PART : ONE

Socio-economic bases of Communal relations
Chapter - I

Introduction.

The present study based on first-hand field observation of four villages describes the Hindu-Muslim relation in the economic and social sphere in rural Burdwan, a District of West Bengal. The main purpose is to observe the social context within which the economic and social life of the two religious groups operate and the pattern of interaction between the two. As such, the focus of this study marks a departure from other studies made so far in this field. The earlier studies are mainly historical in nature and most of them deal with the subject on an All-India perspective. Here also the analysts differ in their method of treatment and of their conclusions and are generally influenced by one or other of the streams of thought. We may categorise them into three groups. On the one hand is the belief nurtured by the nationalists who speak of "a kind of golden age of Hindu-Muslim amity, deliberately destroyed by the British through their divide and rule techniques — with Curzon, Fuller and Minto figuring prominently among the villains of the piece." Sumit Sarkar has presented the views of Bipin Chandra Pal who is one of his "Madras Lectures ( 7th May, 1907 ) stated — " In the days of my youth, not to go farther before, we had no Hindu-
Muhammadan problem in any part of India."¹

In the "Preface" to the "Mughal Empire", Dr. R.C. Majumdar has referred to the views of Late K.M. Ashraf who sought to prove that the Hindus and Muslims had no cultural conflict.² Lala Lajpat Rai asserted that "the Hindus and Muslims have coalesced into an Indian People very much in the same way as the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans formed the English people of to-day". His further assertion that "the Muslim rule in India was not a foreign rule," has now become the off-repeated slogan of a certain political party."³

In an article,⁴ Mr. K. Raman Pillai examined Nehru's attitude on Hindu-Muslim question. Nehru, as K.R. Pillai interpreted him, viewed communalism a superficial problem — resulting basically from a servile mentality that seeks favours from a third party — the ruling power. An article written by him on 10th August 1940 (after the Pakistan resolution was passed by Muslim League) clearly reflects Nehru's mind at this time—"The communal question is essentially one of

² Dr. R.C. Majumdar (ed): 'Mughal Empire', Preface, P:-XIII.
³ Ibid.
protection of vested interests and religion has always been a stalking horse for this purpose. Those who have feudal privileges and vested interests, fear change and become the camp followers of British imperialism. The British Government, on the other hand, delights in using the communal argument to deny freedom, democracy or any major change and to hold on to power and privilege in India. This is the raison d'etre and justification of communalism in India. And Nehru's diet is that once the common man had a hand in the formation of policy, communalism would wither away.

A diametrically opposite viewpoint is noticeable in the famous "two-nation theory", according to which there is a historic difference between the Hindus and Muslims — in ethnic origin, language, culture and religion and as a result the two great communities are moving in its own orbit. The adherents of this view are some of the historians and revivals of both the religions. Among the historians, Sir Jadunath Sarkar's name can be cited first because of his discussion of the problem in a definite form. To Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "Down to Akbar's time, the Muslim settlers in India used to be in the land but not of it", and for this separatism he held the Muslims alone responsible. "The Hindus were willing to absorb the Muslims; they wrote the Allopantisad

5. Ibid, P:-634.
and went perilously near to making an avatar of the Emperor Akbar. But the Muhammadans would not yield on the cardinal points of their faith, nor accept the few conventions necessary for entering Hindu society."Therefore, in the opinion of Sir, J.N. Sarkar, the Hindus and Muslims lived in the same land without being able to mix together. Nothing has enabled them to bring this gulf." Dr. R.C. Majumdar also maintained the same view. To Dr. Majumdar, "Many times since the advent of the Aryans more than three thousand years ago, diverse types of culture met in India, but with the exception of a very small Persi enclave, were all fused together in a common cultural pattern. The Muslims however, did not merge themselves into the pattern." The followers of that faith settled in India in large numbers, but generally speaking, kept themselves severely aloof from the normal current of the social and religious life of the country. So, for the first time in Indian history, two important but distinct communities and cultures stood face to face and India was permanently divided into two powerful units, each with marked individuality of its own which did not prove to be amenable to a fusion or even any close permanent co-ordination. He further reiterates, "The problem which then faced India has proved to be the


most knotty one in its chequered history during the next six hundred years and has not entirely been solved by the partition or bifurcation of India."8

