CHAPTER IV

PERCEPTION OF IDENTITY

Complete submission to the Sovereignty of God in all
spheres of thought and conduct on the principle of the unity of
purpose in the creation of man and universe and the unity in
aspiration and goal of man are the distinguished marks of
identity of a Muslim. The identity of the Islamic community
centres upon the principles of consistent balance, exemplary
conduct, unity of purpose, reciprocity of feelings, and
solidarity and equity. 1

The qualities of a Muslim have been dealt with earlier
in the Chapter II. Hence, bearing that explanation in mind,
what is required to point out here is, that each thought and
attitude of a Muslim distinguishes him from others on this
criteria of the complete submission of the Islamic principles. 1
In other words, the criteria of complete submission to Islam
is the only demarcating line which separates a man from another,
thus identifying the one who is inside the boundary as a
'Muslim' and the one outside is a 'non-Muslim'. From this two
conclusions can be drawn:

1. That each thought and attitude of a Muslim expresses his
identity as a Muslim in all the realms of social, economic,
political and educational life; also in his day-to-day dealings
of life; also in his diet, dress and the mode of walking,
sitting, sleeping and rising and more particularly in his aspirations and goals of life. In short, all actions from the cradle to the grave express his identity as a Muslim. Muslims are always characterised by their strong desire and endeavour to live by Islam. For Islam is unique among religions in that it claims to be a total way of life for humanity. This naturally raises certain problems when Muslims are placed in a different cultural environment and yet wish to practice their religion and preserve their cultural identity.  

2. The identity as a Muslim is the basic and a primary identity which transcends all the geographical and ethincal boundaries. The national, ethnic, regional and such other identities remain only on surface. These identities do not divide the Muslim Ummah, since they are only nominal and hence should not be confused with the primary identity as a Muslim - a follower of one and the same ideology - The Islamic ideology. "Islam as a religion transcends national and geographical divisions. It is open to all mankind and is in no way restricted to any group ... Islam has never sanctioned divisions, yet ethnic preferences within the community have surfaced in several ways."  

The Muslim Ummah, today, is found to be scattered throughout the world under the geographical and ethnic divisions, but all these nominal divisions shrink into one
single identity of Muslim community (Ummah). But the question is how these scattered Muslims have endeavoured to preserve their identity in the West in a predominantly alien environment. However, this is the secondary question. The basic problem is to find out their perception of their identity, because it is only a clear and deep perception of anything which acts as a basic foundation for one's action and behaviour. Hence, it is what we are going to explore and present in this chapter. This chapter is divided into two sections: in Section 'A' an exploration into their understanding of their identity would be presented which is followed by Section 'B' in which the aspiration and goal of the community would be focussed and in Section 'C' the conclusion would be presented.

SECTION 'A'

A. Understanding of Identity

At the very outset, it is to be made clear that an exploration into their understanding of their identity as Muslims is going to be conducted through four tables of the questionnaire, informal and interviews, self-observation and to be simultaneously compared with the findings of the other researchers. To begin with the questionnaire, the first table is set up on the question, in which the respondents are required to say in which of their action or activity, that they wish to identify themselves as Muslims strongly?
TABLE - I

1. In what situation do you strongly wish to identify yourself as a Muslim?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) While admitting your child to school in Britain</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) at the place of work</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) While consulting a doctor</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) While introducing yourself</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table (1) illustrates the high concern of parents (179) to preserve the identity of their children while admitting them to the British schools. It also emphasises that the school is the most sensitive and delicate area which plays vital role in making one's identity. "All education aims to build a particular identity in the one who is being educated." 3

Education is the basic element which formulates the personality of man. It is education which makes the mind of man and also forms his heart. Education is the backbone resting on which, a man perceives and caters to all the problems of his social, cultural, economic, educational and political aspects of life. Ever and above education is the 'stair', the more one takes the step upwards, the more he understands the 'universe', the 'Almighty' Allah and 'himself'. It is the reason, that Islam encourages education for an individual.
The Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, reported to have said: "He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of Allah."

However, it is deemed necessary here to understand the concept of education in Islam. By the word education, Islam means the knowledge about the Universe and man. In other words, it embraces all social, physical and natural sciences. The main idea which lies behind the thirst of a student is to discover the all-pervading sovereignty of Allah in the whole creation, the principle of Unity underlying the whole creation, the place of man on the earth and the purpose of his creation. It is the main function of education in Islam which is distinct from the concept of education in other ideologies. Islam therefore places more emphasis on education because an unprejudiced man while acquiring knowledge of the Universe, man and its creator, can very easily understand the basic concepts of Islam and can submit himself to the ideology. This being the function of education in Islam, morality and the construction of humanity on the moral foundations are its chief end. This totally distinguishes the concept of education in Islam from the secular concept of education. The secular concept of education drifts man away from realizing the sovereignty of God in Universe and the relationship between man and the Creator. Rather it tends to make the State as God and the citizens its worshippers. It is the reason that the purpose of the secular concept of education is materialistic.
at both the individual and social levels and hence falls short of the concept of education of Islam which aims at making man a 'man' and constructing the society on the moral grounds.

