The researcher undertook this work to enlarge understanding with regard to an interesting socio-political and religious aspect of the American society that is the nature and dynamics of the Muslim community. The researcher was interested to find out various life aspects as well as religious and socio-cultural practices associated to the Muslims who live in the United States of America. The researcher also considered a historical overview that how the Muslim community grew and developed itself within the USA during the past two centuries.

The present research was inspired by the sense of genuine concern and curiosity towards the religious, social, economic, political and educational development and thus the establishment of the Muslim community of the United States of America.

In chapter 3 we have formulated research objectives in the light of the chosen methodology and available literature in the area. Appropriate analysis was carried out to draw conclusions out of the available data and to fulfil the objectives. The obtained results give an overall picture of the population of the Muslims living in the United States of America. Since the data did not represent
the population on the principles of probability, our results indicate the status of
the respondents only. However, previous researchers gathered information
from reliable resources and large number of participation in the research by the
Muslims. According to the World Alamanac 2001, there are about 5.8 million
Muslims in the USA\textsuperscript{129}. However, One Muslim sociologist, on the basis of an
exhaustive review of all the research regarding the number of Muslims in the
USA estimates that there are 6.7 million Muslims in the USA\textsuperscript{130}. The present
study bases on a sample of Five hundred and forty American Muslims amongst
whom only 270 could be used for analysis purpose.

In order to meet our first research objective, distributions of respondents
were identified on the basis of their age, gender and level of their education.
Table and figure 1.1 in the results chapter indicate that 20 to 24 percent of our
respondents belong to the age group 20 to 30 years. And the least participation
that is 1.1 was by the age group 65 to 74 years. Research evidences also put that
about 79\% of all Muslims fall between the ages of 16 and 65. Likewise, while
taking a record of age and level of education, we see that 40 percent of
participation is by Males and 30 to 40 percent respondents either have
graduation or post-graduation levels of education.

Respondents of the present study represented many states of the USA.
However, high frequency came from Florida, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, New
York, Ohio and Tennessee.
Further research objectives focus on the enquiry that whether our respondents belong to different generations of immigrated ancestors and their country of origin from which they have migrated to the USA. Almost 50% of our respondents were those who either did not fall in this category or they did not wish to respond to this query. Amongst the rest, majority of the respondents represented first generation of immigrants. Interestingly, we have four respondents who belonged to the sixth generation of immigrant Americans. These respondents reported themselves to be belonging to a range of countries of origin, including countries of Africa, Europe, Middle East, Asia and South East Asia. However, majority of them belonged to the Asian countries. To maintain the record of the Ancestry of population, the Bureau of Census of the United States has established a format by which countries of ancestry are grouped into a subset of continental regions\textsuperscript{131}. This data along with the data of Muslim concentration in different regions of the world provides an understanding of the Muslim population with respect to their country of origin in the United States of America\textsuperscript{132}.

Our next research objective deals with the knowledge of ethnicity of our respondents. Though there was a fairly even representation from different ethnic groups, still there was a dominance of South Asian and Arab origin respondents. This kind of evident from the previous researches too which show the highest number of Muslims from these communities. According to the "Faith Communities Today" report, the ethnic origins of Muslims as taken from
their attendance to the Islamic centres is, South Asian 33%, African-America 30%, Arab = 25 %, Sub-Saharan African = 3.4 %, European (Bosnian, Tartar, Kosovar, etc.) = 2.1 %, White American = 1.6 %, Southeast Asian (Malaysian, Indonesian, Filipino) = 1.3 %, Caribbean = 1.2 %, Turkish = 1.1 %, Iranian = 0.7 %, Hispanic/Latino = 0.6 %133. Such a data, to some extent, approves the participation of respondents in our study. Subsequent to the findings related to American Muslims' population, it is an important issue that how many of them have embraced Islam by converting from other religions. A clear percentage of 7 are present in our sample, some more may be present amongst those who do not wish to respond on this query. However, previous researches have indicated rather big proportion of converted Muslims in the United States of America. Amongst these people many of the respondents fall in another category, that they did not convert directly, but belong to the ancestors who embraced Islam.