In bringing out the reasons for this disunion, Dr. R.C. Majumdar points out two reasons. These are primarily the religious bigotry on the side of the Muslims and social bigotry on the part of the Hindus. The political and religious condition under which the Hindus were forced to live in a Muslim state (under Delhi Sultanate) raised a great barrier between the two communities. The historical tradition of the preceding centuries kept the two communities apart. After a review of the status of Hindus under Muslim rule (1300 A.D.-1526 A.D.) Dr. Majumdar concludes:—"The Hindus were in much worse condition after three hundred years of Muslim rule than the Indians after one hundred and fifty years of British supremacy. Judged by a similar standard, the patronage and cultivation of Hindu learning by the Muslims or their contribution to development of Hindu culture during their rule of three hundred years pale into insignificant compared with the achievements of the British rule during half that period in the same direction."9 (It would not be difficult to take instances, following Dr. Majumdar, of the atrocities and

8. Ibid, PP:- XXVIII- XXIX.
barbarous activities done by the Muslim rulers. Dr. Majumdar took evidence from Muslim chronicles, the account of Ibn-Batutah and contemporary Indian literature. It is unnecessary for our present purpose to proceed further on this matter.)

Commenting on the status of Hindus under Mughal Emperors (from 1526 A.D. - 1707 A.D.) Dr. Majumdar views that there was no improvement either in their material and moral conditions, or in their relations with the Muslims. With the sole exception of Akbar, who sought to conciliate the Hindus by removing some of the glaring evils to which they were subjected, almost all the other Mughal Emperors were notorious for their religious bigotry." And the result of this religious bigotry was the rise of the Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs who stood against Mughul Emperors.

When India came under British rule, this disunion not only continued but was deliberately aggravated. The two communities were so much conditioned by historic differences so that the English rulers took full advantage of it by playing one against the other. In Dr. Majumdar's words, "Though the English exploited the difference between the two communities, it was in no sense created by them. It was always there and they merely used it to maintain or advance their own interests!"

10. Dr. R.C. Majumdar (ed) ; 'The Mughal Empire, Preface Bharatiya Vidyabhaban, Bombay, P:- XI.
The revivalists of both the religion also supported the view of this historic difference. For example, in 1937, three years before the Pakistan resolution of the Muslim League, Savarkar declared in his presidential address to the Hindu Mahasaya, "India can not be assumed to-day to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary, there are two nations in the main, the Hindus and the Muslims."\(^\text{12}\)

Dr. R.C. Majumdar has quoted a statement made by one who first mooted the idea of Pakistan in 1930: - "Our religion, culture, history, tradition, literature, economic system, laws of inheritance, succession and marriage are fundamentally different from those of the Hindus. These differences are not confined to the broad basic principles. They extend to the minute details of our lives. We, Muslims and Hindus, do not interdine; we do not intermarry, our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress are different."\(^\text{13}\)

K.R. Pillai in the aforesaid article also holds the same view: - "As a matter of fact Islam had given to the world a new socio-political order and that it would be impossible for its followers to merge in any other social or political group, however important that might be. Islam is extremely uncompromising in this regard."\(^\text{14}\)


\(^{13}\) Dr. R.C. Majumdar : 'History of the Freedom Movement in India', Vol. III, P:- 573.