The problem is that the educational institutions of the West and as well as of the East are secular. Hence, it is the major problem for the Muslims, for the Canadian school, endeavours to build the 'Canadian identity' of its students, a Norwegian school, a Norwegian identity and British school, a British identity. The question is about the Muslim who endeavours to preserve his 'identity as a Muslim' and is opposed to accepting any secular identity on the national ground, since Islam stands against Nationalism and in Islam the different divisions of the world are only the geographical expressions. Thus the rejection of the materialism and racism of the West is not seen as a regression or a flight into ethnocentrism; rather it must be viewed as an attempt to transcend the 'tribalism' of language and race and as an invitation into theo-centricism. It can be thus pointed out that "the goal of a Muslim is to develop an Islamic identity which is convinced of the superiority of the Muslim way of life, one that actively advocates the reform of society according to Islamic principles. The goal is to resist assimilation into the host culture and instead to absorb, reform it, that it may conform to the religious ideals of Islam."
What is required to point out here is that the educational institutions of the West being secular, how far the Muslim community has perceived this major and basic problem of education of Muslims as described above? However, it may be pointed out that the majority of respondents in the (table - I) have expressed their deep concern over the education of their children wherein they strongly wish to identify themselves as Muslims. But, the problem is to find out on what grounds, the community has expressed its concern for the education—whether it has perceived the real problem mentioned above or it has concentrated only on the apparent problems. For exploring this dimension of the problem, the informal interviews, observation and the findings of the other researchers have been taken into account.

During my informal interviews almost twenty two (22) respondents out of 25 from both the old and young generations have made mention only of the apparent problems like co-education, religious education, sex-education, dress, food, sports and such other matters. Their general remarks on the educational matter can be put thus:

'There is no separate school for boys and girls, the great problem is for girls, for their dress, specially the dress for the sports and swimming' 'no provision for halal meat, hence the Muslim children often prefer vegetables', 'sexology in
in sex-education is causing more harm than doing any good...

Thus, the area of their concentration on the problem of education is restricted to the apparent problems and there are some who have overlooked some of these problems too. One of the respondents said:

'Since the school supplies only the haram meat and vegetables like potato chips etc; I prefer to eat chips and such other things, because my mother said, that I am not supposed to eat pork or any other meat in school since it is haram. But I have seen that many other Muslims eat haram meat.... perhaps their mothers must not have instructed them....'

It shows there are a few members in the community who overlook even these problems as well as the real problem of secular education.

One of the respondents of the researcher on the Pakistani teenage girls said: "My husband does not agree with me. He never allowed our daughter to take swimming lessons because he did not think it proper...."

Islam encourages learning, as explained earlier. There is nothing wrong in taking swimming lessons. But, the problem in the British schools in this connection are about the mixed
swimming and the swimming dress.

The same argument can be put about the sex education. "Sex education is a part of religious education under the moral code; Muslims are even trained in the methods of bathing after sex. However, sex education in the form of indoctrination is worrying; the tone and approach seem licentious ... Sex education should not be used as an excuse for indolence or mystification. Muslims regard sex as an open subject. Freud was the leader of this disguised movement, and the Church came under pressure, thus sex and sex education became a fashion."¹⁹

Another problem often mentioned by the respondents has been concerning about 'wearing scarf'. When asked a college girl whether just wearing a scarf on head would serve the purpose of purdah? She replied: "Wearing scarf itself is jinah, here, in schools and colleges!" One girl at some conference said that 'she faced questions from her friends in school about wearing her scarf. Similarly when she started to perform her prayers in school, other Muslim girls were reluctant to join, because they were afraid of questions from other girls."¹⁰

In asking a mother as to what she is doing for her children, since they are getting secular education in their schools ?, she said:
"They do go to the schools here .... any way, their father gives them some religious education at home. He makes them learn Arabic to read the Quran."

All this clearly show that they do not have the clear and deep perception of the problem of education and that their only concern of identifying themselves as Muslims while admitting their children to the British school is restricted to the apparent problems.

To move to the second answer of the (Table - 1) it is found that 10 respondents wish to identify themselves as Muslims at the place of work. It shows that most of them do not wish to follow Islamic injunctions in their offices, companies or factories, because it is found that to follow the Islamic principles at the place of work is to invite problems. A respondent said, "A number of problems arise, if we consider Islamic viewpoints in our offices or say in any place of work in Britain. For example, the prayer .... neither we get the time to offer the prayer here during the office hours nor do we get the permission for it. Still, if you want to observe the prayer, you will have to observe it at the risk of your job since the office authorities stand on your nerves and the office colleagues look at you with questioning eyes."

This shows that the respondent is not so much mindful
about the prayer as he is about his job. He looks too much concerned about his adjustment with the people around him and appears absolutely careless about his obligations to God.

However, there are few who always endeavor to observe their duties as Muslims wherever they are and also tend to show their identity as Muslims. A respondent said: "Brother, I try all my best to express my unshakeable faith in all the Islamic concepts before these people, whether it is the place of work or anywhere. You will be surprised to listen that the office mates usually visit each other on holidays or on some special occasions, as you know.... My other Muslim colleagues offer their Western friends their favourite drinks (all alcoholic) as a mark of hospitality. But whoever comes to me, I offer tea or any special item to him like samosa, falafel or any sweet and he enjoys it. Of course, there are some who have branded me with names like a non-drinker, fanatic etc. I don't mind all these because I know that it is out of sheer ignorance that they think and say like this...." Akram also stated that "The tale that is repeated most often, whenever Muslims gather for a chat is how such and such a Muslim went to such extraordinary lengths in order to preserve his identity as a Muslim under difficult circumstances and found ways and means to offer his regular prayers, etc. There was a respondent also worked in the city centre and who had made arrangements with
the Minister of a Church near his place of work, so that he was "given a corner of the church every time to offer his prayer in."11 There are also found some who have been entangled with the problem of offering Friday prayer in the mosque. According to a Law report, a Muslim teacher who used to attend his Friday prayer at the mosque was forced to become a temporary part-time teacher, doing only 4½ days a week and being paid accordingly.12

It is also found out from the above table, that there were 10 respondents who wished to identify themselves as Muslims while consulting a doctor. It is also an important aspect as far as the Muslims in Britain or any other part of the West is concerned. It is found out, that very few Muslims consider this aspect as important for a Muslim. Often the Muslim women visit and consult the male doctors even while in pregnancy on the plea that there are hardly any female gynaecologists in their areas. The Westernised Muslims are found to be liberal in these matters because they do not observe purdah. A Muslim Science teacher said in some conference "in hospitals the majority of the doctors are male; and some traditional Muslims object to the medical examinations and treatment of Muslim women by men ..."13 The word traditional Muslim shows that she believes that observing purdah is an old and out-dated act which should be given up in the
present day Western society.

