out. Table III indicates that the group of non-Ansaris and Ansaris differ from each other with regard to family income. On an average, the income of the non-Ansari group is Rs.530/- per month, whereas the average income of Ansaris is Rs. 884/- per month (see Table III Graph 1). The average expenditure of non-Ansaris on essential items was Rs.384.5/- per month, and the expenditure on non-essential items was Rs.113/- per month.
An overwhelming majority of Ansaris (upto two generations above) pursued the traditional occupation of weaving, while a small percentage (6%) were shop-keepers, or were involved in the cloth business. The non-Ansaris were mostly engaged in farming either as land owners or hired labourers.

EDUCATION

Literacy rate and attitude towards education were different for both Ansaris and non-Ansari groups. The Ansaris were more interested in inducting their children into their traditional occupation than to give their children a proper education. On the contrary, the literacy rate in the non-Ansari group was higher and attitude towards formal education was positive.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Data show that both non-Ansaris and Ansaris prefer endogamous cousin marriages. However, inferences drawn from discussions and interviews reveal that the Syed castes are finding it increasingly difficult to continue contracting endogamous and cousin marriages due to a shortage of Syed bridegrooms. They have modified their
rule of endogamy and marry within any Ashraf caste. They, however, would not consider a marriage alliance with an Ansari. Among the Ajlafs, barbers, butchers (Qasai) and Dhobi (washermen), who were far more economically depressed as compared to Ansaris, were also reluctant to contract marriage with an Ansari.

Data reveal that among Ansaris 76.5% the sample favoured payment of Rs. 3000, approximately, as Mehr while for the non-Ansari group the amount varied between Rs. 2500 to Rs. 10,000 depending on the economic status of the person. Both the groups indicated that generally Mehr remained unpaid as no one ever paid Mehr at the time of marriage. Some also informed the investigator, that husbands have a tendency to obtain verbal exemption from their wives on the first day of marriage.

The demand of dowry (Jahez) was disliked by 71.6% Ansaris, and data shows that dowry payments ranged between Rs. 100-500, depending on economic capabilities. However, the investigator, was not at all convinced by this statement especially because in practice the rich Ansaris made a great show of presentations and conspicuous consumption of money. (Table IV)
Infact, many marriage ceremonies attended by the present author reveal that motorcycles, scooters and television sets are the presentations made in form of Jahez (given to the bride by her parents). The more expensive and elaborate the Jahez, the greater the prestige in the eyes of non-Ansaris, but not of the Ansaris in general. The economically weaker Ansari population resents such conspicuous practice. In fact it is mamnooe (prohibited) for an Ansari to give or to take Jahez. Theoretically the traditional dowry of seven copper utensils and Rs. 51 are the acceptable dowry gifts, among Ansaris. This was incumbent on Ansari by order of the Jamatbandi.

However, the non-Ansari group favoured receiving and giving elaborate jahez to their daughters. This indicated that dowry gifts enhanced the prestige of the family. Thus, colour television sets, refrigerators, scooters and cars are generally gifted at the time of marriage among the rich non-Ansari groups. But the present sample did not fall in the category of the such non-Ansaris.

**DIVORCE**

The rate of divorce was low in the non-Ansari sample as compared with the rate of divorce among the economically
well off non-Ansaris. But, the whole, both Ansari and non-Ansari groups display a low rate of divorce and distaste for divorce.

CEREMONIAL TRADITIONS

Although many ceremonial traditions were abandoned, yet the marriage in a non-Ansari group was celebrated with much festivity. Music band is accompanied with the marriage procession and some of the near relatives or friends of the bridegroom dance along with the gaily lighted moving procession.

In the past mirasins (the women singers by profession) used to beat drums, dance and sing songs in marriage parties. This practice was however, not reported by the present sample. However, now among the Syeds, the lady relatives of the bride or bridegroom beat drums, dance and sing ceremonial songs by themselves. This is what Momin (1977) calls 'de-ashrafization' because this act of dancing and singing songs was considered as an act of dishonour and associated mostly with Ajlafs.

Among the Ansaris, marriages are comparatively simple and music bands are strictly prohibited. However, small -
cassettes are often played at marriage ceremonies.

Feasts are also the matter of prestige in the marriage of non-Ansari groups. The quality and variety of the menu certifies a man's economic position. The invitees in the feasts are mostly relatives and friends. The friends and the neighbours (no matters to which caste they belong) are compulsorily invited. In the past Syeds did not invite any person from the Ansari group on occasion of marriage. Rather the Ansaris considered it as an honour to be invited to a Syed's house on such occasions. However, for a Syed, it was prestigious not to accept an invitation from an Ansari.