As W.C. Smith observes: "The question of political power and social organisation, so central to Islam, has in the past always been considered in yes or no terms. Muslims have either had political power or they have not. Never before have they shared it with others." 15

A third group recognises the difference (when Islam came in India) between the two communities, but as time went on, this difference was transformed by a process of assimilation and adjustment. To quote a representative analysis, "The Muslims of foreign extraction who came to India from Persia, Afghanistan and Khurasan in the early days, unlike the Arabs, held themselves aloof from the Indians from some time but gradually the barriers between the two communities were removed and a process of Indianization started, making rapid advance and reaching its climax during the Mughal period. The manifestation of this process were visible in every walk of life and the Muslims had already adopted many habits, ways and manners of the Hindus." 16

Not only in the social sphere, the religion of Islam, M.W. Mirza holds, at least its popular form "underwent a

16. M.W. Mirza: 'Muslim religion and society' in 'The Delhi Sultanate', ed. by Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, P:- 615.
substantive change having been profoundly influenced by the
sufi beliefs, which in their turn, owed a good deal to Hindu
vedantic and Yogic philosophy."

M.W. Mirza divides the Muslim population of the sultanate
period into four classes — The sultanate — the nobles
of foreign origin — Next to the nobles, a large class of
people with modest incomes derived from small land holding or
from the royal treasury in return for their services in different
capacities — and the lowest strats of the Muslim society
comprising the peasants and cultivators usually of Indian
origin, workmen artisans and domestic servants. In M.W. Mirza's
writings we come across the interesting fact that caste system
not much dissimilar from the Hindu caste system gradually
developed among the Muslims. — "The Muslim nobles were usually
of foreign origin — Persian, Turks, Afgans and Sayyids or
Arabs — and mostly kept themselves aloof from their Indian
subjects and dependants. The arrogant aristocratic classes
gradually developed a sort of caste system which was alien to
the spirit of Islam and certainly the product of Indian influence.
Thus a Turk ( or Mughal ), a Pathan, a Sayyid or even
a Shaikh would never think of a matrimonial alliance with a
person of a lower rank, that is one outside these four dhats
or quams or even outside his own particular denomination."

Dr. P.N. Chopra's analysis of "The impact of Islam on India" may also be mentioned here. According to him, "unlike the earlier invaders — Greeks, Seythians, Parthians and Huns, who were absorbed in the Hindu society during the course of a few generations — Islam came to India with a massage of its own. Simple, clear and aggressive, Islam had nothing in common with the elaborate, ritualistic and absorptive Hinduism. ... But Islam, on its part, had lost its original vitality and dynamism which had enabled her followers to spread out and conquer from Spain to border of Mongolia. It was, in fact, a changed religion when it reached the heart of India about 600 years after the establishment of the Arab Colony in Sind in 712 A.D." 18

According to Dr. Chopra, Islam during all those centuries was class-bound and feudal in outlook. It had no new technique or political or economic structure to present as compared to the well thoughtout and comprehensive system of the Hindus. In matters of production and industrial organisation, it did not compare favourably with what prevailed in India. Indian tradition and faith were still strong and firm enough to resist the foreign influence. As a result, the political triumph did not lead to intellectual, moral or religious conquest. Nor could it change the essential character of the Indian people whose life continued as of old — all the people, Hindus, Muslims

and others fitted into it. For seven centuries the struggle for supremacy went on. On the one hand, there was the influence of Islam and the philosophy of life represented by it. On the other hand, there has been the pervasive influence of Indian culture and civilization. Initial clash was inevitably followed by rapprochment, fusion and mutual adjustment."

Dr. K.K. Dutta also maintains the same view: "Whenever two types of civilization come into close contact with each other for centuries they are bound to be influenced mutually .... and beneath the ruffled surface of storm and stress there flowed a genial current of mutual harmony and tolerance in different spheres of life." Amitabh Mukherjee is of opinion: "In Bengal the process of reapprochment perhaps went deeper than in many other parts of India because a large number of Bengalee Muslims resided in the villages instead of being concentrated in a few towns as in north India, and the great majority of them were Hindus (or Buddhist) converts, bred in and surrounded by the old traditions."