For the last answer of the first question of the (table - 1), there were 101 respondents who wished to identify themselves as Muslims while introducing themselves. It is thus found out, that a large proportion of the respondents during their contact with the Western people and the Britishers or the members of the other communities wish to introduce themselves as Muslims, no matter whether they are practising Muslims or otherwise. It shows their emotional attachment to the Muslim Ummah, a sense of belonging to the unique community distinct from other communities. However what is required here to understand is Islam consists of both 'faith and action'. Keeping faith in Islamic principles and acting on the Western injunctions is a tendency which runs contrary to the Islamic spirit. Islam demands that a Muslim should devote himself to the Islamic ideology both through faith and action.

Nevertheless, there are three more testing tables to judge their perception of their identity, no matter the (table-1) has been the most important and the primary one.

The table - 2 can be put as under:

TABLE 2
Do you wish to be noticed as a Muslim?

| (a) by wearing a Muslim dress | 68 |
| (b) by praying in public | 9 |
| (c) by identifying your opinion as a Muslim opinion in conversation | 223 |
| **Total** | **300** |

The dress of a man, his way of walking, sitting and other physical movements too express his inner thoughts and belief. "The handsomeness of men is not in wearing precious stones or floating in pure and natural silken clothes but in high morality, sweet nature and sound conduct... Islam is very sensitive to the manners of clothing and ornaments. It makes it crystal clear that both men and women should be confined to their respective natures to safeguard their natural instincts and endow them with modesty and high morality. Prophet Muhammad upon whom be peace is reported as having said that God condemns those men who behave or act in a womanlike fashion, and those women who behave or act in a manlike fashion. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Islam lays no restrictions on the harmless or proper items of clothing and ornaments." In fact, the Quran calls such things the beautiful gifts of God and reproaches those who look upon them as forbidden.
From these explicit Islamic injunctions on dress, it can be concluded that the wearing of jeans and other tight clothes and also such dresses which do not cover the whole body of women properly, rather exhibit her body and feminine charms in public, are all totally forbidden in Islam. Yet, it is found from the first answer of the (Table - 2) that a very small number (68) respondents have expressed their view in this connection claiming that they wish to be noticed as Muslims by their dress which they prefer to wear. Most of the (23 out of 25) respondents of the informal interviews expressed the view that it is necessary to dress in the Western style to move in this society. A typical answer of one of these respondents can be cited here in this connection. He said that the mode of dress and the hair style are the two controversial issues which often invoke a high degree of tension in his home between his sisters and his parents. He then gave the reasons of the tension. He said that his sisters wished to wear the tights and the jeans and they also like to leave their hair open, while his parents do not allow his daughter to wear any such dress nor he allow them to leave their hair open. His parents want them to wear either salwar suit or saree and want them to tie their hair properly. This creates a problem in the home which sometimes assumes a crucial dimension. On asking him what does he prefer for his sisters, he said that he too wants them to wear the Western dress for the Pakistani dress does not suit
here and further added that his parents are too rigid to understand the problem.

A respondent, of the researcher, Syra Rashid said, "arguments with daughters are over several things. For example there are the tight clothes which people wear in this country. You have to wear Western clothes to go out in the society here and the children particularly like those awful tight jeans." Similarly a girl in some conference argued in connection with the dress, that "Islam is a system of faith, and its acceptance is in the heart. One's mode of dress is of no importance."17

It clearly shows that the majority of the young generation are completely inclined to the Western mode of dress and are absolutely ignorant of the concept of dress in Islam. It is required to make clear here that out of 25 respondents of my informal interview twenty respondents were from the young generation and five from the old generation. Thus, the data show that 23 respondents who wish to wear the Western dress are in majority from the young generation and only four respondents are from the old generation. In other words, out of 20 respondents of the young generation, and out of five respondents of the old generation, only one from the old and one from the young generation held that the Muslims should dress in accordance with the Islamic concept of dress. It is thus noticed that a majority of them do not have the perception of
Islamic dress and they take this matter too lightly. It is a
general observation outside, especially at the shopping centres
that all along the way, I could hear only the (tack-tack) voice
of the penil-heeled shoes which 99% of the ladies of all
communities were wearing, no matter they were short or tall or
whether they could walk comfortably wearing it or they have to
conceal the inconveniences the high-heel shoes or sandal causing
them! Apart from these noisy shoes, the cosmetics on their
faces and the perfume which they sprinkle on their dress show how
far they stand against the Islamic injunction: ‘And say to the
believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard
their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and
ornaments except (most ordinarily) appear thereof; that they
should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their
beauty except before their husbands, their fathers... (and
certain other members of the household); and that they should
not strike their feet in order to draw attention of their
hidden ornaments.”