The data indicates that many of these traditional caste values have undergone a change. Many Syeds, Shaikhs and Pathans now participate in the marriage parties of Ansaris. This does not imply that these non-Ansari have regarded the Ansaris as their equals, but do so just in order to portray themselves as modern, open-minded persons, or as patrons. On such occasions, where Syeds are present separate arrangements for their meals are made and they are treated with deep reverence and honour. They are seated away from the general Ansari invitees. The detailed results of the Ansari sample are given below.
The first set of questions was elicited information on the social organization of Ansaris. The foremost aspect of their social organization is the system of Jamatbandi. In the past Jamatbandi was a powerful organization, almost equivalent to the village Panchayat. The Jamat leader enjoyed a privileged position and power. Apart from this the Jamat formed the governing body. The Ansaris were, therefore, asked questions regarding this Jamatbandi organization. 7.2% of the respondents said that the Jamatbandi system continued to persist, while 27.3% said that the system had become obscure and had moved into the background. The people did not accept the authority of its leaders. 65.5% said that they were quite unaware of the existence of any Jamatbandi.

Almost all the respondents were of the view that the head of the organization did not enjoy much power because the new generations did not accept his authority.

Analysis of the data also reveal that 43% of respondents knew about the existence of the Jamats at regional and central levels, whereas 57% showed their ignorance.
Most of the respondents could name the head of the Jamat without hesitation, while some either hesitated to reveal his identity, or were unaware of his name.

The Jamat, however, was functional at three levels: local, regional and central levels. The main function of the Jamat was to regulate social and moral life of its members. All community disputes were presented to the governing body of the Jamat whose verdict was final and deviance was punishable. Punishments ranged from censuring to levying fines and finally, in its severest form, to expulsion from the biradri.

A majority of the respondents (69.4%) said that the Jamatbandi organization was no longer effective and that they were governed by the laws of Shariat (religions rules and regulations). 10.4% said that their "community constitution" regulated their social life. All respondents affirmed at the fact that no written laws or constitution existed. The regulations were verbally communicated from one generation to the other. 20.2% of the respondents claimed that they were quite independent and had no need to seek the help of either the Jamatbandi or community constitution to solve
their problems. The entire respondent population was of the view that the community organization have lost their authoritative structure and so the punishments had also lost their significance. Therefore, all disputes were taken to the courts of law.

However, it was observed that the role of Jamat-bandri was somewhat anomalous. In case of events which may affect the collective interest of Ansaris, or when they were pitched against the non-Ansaris, the whip issued by the Jamat is "religiously" followed. But in cases concerning rules for marriage, divorce, dowry, mehr entertainment etc. which are more individualistic than collective, the Jamat seems to have no effect.

The next set of questions was framed to obtain information regarding the economic, occupational and educational structure of the respondents. These results are given below.

ECONOMIC, OCCUPATIONAL & EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE

The data were collected to determine the economic status of the respondents. The indicators used were income, expenditure, savings, possessions etc.
The income level of the respondents in the entire sample varies from Rs. 1 to Rs. 5000. Table V shows the comparative income distribution of the respondents.

Data in the Table V show that the mean income of the respondents is Rs. 1040.5 per month. Most of the respondents are found in the income group of Rs. 501-2000 per month.

The income of the respondents in this sample ranges from Re. 1 to Rs. 2000 per month. Table V also reveals a high frequency of the income group which ranges from Rs. 501 to Rs. 1000. Their mean income is Rs. 670.5 per month.

The range of income of the respondents in Kiratpur was between Re. 1 to 2000 per month. The income group of Rs. 501-1000 per month indicated a high frequency. The average income of the respondents in Kiratpur was Rs. 835.5 per month.

In graph 2, three frequency polygons represent the relation of income and frequency distribution of the respondents of Mentaur, Seonara and Kiratpur. The graphic presentation shows that the median in the total sample is 750.
But comparatively the respondents of Nehtaur were in a better economic condition and their range of income was higher.

Table VI shows that the average size of the family of the total respondent sample is five members. Out of these, 68% families had only one earning member, 11.2% families had two earning members and 20.8% of families were those in which there were more than two earning members. Total earning members are 33.3% of the total population.

POSSESSIONS

Another index to determine the economic position of the respondents is to assess the quality and quantity of their possessions.

Possessions included house ownership, means of transportation and conveyance and possession of handlooms and power looms.