Muhammad Yakub Ali in his 'Mussalmaner Jatibhed', ed. 1927, expressed the view that the Mussalmans of this country are ignorant and they are trying to introduce the caste system

19. Dr. P.N. Chopra: Ibid., P:-232
of their neighbouring Hindus into their own community. The reasons are the influence of the Hindus with whom they are living for a long time. On the other hand, their ignorance made them apart from the ideals of Islam. Moreover, those who have recently converted into Muslims are yet under the influence of long standing customs of their previous religion (religion before conversion) and are trying to introduce the system in an egalitarian Islamic society. 22 Nirmal Kumar Basu also agrees with this view. He opines that the economic stability in the caste system in the Muslim period prevented the converted Muslims to accept the egalitarian outlook of Islam. 23

Dr. R.C. Majumdar quotes an extract from the Siyarul-Mutakherin, by Sayyid Ghulam Hussain who also supports this view. — "And although the gentoos seem to be a generation apart and distinct from the rest of mankind and they were swayed by such differences in religion, tenets and rites, as will necessarily render all Muslim aliens and profane, in their eyes and although they keep up a strangeness of ideas and practices which beget a wide difference in customs and actions, yet in the course of time, they drew nearer and nearer, and as soon as fear and aversion had worn away, we see that this dissimilarity and alienation have terminated in friendship and union; and that the two nations have come to coalesce

together into one whole like milk and sugar that have received a simmering. "In otherwords the communities seem to promote heavily each others welfare, have common ideas, like brothers from one and the same mother and feel for each other as children of the same family." 24

In a brief but meaningful survey of the Hindu-Muslim Relations in Bengal, Sumit Sarkar 25 points out that in Pre-Plassey Bengal, the Muslims as the ruling community, controlled the army and the machinery of criminal justice and as amils and faujdars staffed the topmost rung of the administrative ladder. But at the same time the Hindu upper castes retained an important and in some ways even a preeminent position in society. Since fully ninetenths of Zamindars were held by Hindus. Hindu also manned the quamungo offices and comprised the principal traders and bankers." 26

"The Ashraf community among the Muslims numbered relatively few in Bengal and perhaps uneasy conscious of living in the backwoods of Indian Islam, often tried-right down to recent times—to flaunt its upcountry or foreign origins and


Parsian and Arabic learning at the cost of the more natural Bengali. The Hindu gentry on its part, might have resented occasionally the political inferior position to which it had been relegated and disliked the inequities and harsh procedure of Muslim criminal justice — these things might justify the eagerness of the 19th century bhadralok intelligentsia to congratulate British rule."

But the vast majority of Bengali Muslims, Sumit Sarkar continues, were peasants, in origin probably low-caste Hindus, Buddhists or simply people who had never been fully assimilated into the structure of Aryan Society ....... It is at this popular level that considerable progress was made towards the evolution of a common culture based on the Bengali language and an amalgamation of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and primitive folk rites." As the Imperial Gazetteer of 1909 records :- "It was until recently the regular practice of low-class Muhammadans to join in the Durga Puja and other Hindu festivals." It mentioned also consultation of Hindu Almanacs, worship of Hindu Goddesses Sitala and Manasa, use of vermilion and joint offerings to village deities before the sowing or transplanting of rice, seedlings by the Muslims. Syneratist cults like the Satya Pir and communities like that of the Bauls which emerged in medieval Bengal with the dominant Sufi tradition and the

27. Ibid : P:- 408.
poetry of Kanu fakir of Chittajang (early 10th century) with its peculiar mingling of the image of Muhammad with that of Krishna are all examples of the eclectic admixtures. Judged by all these considerations, Sumit Sarkar concludes that "in Bengal at least, the 'two-nation theory' is a historical absurdity — as was proved once again after 1947 by the magnificent resurgence of Bengali language and culture in East Pakistan against the threat of Urdu domination culmination in the emergence of Bangladesh."  

28 At the same time, he admits, that the premodern synthesis had serious limitations. Social barriers and taboos remained sufficiently formidable for both communities to retain always a sense of separate identity even at the village level.

Under British rule, the economic position and status of the Muslim upper class suffered a sudden and sharp decline. (Sumit Sarkar in the said book has mentioned some of the causes of this decline. It is unnecessary for our present purpose to mention them). This resulted in the disparity in "middle class development which constituted one fertile source of communalism". According to him, "the imbalance between the two communities made the Bengal renaissance almost entirely a movement of the English educated bhadralok Hindu."  