However, to move further with the table-2, it is first
required to clarify that during a long time in the year, the
days in England are too short and the nights long especially in
winter. During this period, in most cases, the timings for the
three prayers (Zohar, Asar and Magrib) particularly follow
very soon one after another. Hence, for a Muslim who is working
outside, it becomes too difficult to observe his prayers unless
he is much thoughtful about his obligatory duty as a Muslim,
to pray punctually wherever he is working. It is the reason
that such a question was put before the respondents to find
out how thoughtful they are about one of this obligatory duties
of a Muslim and to know how much they adhere to their duty, no
matter whether they have to perform it in public or in private.
But the (table-2) clearly indicates how less mindful they are
in this connection. A quite negligible size of the respondents
(9) expressed their concern over this matter. The same sort of
response I received during my informal interviews wherein they
gave a long explanation justifying that they are very much
helpless in this environment of un-Islamic mentality and
feelings. But, any way, there are a few as the (table-2) shows,
who are thoughtful enough for their obligatory duties and do
not mind to perform these duties whether in public or in
private. Lewis Peter writes : "Most employers in immigrant
areas have stopped seeking their employees for insisting on
their prayer times and many now provide a special room to pray
in. But the difficulties were demonstrated dramatically in
Birmingham two years ago when a Corporation bus driver, running
out of the permitted time for his sunset prayers parked his bus,
got out of his cab and put his mat down on the pavement
beside it." 19

As regards representing Muslim opinion in conversation,
the majority of (223) respondents agreed that they wished to be noticed as Muslims while in conversation with the people. However, it is required to make clear here that a Muslim opinion on any matter ought to be based on the Islamic principles. It followed from this that the opinions of Muslims can be formed only on the Islamic teachings, not on the native or family trends which are generally found to be confused with the Islamic teachings. Thus, it is found that the situation regarding the answer to the majority is very complex. From the four tables of the chapter- III and the Table I of this chapter it is found that the general understanding of Islam of the respondents is weak, limited and perplexing. How then can their opinions be genuine, authentic and concrete, if there is a want of clear understanding of even the basic concepts of Islam? Yet, the majority held that they wish to give their opinions as Muslims... Hence, this answer should be understood in terms of what they wish leaving aside whether they can give the genuine Muslim opinion or not. It is thus followed from this that at the core of their heart, the majority wish to preserve their identity as Muslims regardless whether their own perception is clear or shrouded one.

Keeping these results apart, let us see what the (Table - 3) unfolds.
TABLE 2

Do you consider that the Muslim communities' perception is endorsed by:

| (a) Mosque with a minaret | 215 |
| (b) by a special programme on Islam on Radio, TV, etc. | 29 |
| (c) by holding large meetings at public places | 66 |
| **Total** | **300** |

Mosque in any place stands as an embodiment of the Muslim community. Wherever a mosque is seen, it can be well realised, that there is a Muslim community in a small or a large size existing nearby. Mosque is place where the Muslims, particularly men are instructed to offer all their five obligatory prayers. However, it is required to make clear one point here that for the followers of the Prophet Mohammed upon whom be peace, the whole earth has been made clean and pure for performing their prayers. It is laid down that "wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform the salat and that is a masjid." However, the importance and significance of the mosque lies in the fact that praying in congregation is preferred to praying at home for men. "The prayer-site of the man who joins the congregation is more than twenty degrees better than that of him who prays in his place of merchandising or in his house."
It is thus pointed out by the majority of (215) respondents on Table 3 that a mosque with a minaret is a sign, a symbol of the existence of a Muslim community. In other words, the perception of a Muslim community is enforced by the presence of a mosque. But just building a mosque is not an end in itself. It is necessary on the part of the Muslims to visit it punctually five times a day. However it is found out, that though there are a great number of mosques throughout Britain, but the number of devotees in the mosque is not that much. Stephen noted an experience of a Bengali Muslim who reported 'if several men were together at the time for prayer and the subject was mentioned, then they prayed, but not otherwise.'

This experience cannot in any way be generalised. It is being observed that if not all the five times a day, some two or three times a day at least most of the mosques are attended by the regular observers of prayers. Moreover, some of the regular observers of prayers offer their prayers at the place of their work, if not in congregation, individually. An Imam of a mosque of Bradford observed that when he arrived in 1978, only two or three people came to the daily morning prayers, but by 1980 as many as ten were present. At the Friday prayers there were seldom more than forty in 1978 but two years later there were up to sixty. During Ramadan those figures increased further, so that by 1980, there were up to eighty present at the Friday prayers and approximately one hundred and twenty at the night congregation.'
It is a point worthy of note in connection with the attachment of the Muslims to the mosque as what the (table-3) suggests, that leaving aside the fact whether they (most of them) are regular mosque attenders, but they do show keen interest in forming and building the mosques since they understand the importance of mosques and feel acutely the need of listening to the call to prayer adhan during five times a day which is a reminder for prayers for Muslims. A mosque secretary is reported to have said: "the time must come in England when this prejudice will disappear. After all, you ring your bells and the call to prayer is not a noise."  