HOUSE

Table VII shows that 40.4% of the respondents lived in their own houses. Only 15.6% were living as tenants. 44% lived in their father's house.
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION & CONVEYANCE

The means of transportation and conveyance included ownership of bicycle, motor cycle, scooter, jeep or car, and bullock cart. Table VIII indicates that a large percentage (77.6%) of the respondents owned bicycles, 10.8% owned motor cycles, 6.8 owned scooters while 1.6% possessed bullock carts. Jeep/Car was owned only by 0.4% of the total respondents population. It is interesting to note that the very high percentage (77.6%) of bicycle ownership reiterates the legendary saying prevalent among the non-Ansari groups that "who bhi kya julaha jiske pass cycle na ho" (He, who does not own a bicycle, cannot be characterised a "Julaha"). (Graph 6)

MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Since the main occupation of the respondents is weaving, their means of production included hand-looms and power-looms.

HANDLOOMS

Table IX has already indicated that out of the total sample of 250 respondents 177 were engaged in their traditional occupation of weaving. Hence, Table IX reveals that out of these 177 weavers 51.2% possessed hand-looms. The
The total number of handlooms in all the three areas is 144. Thus, the ratio between number of persons and number of handlooms is 1:1.4. (Table X)

Of 51.2% owners of the handlooms, 21.6% possessed powerlooms. The total number of powerlooms is 72. Thus, the ratio between number of persons and number of powerlooms is 1:2.6. (Table X)

EXPENDITURE

The monthly expenditure of the respondents was categorized as expenditure on food, clothing, education, health and sanitation, travel, guest entertainment, house repair, donations to poor relatives, Schools/madarsas, orphanages, mosques and hospitals etc. These categories were further grouped as (i) essential and (ii) non-essential expenditure.

(i) Essential category included food, clothing and education, sanitation and health.

(ii) Non-essential category included travel, entertainment, house repair and donations.
EXPERIENCE OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS

The expenditure on essential items analysed in 20 groups of expenditure. Table XI shows that the expenditure on essential items ranges between Rs. 1-2000 per month in Nektaur. The mean expenditure is Rs. 603.5 per month.

The respondents of Seohara spend Rs. 1-1100 per month and their mean expenditure on essential items is Rs. 480.5 per month.

The data from Kiratpur show that the respondents' expenditure ranges Rs. 1-1000 and their average monthly expenditure on essential items is Rs. 580.5 per month.

These results indicate that the average expenditure of the Ansaris of Nektaur on essential items is higher than that of Seohara and Kiratpur. Graph 3 shows the relation of expenditure on essential items with frequency distribution of the three towns.

EXPERIENCE ON NON-ESSENTIAL ITEMS

The data represented in Table XII reveal that the respondents of Nektaur spend Rs. 336.5 per month on non-essential items whereas the respondents of Seohara spend Rs. 163 and the respondents of Kiratpur spend Rs. 250.5 per
month on the non-essential items. Graph 4 shows the relation of expenditure on non-essential items.

GOVERNMENT BENEFITS

When the respondents were asked about Government supported financial aid, 82% respondents of the total sample stated that no help was received from the government. Infact they complained that the government had always ignored them. 18% of the respondents were completely ignorant of the governmental programmes for the upliftment of the depressed classes.

SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

Savings and investments form an important aspect of economic well-being. Questions were framed so as to elicit information on the saving and investment patterns of respondents. 38.4% of the respondents did not save at all. When respondents were asked why they did not save, some gave, pessimistic reasons. This pessimistic group believed that savings were useless for one could not predict the future. About 10.3% thought that saving was important, while only 0.3% admitted that they saved a sufficient amount from their income.
The Ansaris, on the basis of their hereditary occupation of weaving, constitute a well-knit biradri within the Muslim community. To assess their social and economic organization data relating to their occupation, income, possessions, expenditure, saving, business and its related aspects like their trends in occupation and education were obtained.

Occupational history up to three higher generations was recorded. Table IX shows that 51.2% respondents were following the ancestral occupation of weaving for the last three generations. 11.0% respondents had deviated from their ancestral occupations. 4.00% respondents claimed that they had no knowledge of occupation of their grandfather and great grandfather. Distribution of occupation of the total sample, given in Table IX, reveals that the majority of the respondents were engaged in the craft of weaving. The results also show that a maximum percentage of respondents agreed that the characteristic occupation of their biradri was weaving, while a negligible number denied this fact. It is, therefore, evident that most of the respondents in all the three areas of study were pursuing their traditional hereditary occupation of weaving.
Since the main economic asset of the respondents was weaving cloth, questions related to the organization of work revealed that in 67.2% cases weaving work was done by family members (Table XIII). 32.8% responded that they engaged labourers for weaving. The 27 respondents who owned power looms as well as handlooms were dealing in cloth business as manufacturers. Table XIV reveals that out of 27 respondents 70.3% were managing their own business. 7.4% sought the help of their father who also helped them in the supervision of work. 14.8% respondents showed their incapability to supervise because of old age and long term illness. The sons and grandsons in the family looked after their business. All business activities of 7.4% respondents was supervised by the appointed managers who were paid a salary.