29 Soon, patriotism tended to be identified with Hindu revivalism. On

28. Imperial Gazetteer of India, PP :- 48-49.

the otherside, when the Muslim Ulema had reacted to the loss of their old world with a powerful revivalist movement calling for a return to the primitive of Islam, they found no difficulty to catch the support of the down-trodden Muslim masses stirred by religious frenzy as well as by the egalitarian appeal of Wahhabism. At another level, the permanent settlement and the regulations of 1799 and 1812 consolidated and greatly enhanced the power of the landlord over his tenants and in many districts of East Bengal, Hindu Zamindar faced a peasantry predominantly Muslim. The peasant, as a rule, whether Hindu or Muslim remained politically inert but in certain areas he was stirred into action against the Hindu bhadralok gentry and riots took place —communal in form, very largely agrarian in content. (In a brief survey of the riots of 1906-7, Sumit Sarkar has shown how communalism in Bengal took its agrarian base.) Thus, Sumit Sarkar hold "what made communalism dangerous in Bengal was the incongruous Muslim combination of aristocratic leadership with antilandlord demagogy —a combination made possible by the peculiar social fact of their being." 30

Sumit Sarkar, thus, explains the Hindu-Muslim relation by stressing not only on religion but also on other factors (socio-economic and political) which have moulded and are moulding the relation between the two religious groups. Amalendu De, another eminent social scientist who seeks to find out the

roots of separatism in the 19th century Bengal also shares this view. 

"... living side by side for a long time, in a common geographical boundary and climate, under the same political and economic conditions, exchanging ideas in the same language and possessing 'psychological marke-up manifested in a common culture', the Hindus and the Muslims had developed certain essential traits of the modern Bengali nationality. In spite of the wall erected by religion separating the two major communities the elements essential for moulding modern nationality remained active. Normal and easy relations developed between them amidst various obstacles in Rural Bengal." 31

In searching out the roots of separatism in the 19th century Bengal, Mr. De recognises the divide and rule policy of the British but proceeds further and dilates on the socio-economic and demographic factors which nourished separation in nineteenth century Bengal. After a detailed discussion of these factors he concludes that "the Hindu and Muslim leaders followed their own exclusively-parallel course in such matters as education, social life, land system and political affairs. These elements of separation necessarily placed obstacles on the way of the growth of a healthy Bengali nation comprising all communities of Bengal." 32


Prova Dixit, on the otherhand, explains communal problem from a newangle. She views communalism as a political doctrine which makes use of religio-cultural differences to achieve political ends. Her study marks a radical departure from the general thesis that the Indian communal problem that ultimately led to the partition of India, is the result of religious and cultural differences which exhibit between the Hindus and the Muslims. To her, "This approach seems to originate in the a priori assumption that religious differences per se have been the cause of the social tension and political conflict between Hindus and Muslims. When religion is taken as the sole cahesive and determinant force of social groups, the two communities are regarded as monoliths. This monistic explanation has not only restricted our vision of the present but has also produced a distorted picture of the medieval past ... the historical point at which the two religions, Hinduism and Islam came into confrontation with each other. The political conflicts of that period are viewed as communal conflicts and the contemporary communal problem is easily interpreted as an extension of the long standing hostility between the followers of the two religions." 33

Probha Dixit is of opinion that the Hindus and the Muslims instead of being two monoliths were divided into several distinct groups and the power, wealth and social status were

concentrated more or less on a permanent basis in certain social groups. Those who formed the upper strata in both the communities differed widely from the masses in their cultural orientation and mode of life. The awareness of distinction between the two communities was most acute at the upper level but at the mass level the cultural and religious differences between the two groups remained insignificant. "The marginal cultural exchange that took place between the two communities over the elite level was purely utilitarian in nature," and "the cultural differences of which they were so conscious, did not stand in the way of their political co-operation with each other for mutual benefit."