The presence of a large number of mosques and the big congregations of the Friday prayers and the prayers in Ramadhan are some such features for some of the Western eyes who look at these as instructions for them for it is observed that many an Anglican considers three or four attendances a year to be quite enough. Hence Lewis Pater remarks: "A glimpse of Britain as it looks from the minaret can be instructive. One may as well begin under the great gilded dome in Regent's Park of the Central London Mosque, the Westminster Abbey of Harlam Britain. On Fridays the mosque court yard is thronged like a Middle Eastern market with stalls selling books and prayer mats and souvenirs Midday papers bring together the motliest of multi-racial congregations. Facing the prayer wall, aligned with Mecca, the long lines of men bowing and kneeling represent something of the range of the Muslim world."
Their headgear includes white prayer caps, draped Arab Keffiyahs, wolly top knots or, failing these a handkerchief. 25

It is thus found that the Westerners too look upon the mosques and the congregations as a symbol of the seal of the Muslim community to commit themselves to prayers in congregation in mosques, irrespective of native land, language, colour, occupation or any such thing.

As regards the second answer of the table-3 it is found out (29) respondents feel that the perception of the Muslim community can be enforced by giving some special programmes on Islam on radio, T.V. etc. All the scientific means and media can be utilised for disseminating Islamic teachings wherever necessary. In the context of extending Islamic knowledge, these can play a vital role, especially today, when a sizable Muslim community has made the West its home. But the correct and real use of these modes of expression can be realised provided the teachings which have been described are undoubtedly Islamic and are not intermingled with other ideas and thoughts which run against the Islamic spirit. It is what has been observed in the T.V. and radio programmes in the West, that the programmes presented are all mingled with the concepts which stand against the Islamic teachings. One of such programmes is ‘Qawwali’ a form of poetry sung by a group of men with a number of musical instruments. First and foremost area of conflict in this
connection arises on the subject matter of the (Gawali). It is found, that it is always based on (shirt) i.e. joining others with the Sovereignty of Allah. The Prophet Mohammed upon whom be peace and his companions are not presented in the true and genuine form, rather they have been presented in a way which go contrary to the Islamic concepts. Apart from this regular programme often presented in T.V. there have been some programmes often presented by the Western media which are against the Islamic dictates. A very recent example in this connection is of a programme in which it is shown that circumcision is obligatory in Islam and both men and women have to undergo it. It entirely based on the wrong assumption. Islam has laid down circumcision only for men and women are totally exempted from it. But they showed such a horrible picture which caused more confusion than understanding. However, a very minor chance has been given to the Muslim scholars of repute to give their programmes. In this connection, a very recent programme on family planning given by Professor Khurshid Ahmedi, Chairman, the Islamic Foundation can be cited. However what is to be pointed out here is that simply giving programmes on T.V. and radio is not a strong sign to indicate the identity of the Muslim community, though its importance cannot be underestimated.

Further, the third answer of the table - 3 suggests that as many as (66) respondents have expressed, that the identity of the community can be manifested by holding large
meeting at public places.

It is observed that the different Muslim organisations all over Britain now and then hold large meetings and invite Muslim scholars, intellectuals and leaders from India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or other places. The Researcher also had the opportunity of attending a number of meetings, especially the two big meetings that deserve mention here were one which was held in the Islamic Foundation, Leicester and the one at Birmingham Mosque. I found that these programmes have been attended by quite a big gathering of Muslims. These meetings fostered a very good impact on the Muslim community, since these meetings aroused in them a sense of obligation towards the Islamic teachings and infused in them love for Islam and a feeling that they all belong to one single Umma, the Muslim community, regardless of any regional, lingual and any other difference. But, it is not to suggest, that merely by holding large meetings, the identity of the community can be exhibited. The holding of meetings is only an outward expression of the identity of the community. The meetings take place at particular times, conducted in some particular place on some specific topics. But, the faith and attitudes of a Muslim are the important signs which show his identity in every walk of his life and in every act he performs.

Now, let us move to the fourth table of the questionnaires
TABLE 1

How do you think that the Community express its identity more vehemently through

| (a) celebration of festivals | 67 |
| (b) faith and knowledge of Islam | 233 |
| Total | 300 |

**Eidul-Fitr (the festival of Fast breaking) and Eidul-Adha (the festival of sacrifice) are the two Muslim festivals which are unique in every respect.** "The first 'Eid' comes after an entire month of "absolute" fasting in the month of Ramadhan. The second 'Eid marks the completion of Hajj to Mecca, a course in which the Muslim demonstrates his renouncement of the mundane concerns and hearkens only to the eternal voice of God."^26

In 'Eid-ul-Fitr', the Muslims "seek the mercy and forgiveness of God and ability to live by the Quran. They also pay the Zakaah, Fitr (Welfare due) for the poor."^27

**Eid-ul-Adha is also an important celebration of Muslims. It is yet another momentous event in the Islamic calendar and commemorates the time, 4,000 years ago, when the Prophet Abraham (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) was, at the command of his Lord, willing to sacrifice his own son Ishmael, as an act of obedience, devotion and submission to the will of God. As a mercy
upon the Prophet Abraham (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) God accepted a lamb as a symbol for such devotion. Now, Muslims throughout the world symbolise their willingness to sacrifice their life and property in the name of God and for the cause of Islam. 'Id-ul-Adha' coincides with the pilgrimage to Mecca and it was on the day of Pilgrimage to Mecca about fourteen centuries ago, that God declared the completion of the final divine revelation.  

Hence, what is evident from the significance of both the Eids is that the festivals of Muslims are not merely the days of merry-making. But, these are the days which impart a sense of realisation in the Muslims, that (in 'Id-ul-Fitr) they should be always mindful about their fellow brothers who hardly get proper meals and are being poorly fed at the cost of the luxurious lives of a few, that (in 'Id-ul-Adha') they should realise the fact, how the Muslims are bound to sacrifice anything asked by God and how they should submit their lives to the Islamic injunctions without making any sort of compromise.