The appointment of managers was an important matter and could reveal certain preferences of the sample. Therefore respondents were asked about their preferences in the appointment of managers. 25.3% respondents responded that they preferred their near relatives as managers. First preference of 51.3% respondents was the appointment of their own relatives. Out of these 31.7%
however, stated that they did not want to make biased appointments and that they preferred to appoint a competent person as manager. However, a large number of the respondents indicated that they were more inclined to support the members of their own biradri.

The distribution of supplies is another important aspect of business enterprise. It was therefore necessary to obtain information about the distribution market. In response to these queries, 55.5% of the respondents indicated their supply of material was limited to the district as there was much demand in the district itself. 44% of the respondents supplied their material outside district. Of these, 31.4% of the respondents revealed that the distribution of goods was limited within the country. But 19.5% respondents indicated that they were exporters but did not specifically name the countries to which they were exporting their material.

**SELF-PERCEPTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS**

It is a widely accepted fact that economic status can significantly influence various other aspects of life. It is also believed that economic factor is one of the most potential factors in thinking about social change. On the
basis of this contention, the economic factor is used as an independent variable in the present study. The respondents were asked questions relating to the self-evaluation of their economic status. Three categories were formulated to assess the answers. But the respondents revealed uncertainty about their self-perception and the answers about their economic position were contradictory to the answers regarding their income. Therefore, their economic status was evaluated on the basis of their income only.

The economic status of the respondents was categorized into three classes—upper, middle, lower.

**UPPER CLASS**

The income group ranging from $2,001 and above was characterized as upper class.

**MIDDLE CLASS**

The income group ranging from $501 to 2000 was designated as middle class.

**LOWER CLASS**

The group below the income of $501 per month was classified as lower class.
Classification of the responses in Table XV indicates that 4.8% respondents in the total sample had a higher range of income and belonged to the upper economic class. 73.6% were those whose average income was moderate and thus they belonged to the middle class. The income range of 21.6% respondents was below Rs. 501. The results, therefore, indicate that most of the respondents belonged to the middle economic class.

This index has dealt with the economic activities of the Ansaris. Unfortunately no published account of the Ansaris of Bijnor district are available. Therefore, on the basis of the present study they can be categorized as: entrepreneurs, hired labourers and cloth merchants.

(1) **ENTREPRENEURS**

Mostly the owners of the powerlooms and handlooms who manufacture cloth are regarded as entrepreneurs. These form 21.6% of the total sample. Manufacturing of material is mostly undertaken on the demands of exporters or suppliers. However, the respondents reported that all business transactions were undertaken without any format written orders. All transactions are vocal. Many entrepreneurs
complained that they could not increase production as they had a limited supply of cotton thread. In their opinion the supply agencies of cotton thread were insufficient and corrupt and the government had no control over them.

(2) HIRED LABOURERS

Out of the total sample population engaged in weaving, 19.6% were working as hired labourers. The hired labourers can be defined as those persons who own one or two handlooms, seek work order from distributors or agents and manufacture cloth in their own homes on a hire basis.

(3) CLOTH MERCHANTS

Apart from the weaving, many Ansaris sell cloth merchandise. Some have large shops in the town. Several others do not own shops, but generally load cloth lengths on their backs or bicycles and sell the cloth as hawkers.

AVERAGE INCOME & SAVINGS

The average income of the entire sample is $834.5 per month. This shows that as compared to the per capita national income the Ansaris of Bijnor have moved a long way since independence.

Their attitude towards saving is quite uncertain because various insignificant responses were given by the
respondents. But personal observations of the author indicates that most of the respondents in the sample were not in position to save because their income did not range much higher than their expenditure. Apart from this many of them did not save because what they earned they spent it lavishly on the essential and non-essential items. This was evident from the fact that their homes displayed a number of luxury items such as radios, tape-recorders, sewing machines, etc. (Graph 5)

EDUCATION

The data in table shows that 62.4 respondents of the total sample were illiterate, 27.2% were literate and only 10.4% were those who had a formal education at College or University level. This shows that the general level of education among the Ansaris of Bijnor district is low even when the provisions and facilities of education exist.