"As long as the power-structure of the medieval society remained asymmetrical and the Muslim ruling class retained its premier position, political conflicts did not give rise to social tension or cultural fanatism. Consequently, the need for mobilisation of communal support was absent. Military support was sufficient to resolve political conflict. But once the Muslim ruling class was relegated to a subordinate position beyond the hope of recovery, as it happened in the 18th century signs of socio-cultural tension became visible. At this critical juncture, when the Muslim ruling class found itself inadequate to combat the dangerous challenge posed by the newly born power groups like the Jats and the Marathas, it tried to

34. Ibid: - P: 3.
arouse the religious emotions of the Muslim masses by identifying its loss of power with the decline of Islam. Similarly the new Hindu aspirants to political power started using Hindu slogans to win mass support for their struggle against Mughal imperialism, identifying their political objectives with the cause of vindicating the honour and dharma of the Hindu." 35

Probha Dixit, thus, concludes that the communal tension in India "was not the result of religious hostility between the Muslims and the Hindus but was evolved as a political doctrine and was closely tied up with the struggle for power. By adopting a separatist stand and emphasizing the traditional aspects of their respective religious and cultures, both Muslim and Hindu elite tried to retain their pre-eminence within their own communities. Through a communal ideology, they could safeguard their position and combat the rising influence of a new class of progressive Indian elite who cutting across the division of religious identities had made a form commitment to the modern trends of nationalism and democracy." 36

The above discussion represents some of the historically oriented observations on the Hindu-Muslim relation in India. And it is also found that there are differences of opinion among the scholars on the said field. According to Hossainur Rahman, "most of the historical studies in this field relate

35. Ibid., P: 7.

to political forces and very scant attention has so far been paid to the socio-cultural base of these relations. Apart from these historically oriented observations, some of the scholars while studying the structure and organisational characteristics of a specific religious group gave stray references on the influence of one culture upon another. Some of such studies are historical in nature, while some are based on first-hand field studies. But there is little information on the social context within which that group operates and the pattern of interactions with another religious group in that local situation. This work based on first-hand field survey of four villages observes the Hindu-Muslim relation in economic and social sphere in rural Burdwan, a District of West Bengal. The investigation is being carried out in the years 1976-1980. As such,


the observation is limited to a very narrow field but it is the success of this limited survey that would help us understanding the picture of interaction of these two religious groups and also to observe the bases of communal harmony and the areas of difference between the two religious groups. As Prof. N. K. Bose addressed it a 'living problem' in our country because of our existence of a large number of Muslims in India even after partition. And "it is only when we understand properly the nature of the problem that we can also hope to direct it is a required direction provided of course we have the skill and imagination to shape things in the proper way."

Chapter - II

Method of Investigation

As the object of this investigation is to find out the nature of Hindu-Muslim relation in the socio-economic sphere in rural Burdwan and as there are thousands of such villages, one naturally has to select some typical villages for the purpose of one's investigation. However, the selection of the villages for observation is based not on subjective attitude but on some objective considerations so that they represent the District in respect of its major local variations. While selecting the villages, the geography of the District, its ethnic composition and pattern of occupation are all taken into account.

The district of Burdwan is dotted with 2665 inhabited villages, big or small, where 2521765 persons (81.80%) out of 3082846 persons i.e. its total population, live and 19 towns where 561078 persons (18.20%) of its total population are settled. The villages in spite of their local variations reflect some features which are common to them all. More or less, every village containing the members of different castes/religions is largely self sufficient, having its own controlling

agencies. The people are dependent mainly on agriculture. Some of them belonging to different castes perform their caste functions (either primary or secondary function) which are essential to the agrarian economy of a village whose communication with the outer-world is relatively small. From these common features of the village life, one must not, however, conclude that the villages do not have any local peculiarity. They also differ from each other in their structure and organisation, of the degree of isolation from or the contact with urban areas. From its ethnic composition, some villages contain population of different religious groups, while others profess single religion. Therefore, in selecting the villages, the geography of the District, its ethnic composition and pattern of occupation are also taken into consideration.