It is thus followed from these characteristic features of the Muslim festivals that on the one hand these are the days of happiness and joy and on the other, these are the days of deep realisation – a realisation that demand from them the total commitment to the Islamic injunctions at the individual level and a sense of belonging to one Ummah, Muslim community which has a
unique purpose of existence and moral obligation towards the rest of mankind.

Now, it is required to understand that in what context, (67) respondents as the (table-4) suggests, feel that through the celebration of the Islamic festivals the community expresses its identity more vehemently? In this connection, we present our data based on interviews, personal observations and the findings of other researchers.

It is found that 24 out of 25 respondents mentioned only about the apparent features of these festivals remarking quite painfully the fact, that they enjoy the Fide remarkably a lot, lot more than what they enjoy in Britain. The whole atmosphere in their native places look totally different - children, elders and even the old all wearing new costumes, sprinkled with perfume, visiting family members, neighbours and friends, enjoying delicious dishes and so on ....... Here, they (the respondents of the old generation) particularly remarked, that our children do not know what happiness and felicity Eid brings for them, since most of them have not experienced that sort of happiness and joy which they have enjoyed in their native places.

A similar complaint has been received from the informants of Syria, who stated: "Those of my informants who have experienced Eid in Pakistan complain that the occasion is a dull one in England."
It is no doubt observed that these occasions have a totally different colour and charm in a Muslim-majority setting, where the whole atmosphere is echoed with the phrase "Eid Mubarak" (Happy Eid). But, what is to be pointed out here is, merely greeting each other and passing the day with remarkable pleasure and happiness is not an end in itself ... where then comes the moments of realisation and reflection. For a Muslim both the moments joy and reflection are important and must go simultaneously. It is the reason, that even on the occasions of Eid, while addressing to the public, the Imam is required to remind the Muslim masses of their duties and responsibilities as Muslims. Hence Stephen observed that "these are the occasions for him (Imam) to remind every Muslim of the basic duties which he is bound to fulfil not only at Eid but every day, in the knowledge that 'we shall not all meet at the next Eid.'" 30

It has been found that only one respondent expressed such thoughts as how deeply he feels especially on the occasions of Eid, that how the Western society is partially or totally unaware of the significance of these festivals and how far it stands to the unbounded happiness the Muslims possess in their hearts on these occasions. Apart, he also mentioned, that merely by celebrating the festivals, if the community wishes to identify itself as the Muslim community, it hardly affects the alien society.

It is thus noted that the respondents who look upon the
celebration of the festivals as the greatest occasions to express the identity of the Muslim Community, they look at only the apparent features of the festivals, their colour, charm and happiness.

You let us see the response for the second answer of the same question of the (table-4). It is found out that the majority of 223 respondents expressed the view that through faith and knowledge in Islam the community most vehemently expresses its identity.

"Knowledge of God is belief in His constitution the very foundation of Islam." It is on the foundation of knowledge alone that a man can build his personality - a Muslim personality or a non-Muslim personality. It has therefore been observed that the more knowledge one obtains in Islamic ideology and in other domains of knowledge, the more he understands God and the stronger his faith in Islam becomes. Knowledge in Islam means knowledge of the Quran, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed upon whom be peace), Islamic jurisprudence, the social, economic and political system of Islam and Islamic history. It may be pointed out here that "the Quran is the greatest gift of God to humanity and its wisdom is of a unique kind. One of the major characteristics of the Quranic wisdom is that it is not the static or dry type. It is a kind of dynamic wisdom that provokes the mind and quickens the heart. In this wisdom there is stirring
dynamics and there is moving force attested by historical evidence as well as by the Quran itself. The penetrating dynamics of the Quran is tremendous and irresistible.\(^{32}\)

Hence, it can be thus suggested that the faith and knowledge in Islam are the essential ingredients of the identity of a Muslim. It is the reason that the majority of the respondents have expressed such a view. This view of the respondents coincides with their keen interest in opening as many mosques madrasahs as possible for their children, to make them well-versed in Quran. They do understand the importance of gaining knowledge. They believe that the mosque madrasah would serve as the defensive weapon for their children to guard them against the dominant Western culture. But the problem is, how far the mosque-madrasah is providing knowledge to the children and does the education at the mosque madrasah is sufficient for bringing up the children on Islamic standard?

It has been found out that in the mosque madrasah the children are taught only to read the Quran and for those who wish to learn the Quran by-heart, the madrasah provides guidance. But, it is obvious that though the recitation of the Quran has also its importance, yet it is not sufficient only to read the Quran. To understand the message and meaning of the Quran and to draw guidance from it for all the problems of one's life is more important for a Muslim. It is only through the knowledge
of the Quran and following it in life that a Muslim can lead an Islamic life.

But it has been observed, that both the parents and the children (old and young generation) do not take this matter as seriously as the problem demands. When enquired into this matter, one of the parents said, that she herself does not have any knowledge of Islam, what can she teach her children?

However, what can be derived from the above facts is that even though the majority of the parents believe that through faith and the knowledge in Islam the community strongly expresses its identity, they do not pay serious attention to impart proper education to their children. Nor are they thoughtful about their own little education of Islam which creates a lot of confusion and tension in their own life and between them and their children.

SECTION IV

Identity in Context With Goal And Aspiration:

The goal and aspiration of man is a central axis around which all the thoughts and actions of a man rotate. The identity of man is revealed through his aspiration and goal of life. To achieve his goal in life, a man devotes his time, energy and ability. The attitude of man towards his life and the Universe
rests on his goal and objective of life. In other words, it is towards the goal and objective of life all the works and activities of man are directed. The central importance of the objective and goal of life in the life of an individual is equally important in the life and existence of a community and its importance further increases in the life and existence of the Muslim community which is originally created for Divine aspiration, Divine objective and Divine goal. It is in this perspective that the Muslim Community of Britain is viewed in this section.