Our next research objective points out the reasons of immigration of the Muslims to the USA. There were many reasons considered, but people preferred to respond 'better economic opportunities' as major reason of migration. However, researchers report of many other reasons viz. more social and political freedom, comfortable life etc. they came in different waves which also indicate major reason of migration as well as circumstances back home134.

While living at the soil of the United States of America, Muslims indicate different patterns of living including their choice of neighbourhood. This
indicates their social interaction system too. Haddad and Lummis in this connection report, "The area in which Muslims live also plays a part in determining the nature of the social interaction they have with those outside the Islamic community. In the upstate New York area, for example, Muslims generally dine socially only with other Muslims, whether or not they are family members, even though typically they must travel out of their neighbourhoods to do so." Current research has considered various associated preferences of the American Muslims. These preferences were based on religion, ethnicity, and public infrastructure etc. Maximum number (27.4%) indicated a preference of a neighbourhood as mostly Muslim however, the next best preference was "non preference" (25.2%). This indicates that religious similarity or work suitability are major determining factors of choice of neighbourhood. Like wise, 57% of the respondents indicated that they owned their homes whereas 37.8% rented their homes. Ownership of houses was associated the preferences of neighbourhood too.

One of the major objectives of the present research was to study the religious status of the Muslim community of the United States of America. The parameters to study such a status were the foundations of Islam known as Irkaan which have to be practiced upon by a true Muslim. Researchers have taken a brief overview of these practices. First and foremost of them is Shahadah or Tauheed which is a basic pre-requisite of being a Muslim. Researchers say that there is a significant growth of Islam through new persons
accepting Islam in America. For example, in the state of Illinois, a growth of about 25% in the Muslim population was found to be due to conversion\textsuperscript{135}. The present research investigates that 88.1% of the total respondents know the concept and purpose of the statement of Tauheed (Kalma-e-Tauheed). 77.8% believe that it is very important that children should recite the Kalma-e-Tauheed.

Next of these five practices is Salaah or offering prayers to Almighty. According to surveys three to four percent of Muslims attend weekly Friday prayers in America\textsuperscript{136}. This number is low compared to about 40 percent of Christians in America who attend their church at least once a week\textsuperscript{137} and 15% of Jews who visit their synagogue once a week or more\textsuperscript{138}. It may be because Muslims don't get a day off on Fridays or their practice of Islam is nominal. However, present study indicates that 97.8% of respondents know the purpose and functions of Salaah very well and 89.6% of them perform Salaah out of which 35.2% manage to practice it for five times a day and 21.9% offer these prayers of Fridays. Respondents were assessed on level of importance they attribute to the Salaah. 82.6% of the practicing respondent feel that Salaah is very important for their spiritual well-being whereas 80.0% of them believe that it is very important for their general health and well-being. Such results are indicative of very good standard of the American Muslims who participated in the present research on the most important practices of Islam.
The next important practice of Islam is to pay alms taxes or Zakaah which literally means to giving back to Allah a portion of his bounty as a means of avoiding the sufferings of the next life. Zakaah is less of a voluntary and more of a required religious observance; indeed it is a fundamental of the faith.

_Establish worship and pay the poor-due and obey the messenger, that haply ye may find mercy._

Amongst the Muslims of USA, it is estimated that they donate about 100 million dollars every year to their relief organizations, Mosques, and schools. Not all of these donations are Zakaah money and not all donations go through Muslim channels. Amongst the respondents of the present research, 95.2% indicated that they know the concept and method of Zakaah, 90.7% believe it to be very important practice, 87% showed that they know exactly to whom the Zakaah be paid and 78.1% of the respondents indicated that they regularly pay Zakaah. These people gave responses on to whom they prefer to pay Zakaah, 26.7% did not respond, 9.3% said they pay Zakaah to the needy people in the USA, 29.6% said that they pay it to the charity organizations in the USA, 28.5% responded that they prefer to pay Zakaah to the needy individuals in other countries whereas 5.9% said that they pay it to the charity organisations in the other countries.

Another parameter was Sawm or fasting (Rozah) which is another prerequisite of faith. Qur’a’n says:

_O ye who believe! There is prescribed for you the fast, as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil)..._
Researchers say that about 47% of all Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan\textsuperscript{13} whereas present research did not elicit valid result on this parameter as the response rate was too low and was not analyzable.