For administrative purposes, the District is divided into four Sub-Divisions — Sadar, Kalna, Katwa and Asansol (At present, Asansol Sub-division is further sub-divided into Asansol and Durgapur Sub-division). Each sub-division consists of some police stations under whose jurisdiction some villages belong. The Census of 1951 compares the shape of the District to a hammer of which the handle consists of Asansol Sub-division which is some 60 miles in length. The head is formed by Sadar, Katwa and Kalna Sub-division and the widest part runs to about 70 miles. It falls naturally into two divisions — the eastern part consisting of Sadar, Katwa and Kalna Sub-division with a total area of 2081 square miles, is a wide alluvial plain enclosed by the river Ajoy, Bhagirathi and Damodar respectively
on the north, east and south. River Damodar divides the eastern part and separates P.S. Raina and P.S. Khandaghosh which lie on the south of river Damodar. To the west, the district narrows to a mere, strip of rocky undulating land, some 15 miles wide, lying between the Ajoy and Damodar.

The eastern part differs from the west in natural characteristics. The eastern part enclosed by the river Ajoy, Bhagirathi and Damodar is rich in agriculture. "Wide plains, green in their season with rice, at other times patterned like a gigantic chess-board by the local embankments which divide the fields stretch in unvarying monotony to a horizon bordered by trees and villages." 2

The western part of the district, on the other hand, consists of barren rocky and rolling landscape with a laterite soil rising into rocky hillocks on the right bank of the Ajoy river and shut in on the west, north and south by the hills of chotanagpur and santal parganas .... This tract is practically treeless though a portion is still covered with sal forest and before the discoveries of coal in the last century was a tremendous wilderness dotted at long intervals by tiny clearings and settlements and intersected by no great road or route. The surface is generally covered with clay in some parts alluvial but in others formed from the decomposition of the rocks, though in places the rocks are explored and great stretches of land are

wholly unfit for cultivation ..... Along the Damodar to the south, however, there are narrow strips of land formed by alluvion which yield good harvests. With the discoveries of coal in this area in the last century, this sub-division becomes the puriest industrial tracts in Bengal and the area is at present full of coal pits and factories. Out of 19 towns in Burdwan District, 13 are situated in this sub-division.

Thus, the eastern part is rich in agriculture whereas the western part is rich in industry. The eastern part is marked by its rural population (87.83%). The western part is characterised by its urban population (54.25%). The total number of inhabitants in urban areas is 561078. Of them 383,708 souls live at Asansol sub-division which comprised 624.2 Sq. miles (whereas the eastern part 2081.3 Sq. miles). Therefore, in selecting the villages the choice falls on the eastern part which is rural and agricultural in comparison with its western part which is urban-based and industrial.

If we study the pattern of the growth of population of this District from 1872 onwards, we cannot miss the most interesting fact that the growth of population between 1872 and 1921 in every police station in the Sadar and Kalna sub-division and Ketugram police station in Katwa sub-division was negative. The 1951 Census registered Malaria and flood as the causes of the

4. Part-1, Table-1,
decline of population of these three sub-divisions. But towards
the close of the decade there were signs of relief from malaria
and some hope of security from disastrous floods after the sys-
tematic repair of the embankment of the Damodar by Government
\(\text{Census 1951 P:- c-xvi}\). The development of communication
system through railway also improved the situation. Several
welfare measures were taken by the district board against epi-
demic. All these good works continued in 1931-41. Between 1947
and 1951 Katwa, Kalna and Sadar sub-division received a steady
stream of displaced persons, which swelled up the population
of the District. These are some of the reasons responsible for
the steady increase of population in the three sub-divisions
between 1921 and 1951. Though the percentage of growth of the
population of these three sub-divisions from 1921-51 differs,
the difference is nominal in comparison with the percentage of
growth in Asansol sub-division. From 1921 to 1951 the increase
of population in Sadar, Kalna and Katwa is on +36.0% + 48.5%
and +33.9% respectively. Between 1921-31 the increase in Sadar
sub-division is +6.0% at Kalna +6.2% and at Katwa +14.3%.
Between 1931-41 the growth is in Sadar + 18.0% and Kalna 13.2%
and at Katwa +11.6%. But from 1941-51 the increase in Sadar is
8.7%, Kalna 23.4% and Katwa +5.0%. The increase of population
in Kalna sub-division can be explained by the fact that Kalna
is situated on the eastern border of the Burdwan district and
therefore it received displaced persons from the East Pakistan