However, it may be clarified that the data in this connection are based on informal interviews and observations. The questionnaire and formal interviews are deliberately avoided which were likely to create confusion. Since the questionnaire is not used here, the respondents of the informal interviews and observation were approximately 150.

It is found out that 20% of the respondents aspire only for the material prosperity of their family. Only 8% of the respondents aim at the achievement of the specialised knowledge in sciences or commerce or technology. The remaining 25% of the respondents strongly wish to continue their stay in Britain while working for the Islamic cause in Britain and remaining as practising and committed Muslims themselves, though they also admitted the fact
that their migration to Britain was primarily for economic reasons. Now all the three type of responses and a deep analysis of each set of these responses is presented.

The responses or the points of view of the first type of respondents were quite common. Hence to avoid repetition, the responses of a single respondent of the informal interview is presented here.

The respondent told that it is the age of material worship. Every man is seen day and night engaged in the maintenance and upliftment of his house and family. The more one thinks about the standard of his life, the more he turns to material progress. He further told that he also thinks about his life in terms of material values. Although the moral and the Islamic values cannot be overlooked, he said that somehow he keeps a balance between the material and spiritual values.

On hearing these views, I told him that there is however no separation in Islam between the material and spiritual values, since, Islam does not discard the material prosperity of man. What Islam says in this context is that the material prosperity of man should be based on the spiritual principle of unity of life and purpose and on the harmonious relationship between God and man and between man and the other fellow beings.
On listening to this, he objected to all the points I tried to convey and told that material prosperity is a subject not touched by the Islamic ideology, rather prescribed by the Western ideology alone. With such a misconception, he further proudly described the industrial and technological society of the West and said with an air of satisfaction that he is very fortunate to be living here with all possible material comforts.

I then asked him whether he is not sinking his identity in the Western ideology which advocates secularism and materialism. He told that it is absolutely an incorrect opinion of some of the people who are fanatic or extremists, since my faith in Islam identifies me as a Muslim.

On listening to this reply, I quickly asked him a very sensitive question. I questioned him whether he has faith in Islam as well as Western ideologies?

He answered that the faith is different from the aspiration or objective of man’s life. He then elaborated it saying that he is a Muslim by faith and a Westerner through aspiration. He then said that he wants to remain a Muslim, yet he does not want to deny a place for him in modern civilization.

I asked him whether he means that Islam does not represent any civilization or culture and for that reason he
has associated himself with the Western civilization?

He replied that all the tremendous progress which the West has made in science and technology and industry, stand as an ample proof of its supreme and flourishing culture and civilization, whereas we are lagging behind the West in every aspect.

I questioned him whether he is unaware of the fact that after reaching height in technological progress, the West has utterly failed in imparting peace to its very soul which is tearing under the burden of the technological and industrial society?

He said that he was quite aware of the weaknesses of this civilization too, yet he proceeded saying that as Muslims we should not partake in this side of the civilization and should adhere to our spiritual values.

I then asked him whether all that the Western civilization presents before us is not originally based on the Western ideology? He replied in positive.

Then, I questioned him whether to associate oneself with the Western civilization does not mean to associate oneself with the Western ideology?

Without reflecting on the question, he blindly replied
that Western industry, science and technology and the material progress and economic stability are all different things and the Western ideology, secularism, materialism, rationalism are different things. Giving such a reply, he looked at me wide-eyed and commented "you are looking confused and perplexed..." I cut short the discussion on this juncture.

All his responses to the concerned questions quite evidently reveal his incomplete and ambiguous perception of both the Islamic and the Western ideologies, his strong aspiration for material prosperity on the Western dimension and his confused perception of the Islamic identity.

It is my personal observation that the majority of Muslim migrants are seen always absorbed in the maintenance of their house and the upliftment of the family standard to the extent that they unhesitatingly overlook the Islamic obligation, duties and responsibilities, as described in the Section A.

It is observed that there is no limit to the aspiration of the Muslim masses for their material progress. The more they find new things of new fashions in the market, the more they aspire for buying it as soon as possible. Sometimes, they are seen engaged in the competition for buying new commodities, for furnishing new and up-to-date things in their drawing-rooms and so on.
Another aspect of this competition for material things is more conspicuous. No sooner a new fashion in the dress comes out, the girls particularly are found devoting their pocket money as well as a considerable time to these things.

In this connection, the cosmetics shops and the cosmetics departments of the big shops are worth mentioning. Even after keeping a number of things for their make-up, they are often found loitering around the cosmetics shops for other new varieties freshly arrived in the market.

No doubt, Islam does not discard woman's facial adornment. But Islam forbids indulgence in any type of luxuries or in excessive indulgence in anything.

However, it may be pointed out that the interest and aspiration vary with the age and sex. The ladies express their excessive interest in buying new things for the house. If they see new designed and multi-coloured carpet, or a new variety of sweeping machine or any new cooking vessel, they run after these things.

The men show all their interest in new models of cars, and other luxury items. Some men are found so crazy about these things, that they keep on buying and selling their cars for every new model that comes in the market.
The young boys and girls express their greatest and immediate interest in collecting cassettes and video cassettes of their favorite songs, music, and films. Some of them listen to the English pop music day and night with all their friends at home or outside in the video clubs. Apart, the girls look forward to their tights and cosmetics and the boys for their suits and jackets.