Since the process of education opens new horizons of social and economic development, the respondents were examined whether they were inclined to educate their children. The data analysed in Table reveal that 33.3% children of the respondents of the total sample were studying in madarsa, 19.7% were studying in schools and 6.3% were getting
education in various disciplines at the college and University level. Most of the respondents did not feel it necessary to educate their children because the children were required to help in their family trade of weaving. It was therefore observed that most of the children of school going age were taken as apprentices and thus the formal education of the children was neglected.

The respondents were further asked whether they liked their children to get education in co-educational institutions. Almost all the respondents replied in the negative.

**FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

Family patterns constitute an important aspect of social organization. It has generally been stated that the joint family system is giving way to nuclear family because of rapid urbanization and industrialization. Data obtained from the sample revealed that 57.1% of the respondents lived in a nuclear family, 27.9% live in joint families and 14.9% live in extended families (Table VI).

The reasons for living in the joint families and the extended families, were cited as cooperation and interdependence in business matters and the family trade. Most of the reasons for not living in joint and the extended families
were familial disputes and the lack of privacy.

Marriage alliances constitute an important aspect of life and especially of caste-life. The traditional Hindu caste marriages were endogamous and patterns of endogamy are not unknown in other caste-like groups. The Ansaris are a case in point. Endogamous marriages are preferred either because purity of blood is to be maintained, or because of property or politics. The data obtained from the sample reveal that 85% of the total respondents preferred marriage alliance within their own biradri, while 15% had no objection to contracting marriages outside the biradri. 52.9% of the respondents, who preferred intra-biradri marriage, preferred bride-grooms from within their own cousin group, while 47% of respondents did not want to restrict their choice to cousins only (Table XVII). It can be inferred that almost half of the respondents did not prefer cousin marriages. The respondents who had married within their family were asked to indicate their relationship with their spouse. Table XVIII shows that 55.7% respondents had married their paternal cousins and 44.2% had married with their maternal cousins. Similar results regarding the marriage of the sons and the daughters of the respondents are tabulated in Table XVIII. This indicates that most of the marriages of the sons were held with paternal cousins while the majority of the marriages of
the daughters were contracted with maternal cousins. Table XVII reveals that 99.5% of the respondents had married within their biradri.

The respondents, who did not want to contract marriages within the family, gave various reasons, such as, familial disputes, confinement of choice etc. as factors affecting their decision. A small number of respondents viewed such marriages as useful as they solved the problem of mate-selection.

A large number of the respondents favoured intra-biradri marriages because it would help to maintain the biradri structure.

Regarding the preference of family for sons/daughters' marriage the 86.6% of the respondents preferred a "religious" family, 10.4% preferred an "educated" and "rich" family and 3% preferred a "modern" family.

The other question was asked to examine the attitudes of the respondents towards monogamous marriage and polygamous marriages. Table XIX indicates that 60% of the respondents preferred monogamy, 2% preferred polygamy and 38% were indifferent.

The main reason for the preference of monogamous marriage was cited that a person could adjust with one wife in a
In order to find out the authority structure in the families, the respondents were asked about the process of mate selection. The answers revealed that in 98% cases the mate selection was done by parents, in 2% cases it was done by relatives and none of them had a right to select a spouse according to his choice.

The respondents were asked what general factors were perceived in mate selection. Table XX reveals that 32.8% emphasised 'caste', 17.2% stressed on 'good character', 17.2% gave importance to 'income', 10.8% wanted to select a 'religious' person as spouse and the remaining respondents gave almost an equal emphasis to 'skill', 'education' and 'health'. This indicates that a sizeable percentage of the respondents preferred spouse from within the group. This also implies that the tradition of endogamy is preferred.

Table XXI shows that almost all the respondents were not permitted to meet or see their financee/finance at all before marriage.

The change in outlook of the unmarried respondents regarding the criteria of mate selection was examined. Table XX exhibits that 45% of the respondents gave importance to the 'beauty' of the bride to be 35% said that their wife
should be perfect in 'house-keeping', 15% were those who wanted the girl to be 'religious' and only 5% respondents wished for an 'educated girl' as a marriage partner. These responses showed that the attitudes of the young unmarried respondents were quite different from the traditional ones.