The fifth religious duty of the Muslim is the pilgrimage or Hajj at least once in a lifetime. This is a series of religious activities and visit to the sacred monuments at Mecca. This is an experience that all Muslims affirm is a signal one in recognizing the unity of the worldwide community of Islam\textsuperscript{141}. Present research indicates that 89.6% of the total respondents know the concept and significance of Hajj whereas 75.2% of them term it to be very important for a Muslim to perform Hajj once in a lifetime.

Above findings which belong to the section two of the list of our research objectives indicates that participants of the present research i.e. American Muslims stand high on the religiosity indicator. While living in a non-Muslim society and system, they are strong on their religious systems and practices. We will further see their standing on socio-cultural and political life which have been stated through the research objectives in section 3.

Research objectives related to the social, cultural and political life of Muslims in the USA lead us towards investigation in these life areas of the targeted population. As far as it is considered of social and cultural life of Muslims, American society and migrated Muslims both have exerted their
significant effect on each other. The process of acculturation as well as enculturation is evident in this case. However, socio-cultural life styles trespassing religious practices have not got much development amongst these Muslims as they wanted to keep their religious identity intact. Beginning with the food habits, the respondents of the present study were tested on whether they have the knowledge of concept of Halaal or Zabiha food and how much importance they attribute to the abstinence of non-halal food. More than 97% of the total respondents indicated to having knowledge of the concept of Halaal and more than 64% of the total sample rated it to be very important to abstain from non-halaal food. While commenting on this topic Haddad and Lummis report that “according to Islamic law Muslims are supposed to eat halal meat, that which is killed according to proper Islamic practice. This means that the animal is slaughtered rather than stunned, that the blood is completely drained, and that the words ‘in the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate’ must be said at the moment the throat of animal is cut. Often it is difficult to find the halal meat and in such cases there is a widely accepted compromise to buy kosher meat from a Jewish butcher shop142.

Importance of assimilation to the American has been given mixed response pattern. However the response category “somewhat important” got the maximum frequency of 47.8% whereas importance given to ‘maintaining family relations with US people belonging to other religions’ also got fairly
mixed responses having ‘very important’ most frequency that is 31.5%. Such response pattern indicates an open orientation of the American Muslims towards the American society in which they wish to keep their religious identity intact but along with it they prefer to maintain a good concordance with the prevalent culture and social relations with the local people of other religions.

Another most important aspect of American culture is that of dating. Dating is generally not accepted amongst Muslims because of its detrimental influence on the lifestyle and also because it is apparently a license to sexual relations before marriage\(^{143}\). It has been observed that many Muslims in the USA allow their opposite sex children to meet with each other in order to understand each other so that they can set off for a marital relationship. Such a practice is performed in the presence of family elders. However, such a practice can’t be termed as dating. Respondents of the present study were assessed on four response categories of permission to date for their children viz. ‘no response’ (2.2%), ‘Yes, but only with other Muslims’ (3.0%), Yes, but only with people of my ethnic group (9.3%) and ‘No’ (85.6%). Responses are evident of the fact that Muslims in the USA do not accept the practice of dating for their children.

Regarding education of children, American Muslims face difficulties in the sense that public schools do not provide Islamic education and many of
them have to find suitable alternatives. On the question whether our subjects prefer to send their children to non-Islamic schools, 63% responded in 'No'. This is probably because Muslims on the whole feel that the public schools which take their children away from the Islamic education pose difficulty before them to raise their children in the Islamic faith. On the other hand, Mosques support them in this purpose and education in the fundamentals of Islam and courses in Arabic are identified as the central elements of the Mosque experience for children and teenagers. According to the researchers, there are about 200 Muslim schools, about 500 Sunday Islamic schools, and six schools of Islamic higher learning in America. However, not more than three percent of Muslim children acquire any formal Islamic schooling outside of their home.