It can be easily observed through this discussion how much they cling to material things and how less mindful they are about their Islamic presence in an alien society and their duties and obligations towards the dominant society to safeguard their identity and to represent their cultural identity as distinct and unique. All this evidently reveals that their material aspiration versus Islamic aspiration which ultimately steals away the very essential ingredient of their identity leaving them engulfed in materialism.

As far as the respondents of the second type are concerned, they express their earnest interest in attaining specialized knowledge in science, arts, technology or industry. However, as said earlier, this type of interest is found in very few respondents.

A great number of these respondents were from African countries, South America, Turkey and a few from Pakistan and
India. These respondents aim at attaining education or training in one or the other field of knowledge to seek a better job for a better salary and better life.

These respondents plainly told in the interviews that they only concentrate on their subjects and on holidays they either go for outing, visiting friends or watch the T.V. at home. On asking them whether they perceive the Westernised and secularised colour given to education, one of them totally refused to accept the Westernisation or secularisation of education and said that they do not believe in all these humbug. Some of them told that they would look into these matters later.

Then I further questioned them about their aspirations in life and the actual goal of their life in obtaining education. They replied that they wish to lead a good life as educated, cultured and civilized people. On learning this, I asked whether 'a good life' also does not demand your obligations and duties and responsibilities of a Muslim? Some of them said that they do follow many of the Islamic injunctions like offering prayer on Fridays and fasting and not eating pork etc. The rest of the respondents told that the obligations and responsibilities of a Muslim should be reinterpreted today considering the present times and said hardly any Muslim can perform all his duties and responsibilities in a highly industrialised society.
All this shows that these respondents too, do not identify themselves with the Islamic ideology on complete and concrete understanding of the ideology and that their aspirations and goal are more or less similar to the respondents of the first type.

However, the remaining third type of the respondents are found to be quite clear in their understanding of the Islamic identity and the Western culture. They expressed that although they migrated to England for economic reasons, they are very much concerned about safeguarding their identity and that they keenly aspire to uphold the Islamic ideals in the society.

Confusion Regarding Identity - Some Observations:

It is observed that a fairly large section of the community basically wishes to maintain its identity as Muslim, yet due to its incomplete perception of the Islamic ideology in general it shows a great inclination to the Western ideology and falls short of keeping its identity in all walks of life. This can be proved by its adoption of many of the Western ideas and thoughts which have led its life on the midway — between the Islamic and the Western Paths. They wish to remain both as Britishers and Muslims. It is said: "Muslims are in the country to stay and their basic desire is to be British and to remain
Muslim ... How to combine being British and being Muslim is in practice for Muslims to decide. It has given rise to a concept called 'British Islamic identity'. Now let us examine the validity of this concept on Islamic grounds.

It has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, that Islamic identity transcends all regional or ethnic boundaries. A Muslim who has committed his complete life to the Islamic dictates has all rights to identify himself as a Muslim no matter whether he is a Britisher or a Pakistani. Thus on the ground of his commitment to the ideology his identity can be formulated. Other ethnic preferences of Muslims do not divide his identity into regional or Islamic identity. If a Muslim from England prefers to eat fish and chips and a Muslim from Pakistan enjoys 'Samosa and Pakora', it is not to suggest, that these differences of taste divide their identity under the so-called categories of 'British Islamic identity' or 'Pakistani Islamic identity', since Islam is one and the same for Pakistan, Britain or any other place; there is no Pakistani Islam or British Islam. As far as these Pakistani and British Muslims eat and drink in the Islamic fashion, they are Muslims and their act of eating and drinking identify them as Muslims. One Pakistani leader told Haddad: "We worship together but then the Pakistani go back to their curries and the Arabs to their Kababs." It makes no difference.
However, if a Muslim fluctuates between two opposite cultures—Islamic and Western, it becomes difficult to distinguish his identity. His life fluctuates between the two worlds of being and becoming.

It is found out that a considerable size of the Muslim community in Britain has been experiencing this state of fluctuation of being and becoming. This is proved by the tables (1, 2, 3, 4) described in Section 'A' of this chapter and interviews from the respondents. The majority, as the Section 'A' suggests, do not have even the perception of their identity, though they wish to express their identity as Muslims. It can be thus said that their fluctuation between the two worlds is the result of their weak perception of their identity.

Apart from this majority group, there are a few who have been noticed as having completely assimilated themselves to the host culture, thus totally losing their identity as Muslims. It should be noted here that "assimilation is sometimes interpreted as the complete fusion of the immigrant with the host community and the complete absorption of the former by the later. This is what was referred to by E. Fecham, Chairman of the New Han Muslim Association and an English Muslim himself, as the "sausage-machine" assimilation which results in complete loss of identity by the assimilated community. The English, he added, are in effect telling the Muslims that 'you must
become like us." It has been observed that some of them have replied "Yes, here, we are.... We unbecome of ourselves so as to become like you." 35

It can be thus stated from the above study that the perception of the community about their identity is unclear, confused and perplexed one. It is the reason that a fairly large section of the community is seen fluctuating between the Islamic and the Western world, thus creating a problem of identity. However, there are a few whose perception of identity, to a comparatively large extent, is clear and complete. Peter Lewis in his article, quoted the words of a recent convert Mousaf Islan who was the famous pop singer of England: "I felt I was finding my identity for the first time." 36 As the singer Cat Stevens (his previous name as Christian) he had no identity. It was only on embracing Islamic ideology and following it that he recognised his identity as a Muslim. However, it is found out that such Muslims (born or converted) are very few in number who have a clear and complete perception of their identity.