Although the court marriages are not encouraged, the trend for contracting civil marriages is increasing. Respondents were asked whether there had taken place any court marriage in their family. All the respondents of the total sample said 'No' because it was against the biradri culture and it could result in dire consequences like being expelled from the biradri. Similarly, the responses regarding the preference of the court marriages were entirely negative.

**Mehr (Dower)**

The Mehr (dower) is a part of a Muslim marriage which is paid or pledged to be paid in cash or kind by the groom to the bride preferably at the time of marriage or immediately after or positively at the time of divorce. The Holy Quran speaks of Mehr saying, "Give women their dower as a free gift" (4:4 | P. 357. The Holy Quran)

This implies that Mehr is a gift which belongs to the woman herself and not to her father or mother or parents of the groom. Mehr is not the wages for having brought her up,
nursed her and fed her. The mehr is a condition in shape of some money or kind, deferred or paid in cash on demand or at the time of divorce or dispute (Ellickson 1976, Mutahhari 1981, Anwar 1983). 76% of the respondents indicated that the prevalent system of Mehr was "mehr-e-Fatimi" (which refer to a traditional amount paid by Ali to Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet of Islam. The traditional value of mehr-e-Fatimi was 107 Dinar- Arabian currency, equivalent to $3000. 24.0% respondents said that there was no fixed condition or amount of mehr. It varied and depended on the personal capacity. Regarding the time of payment of mehr 32% of the respondents revealed that they were ignorant when it was paid, 23.2% expressed that it was never paid, and 14.8% informed the investigator that it was paid on demand. 30% respondents indicated that the amount of mehr was paid at the time of divorce. This reveals a considerable variation of opinion regarding the payment of mehr.

Table IV shows that low amount of mehr was more acceptable.

DOWRY

Dowry is a key element in marriage transactions. (Mauroof 1976). The demand of a high and adequate dowry had resulted into the victimization of the brides. Demands are made from all sections of people for its abolition and social
rejection. Yet instances of self-harming and killing of the brides have become frequent, as reported in the newspapers.

Among Muslims the practice of a high dowry is more prevalent in the higher castes because it is considered as a symbol of pride and esteem. It was, therefore, necessary to ask the Ansaris if they thought it necessary to demand an adequate dowry. Data reveal that 88% of the respondents gave negative replies. 10% were indifferent in this regard and only 2% showed their inclination towards taking a proper dowry.

Responses regarding an approximate amount of dowry revealed that the amount ranged from Rs. 100 to 500 and above according to the personal capabilities. The demand of a high dowry was disliked by 71.6% of the respondents while 28.4% were neutral in this respect. (Table IV)

The other question was asked if there was any fixed amount of dowry in the biradri of the respondents. 51.2% responses disclosed that seven (small and big) utensils of copper and a cash payment of Rs. 51.00 were fixed as dowry, but 15.6% said that it was not fixed and 33.2% expressed their ignorance regarding the fixed amount of dowry. Apart from this, many respondents said that minimum dowry was fixed with the notion that the poorest one could afford it, but they complained
that some of their biradri had deviated from this traditional norm and indulged in taking and giving unlimited dowry. They regarded this practice as a symbol of "conspicuous consumption". They feared that this change would ruin their families in future as it would leave a number of girls, whose parents could not afford dowries, unwed.

DIVORCE

Divorce in Islam has remained through the ages a controversial subject. Though divorce is permitted by Islamic Law, there is some stigma attached to it. It is very difficult for a divorced woman to get married than for divorced man. Individuals and groups have brought to bear upon the Islamic law of divorce and an assortment of interpretations are given to suit various interests. As a result to this day there has been no agreed solution to the problem (Ellickson 1976, Anwar 1983). "Of all things permitted by law, divorce is the most hateful in the sight of God" (Abu-Dawood, XIII:3). Yet a Muslim man can divorce his wife by repeating the statement, "I divorce you", by three times without any justification.

The rise in the divorce rate is perhaps universal. It is supposed that wherever western manners and customs have influenced the lives of people more, the number of divorces has also gone up. This assumption was tested in this study.
and the respondents were asked about divorce.

The respondents were asked the questions about divorce. Questions regarding marriage preceded. 56.8% respondents agreed that marriage was an unbreakable alliance, 12.4% disagreed and 30.8% had no opinion in this regard. 90.4% respondents reported that no divorce had occurred in their families. 3.2% said about only one divorce, 4.4% said about two divorces, 1.6% said about three divorces had taken place in their families in the last five years. Only 4% respondents gave no answer. This shows that the Ansaris had a very low rate of divorce in their biradri.