Television is also one of the most influential factors of the US culture. It influences children to a great extent in terms of their orientation towards education, value system, morality, attitude towards their family, religion and ethnic identity and their own social role in the society. Many a times, Muslim parents find some programmes or TV channel to be unfit to be watched by their children. In this connection, they take various measures of controlling or regulating TV watching of their children. On the question that whether they permit their children to watch anything on TV, 84.4% responded as 'No' whereas 72.2% indicated that they teach their children to judge what is appropriate to be watched, 26.3% follow the strategy of out rightly
discouraging their children to watch US channels on the television. More often parents find suitable alternative channels like religious, educational or socio-cultural channels from the country of their own origin provided that they are immigrants.

Another most important issue amongst American Muslims is that of higher education for women. In the USA it is mandatory to send children to school as it is state sponsored up to high school. However, later people sometimes think on the issue and mostly the idea is influenced by their ethnic and socio-cultural background back at their native country. Our respondents were assessed on this dimension and they provided mixed response on whether American Muslim women should go for the higher education. 35.2% of them rated it to be ‘Very Important’, 37.4% rated it to be ‘Quite Important’, 21.9% rated it to be ‘Somewhat Important’ and 5.2% rated higher education for women as ‘Not important’. Mixed response trend may be due to various factors like very expensive education, moving girls to the university campuses which appear to be liberal areas and stay of a girl at a remote place away from parents or caretakers.

Celebration of Islamic festivals is also one of the indicators of socio-cultural orientation of American Muslims. Our respondents rate the celebration of Islamic festivals like Eids ‘Very Important’ (86.7%) to be celebrated as they are the hallmark of their religious identity for themselves and their children too.
Sometimes they face a difficulty that their children have to attend their schools therefore, they do not take them to the Eid prayers. But majority of them (77%) prefer to take them to Eid prayers rather than to send them to schools. At some places schools recognize Eid holiday and allow Muslim children to get the day off from their schools. We got 61.5% cases with such situation. However, response ‘Yes’ for the cases in which school closes on Eid holidays were 3.3%. such responses indicate that majority of Muslims in the USA prefer to attend the Eid prayers and celebrate Eid festivals along with their children and other family members irrespective of any academic or business preoccupations with themselves or their family members.

While studying attitudes on marriage, we see that there are different issues associated to this practice. Mainly Muslims prefer to arrange a Marriage only with a Muslim partner. However, there are a lot of deviations too but majority follows this trend. Elkholy^{145}, in this connection reports that Marriage of Muslim with only a Muslim was the matter of debate amongst those who born in the United States. Furthermore, he reported that if a Muslim woman marries to a non-Muslim, they were generally ostracized by the Muslim community. However, respondent of the present research on the same practice rated that it is very important (77%) to marry a Muslim. However, there exists another preference of ethnicity. 23% of the total respondents gave an
affirmative response to this query. Such an ethnic issue comes in the light due
to an ethnic orientation and customs and rituals back at the native country.

One of the most important trends observed amongst the American Muslims is that of keeping themselves attached to their country of origin. Amongst our respondents, 63.3% rate it to be ‘very important’ whereas 26.3% rate it to be ‘quite important’. Such an association is further strengthened with the level of importance they give to the teaching of mother tongue to their children. As many as 57.4% of the respondents rate it to be ‘very important’ and 80% of them or their children can effectively use the language of ancestors which is also spoken at their country of origin. More than 60% of the respondents say it is ‘very important’ to keep abreast with the developments in their native countries. There are different areas of focus while they keep abreast the events at their country of origin. 11.5% did not respond, 60.4% prefer to pay attention to all regions of the Muslim world, 21.9% mostly care for events in regions surrounding the country of origin whereas, 6.3% mostly care for events at the country of their origin.

Muslim community in the USA has become an established community. According to an estimate their number ranges from 2 million to 8 million and an exact figure says it is 4.7 million. Muslims have started to participate in the political processes like voting. They voted in bloc for President Bush in the US presidential election 2000. Three unscientific surveys of Muslim voters indicate
that Muslims voted 70% to 90% in favor of Bush with a significant 34% voting for the first time. Muslims, therefore, became the only bloc vote for Bush. In Florida, the last battleground, there would not have been any battle without an estimated 60,000 votes which Florida Muslims asserted that they delivered in favor of Bush. Amongst our respondents, 49.6% vote during four yearly presidential elections. However, many do not participate due reasons viz. either they do not want to reveal or they are ineligible to vote. 33% of the respondents participate in the two yearly off season election and many of them do not participate in this kind of voting due to their ineligibility.