In support of this question the respondents were asked counter questions regarding conditions for divorce. They were asked whether they would like to divorce their wives if it become impossible to adjust with them. 37.6% of the respondents replied in the negative. Table 11 indicates that 62.1% were willing to settle the dispute by themselves. 35.6% said that they would involve their relatives in getting the dispute resolved. Only 2.2% were unrelated to this problem. Hence the table shows that the majority of the respondents preferred to resolve the matter by themselves while 12.4% expressed that they would divorce their wives straight away and did not try any other alternative solution.
The last question in this index was asked whether the respondents should encourage the practice of divorce. Responses from the entire sample were strictly negative.

Marriage among Ansaris is endogamous as a majority of respondents preferred marriage alliances within the biradri. Several of them were of the view that they would not even consider marriage alliance with Saiyeds.

The traditional trend of cross-cousin marriages shows a weakening trend, perhaps because it limits the family contracts and gives rise to familial disputes.

The right of mate selection is the right of parents which shows that the authority of parents has not been affected by the modern forces. The children are restricted to select spouses or go to civil courts for marriages.

The marriages are simple with a minimum amount of dower and dowry. No elaborate ceremonies are performed on marriage. Talks of the marriage are initiated by the parents of the bridegroom. Music band is strictly prohibited in the marriage processions. But the cassettes of wawwalis are often heard being played at cassette-players. This also shows their rejection of the western music.

The rate of divorce is ideally very low among the
Ansaris. It indicates that they consider marriage as a permanent bond. The whole view of marriage and divorce displays a traditionalistic mode of life.

POLITICAL AWARENESS AND MASS MEDIA PARTICIPATION

Minority communities have been a source of attraction for political parties. Among Muslims, the Ansaris, perhaps because of their singularly unified large population, have come to assume great importance in politics. In a democratic country like India, participation in politics and the right of franchise is considered an essential part of citizenship. Participation in political activities such as meetings, rallies, processions and elections, reflects the level of political awareness.

The respondents were asked whether they had participated in elections at town area/municipal level, assembly level and parliamentary level. The table XXIII shows that 24% of respondents between the age of 40 to 60 years participated in town area/municipal board elections. 63.6% said that they had participated in the assembly elections and 58.4% said that they had voted in the parliamentary election.

Respondents in age group 18-30 years were not asked this question as municipal board had been superceded much before they had attained maturity.
Questions relating to the interest of the respondents in politics at local level, state level and national level, reveal that 12% were interested in local politics, 63.6% were taking interest in state politics and 58.4% were interested in the political matters at central level. 22.8% said that they had no interest in any politics (Table XXIV).

The next question was related with the criteria of support to a political party. The Table XXV reveals that 48% of the total respondents did not show their own inclination towards any political party as they said that they supported the party which was supported by the majority of the other members of their biradri. 21.2% were ready to support the party which could take some steps for the betterment of their biradri while 13.6% would support a party which could take guard Muslim interest. 17.2% made no response.

All the respondents were aware of the fact that persons from their biradri had contested and won the elections as members of town area committee/municipal board, M.L.As and ...Ps.

The data in table XXV exhibit that 60% wanted to vote and support the candidate from their own biradri, while 24% wanted to elect that candidate who could represent the Muslims with sympathy and sincerity. 16% were quite indifferent and did not respond.
The data in Table XXV show that 76.4% respondents preferred a secular government, 6% preferred an Islamic government and 17.6% had no specific opinion.

The respondents were further examined regarding Hindu-Muslim joint participate in the government. Table XXVII shows that 76% favoured a joint government. 3.2% pointed out that this system was possible, and 20.8% gave no response.

The last set of questions of this index were directed to examine the respondents affiliation with political or politico-religious, or religious parties. In response to these questions the Table XXVIII indicates that 59.2% respondents were affiliated with *tablighi Jamat* (a religious organization with missionary zeal organization). 11.6% were affiliation with Jamat-e-Islami (a politico-religious organization) and 29.2% respondents were not affiliated with any party or organization.

**EXPOSURE TO MASS MEDIA**

Mass media provides a vital source of information and communication in contemporary society. Newspapers, radio, television and Cinema are the media which communicate views and news to a large section of people situated in the distant corners of the country. Exposure to mass
media develops an outlook and provides a critical outlook on political, economic and social affairs.

With this in mind, data was collected to elicit information on mass media participation.

Newspapers expand the range of information and bring the people into contact with the global events as well as the nation-wide situation. Thus, the respondents were asked whether they read newspapers. The data given in Table XXIX shows that 18% of the total respondents read the newspapers daily, 2.4% read the newspapers occasionally and 87.6% did not go through any newspaper. The respondents who read newspapers were further asked which newspaper they read, almost all of them said that they read regional Urdu dailies. This indicates that a large number of the respondents did not read newspapers regularly.

Radio and television broadcasts constitute powerful media of mass communication and represent diverse interests and tastes. In response to the exposure to radio, the respondents revealed diverse answers. Table XXX shows that (out of those who owned radio) 56.4% of the respondents did not have any specific liking and they listened to all programmes. 16.9% said that they listened to "tilawat" and 'Nati' (the recitation from the Quran and the poetic applause for the Prophet of Islam). 12.3% listened to the news,
11.7% listened to the 'Qawwalis' and the rest 2.5% listened to other programme of their own taste.

The respondents displayed a similar interest in television. Table XXX also shows that 85.7% (out of those who owned television) viewed all programmes, 2.8% turned on their T.V. sets at news time, 8.5% viewed the sports events and 2.8% saw the plays only.

CINEMA

Cinema is regarded as a means of entertainment at low cost. It also plays an important role in communicating values, norms and attitudes and affects on the existing social system.

The respondents were asked whether they see movies. Almost all of them responded in negative. They were further asked if they would mind their children going to cinema. Table XXX shows that 94.9% of the respondents replied that they would not permit their children to go to cinema, because this was against the Islamic practices. Only 5.1% agreed that there was no harm if their children would go to cinema.

This reveals that the frequency of movie-going among the Ansaris of Bijnor district was totally absent.
**RELIGIOSITY**

The data analysed in table XXXI show that 51% had completed the study of Quran while 35.2% had studied half of the Quran and 13.2% accepted that they did not study the Quran at all.

Table XXXI shows that 10.8% had read the Holy Prophet's biography. 29.2% had some knowledge about half of the biography and 60% had not studied the biography of the Prophet at all.

Table XXXII reveals that 73.6% paid the impost (Zakat) regularly while 26.4% said that they did not pay because they did not have any savings.

Regarding the offering of Namaz, the table XXXII shows that 41.2% of the respondents offered namaz regularly 5 times a day. 19.7% of the respondents prayed occasionally and 8.1% prayed weekly on Fridays, while 10% offered Namaz only on Ids and 21% did not pray at all.

Regarding the observance of fasting, Table XXXI reveals that 55% fasted regularly, 14% fasted only occasionally while 31% did not fast at all.

Regarding Haj, the Table XXXIII reveals that 24.8% of the respondents had performed Haj once, 4.8% twice and 70.4% were those who could not go for Haj because of certain limitations. Table XXXIV shows that out of these,
70.4% respondents, 40.6% said that they could not perform Haj because they had no money to spare. 22% said that they could not perform this duty because the duty of marrying their daughters was the foremost. 16.8% responded that they were too old to go for Haj. 11.2% revealed that they were too occupied by their business to spare time for performing this sacred duty and 9.4% gave no response in this regard. When the respondents were asked whether any of family member had performed Haj, the data in Table XXXV show that 14.6% fathers, 9.8% mothers and 3.2% brothers of the respondents had performed Haj.

In response to Jihad, almost all the respondents showed their eagerness to fight for religion and reiterated that they would sacrifice their lives if they ever found their religion in danger.

Regarding the change in the Muslim Personal Law, 93% respondents were reluctant to vouch for any change in the Muslim Personal Law. Only 7% agreed that the law should be amended according to the modern situation.

68.2% respondents were in favour of giving their children religious education. 17.9% wanted to teach their children their family trade and 13.9% respondents gave no answer. All those 68.2% respondents who wanted to give
their children a religious education, were in favour of this education to be given in madarsa. In response to the visit to the holy shrines, only 11.8% said that they often visited various holy places. 9.6% said that they visited occasionally and the remaining 78.6% responses were in the negative because they thought it an un-Islamic trend (see Table XXXVI).

Table XXXVII shows the data regarding the distribution of property. The data indicate that for 55.2% respondents distribution of property should be in accordance with the shariat, that is, two shares to the sons and one to the daughters. 12.5% said that there should be an equal distribution between sons and daughters and the rest 32.3% showed their ignorance regarding this law.
NOTES

1. Collective Identity: This term has been used by Beteille (1984) and is used in this study in the same context as used by Beteille.

2. Tablighi Jamat: A Religio-political body which has been influential. Under its influence the Ansaris have given up the old un-Islamic custom of dance and music on occasions of marriage. This is an example of Islamization among Ansaris.