Previous paragraphs provided an overview on the demographic, religious, social and political status of Muslims in the United States of America. However, researches in the area indicate that various socio-demographic factors cast their influence on religious and socio-political status of Muslims. Therefore, researcher felt curious to find out the impact of certain socio-demographic factors on the religious and social dimensions.

Primarily researcher analyzed the influence of gender on the level of importance given to the role of Salaah in spiritual life. Analysis reveals that Male and Female respondents are equal (males = 82.8%, females = 82.2%) in terms of rating the importance of Salaah in their spiritual life. However, they slightly differ on rating the level of importance of Salaah in health & well-being. Male data is falling in all categories with highest on 'very important' whereas
female data is 0% at ‘no response’ and ‘not important’. Their concentration is highest (81.3%) on ‘very important’. This indicates that almost all women respondents rate the role of Salaah to be very important in their health and well-being.

Men and women respondents were also compared on the practice of payment of Zakaah. They were particularly compared on their choice of agencies who receive Zakaah. Interestingly, they differ on their choices. While more males were interested pay ‘needy individuals in the USA’ (males = 14.1% and females 1.9%), females were more interested to pay to the ‘charity organizations in other countries (males = 0% and females = 15%). Such a difference might have been due to various legal, social and economic reasons. Likewise, there are various other areas areas in which the distinction of gender could be determined with a vital role played by women. On the role of women, Ghazala Munir writes, “Muslim women continue to play an important role in their sacred enterprise. Women moved by their own innate desires to cultivate peace and understanding at the community level work independently and in organizations147.”

Conversion is another kind of influential factor that has a contingent effect on the lives of Muslims in the USA. A newly converted Muslim has to bring major changes in his/her lifestyle viz. social interactions, preferences of marriage, educational orientations, political orientations and food habits etc.
For example converted Muslims have to start with Halaal food which is a food restriction on Muslims.

Researcher analysed data to find out the difference on preference to abstain from non-Halaal food between the respondents who were converted to Islam and those who were Muslims by birth. Results indicate that converted Muslims are slightly low on rating the importance of abstaining from non-halaal food (converted = 42.1% and non-converted = 65.7%).

Impact of conversion was also studied on another dimension that is attitude towards marrying with Muslims. Converted subjects provide interesting information. 10.5% of them say it is 'not important' whereas 84.2% say it is 'very important'. On the other hand, non-converted respondents give mixed responses with highest (76.5%) to be 'very important'.

Another important socio-demographic factor was that of owning a home by the respondent. Researcher analysed data to see its impact on practice of sending children to the Islamic schools. Interestingly, our respondents who were living at owned homes were lesser (14.8%) in comparison to their counterparts who lived at a rented home (19.8%).

The impact of status of owning a home was also studied at the level of importance given to participation in American political process. Though the respondents who owned a home and also those who rented a home were almost equal (69% and 71.3% respectively), respondents of owning a home were better on the weaker ratings.

Our results obtained by the analysis indicate that Muslims in the United States of America are an intricate society which includes various kinds of people and systems, socio-religious variations, rituals and preferences. Various
economic and professional standards have also influenced the life standards and interpersonal patterns.

Thus, though the present investigation may not have elicited sensational findings it has provided important information with regard to the religious, social and political lives of the Muslim community living in the United States of America.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The actual conduct of research was immensely enlightening; because while assessing American Muslims on their different life aspects, information much beyond what the questionnaires elicited was forthcoming through understanding and additional comments. The researcher began to feel that analysis of the narrative and detailed case history would have been the best method for study of this nature. Since this knowledge came to the researcher after a large amount of field work had been completed it could not form a part of the reported research but it should definitely feature under suggestion for further research.

Trends of scores on various dimensions or ratings of importance indicate that information may be explore on different models of research and researcher may consider studying actual life situations of those Muslims who live at remote and relatively less developed areas of USA.

At the end, it is suggested that further studies should be conducted on larger samples which truly represent of the entire Muslim population living in the United States of America.