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5. Census 1951, P:- xvi.
to a large extent. The growth of population from 1951 to 61 is to some extent normal. At Sadar sub-division it amounts to 43.2% at Asansol 41.9% at Katwa 36.1% at Kalna 35.5%.

But we find a completely different picture in Asansol sub-division. The establishment of big or small industries in Asansol sub-division have invited persons from abroad and have increased the population in an uninterrupted way. From 1872 to 1921 when almost all sub-divisions lost heavily (Sadar 18.5%, Kalna 39.3%, Katwa +0.1%) Asansol managed to maintain its growth on +69.7%. From 1921 to 1951 the growth was around 90.4%. From 1901 to 1951, when the growth of population in Sadar sub-division was +17.5%, at Kalna +35.0% or at Katwa +26.6%, Asansol sub-division increased in its population by +107.4%. This quite inordinate growth of population makes this sub-division rather uncertain choice for the purpose of picking up villages that are representative of the district.

Among other considerations for the selection of the villages, I have taken the religious division of the people of the district. The first general Census of this district (1872) returns a population of 20,34,745 souls. 6 Of them the Hindus numbered 16,79,363, the proportion of the total being 82.5 percent. The Muhammadans who form 17% per cent of the population numbered 348,624. From then, the percentage of the population

of these two religious communities to the total District popu-
lation remained more or less static. Table - 2, shows the per-
centage of population of these two groups from 1872-1961.

The variation of the percentage of population of the two
religious groups from 1881 to 1941 is negligible. In between
1872-1881 there is a fall of percentage of Hindu population.
This was probably due to the fact that during this period some
major transfer of its territory was made. In 1879 the thanas of
Sonamukhi, Kotulpur and Indus were retransferred to Bankura
while the Jahanabad sub-division was transferred to Midnapore.
And from then the District retains more or less its present
form. The immigrants to Burdwan for 1951 includes 96,105 dis-
placed persons from Pakistan and this has caused the decrease
of the percentage of Muslim population of that year ( from
17.8% in 1941 to 15.59% in 1951 ).

Table-3, shows the distribution of Hindu and Muslim
population of the district on several sub-divisions ( based on
1961 census ).

The Hindus command 84.23 per cent of the total population.
The Muslims constitute 15.17 per cent. At the sub-divisional
level, however, this distribution differs from one another.
Sadar sub-division ( Muslim 15.44% ) maintains a close simila-
rity to the percentage of Muslims to the district population

7. Part-1, Table-2.
8. Part-1, Table-3.
(Muslim 15.17%). In Asansol sub-division on the otherhand, the Muslims are in poor percentage. In Kalna and Katwa sub-divisions, they maintain a stronghold (Katwa 21.62%) and (Kalna 21.28%). The proportion of Hindus living in urban areas to the total District population is 15.60% whereas the proportion of the Muslim is 2.21%. The Muslims who constitute 15.17 per cent of the total population, constitute 12.19 per cent of the total urban population. In Katwa sub-division the percentage of the Muslims to total population of this division is 21.62%. In urban areas they constitute only 6.59%. In Kalna also whereas they constitute 21.28% of the sub-divisional population, their percentage of urban population of that sub-division is only 1.59. In Sadar the proportion is to some extent higher. Whereas they constitute 15.44% of the sub-divisional population, 8.98% of the urban population they hold.

Thus in Sadar, Katwa and Kalna the greater part of the Muslims are settled in rural areas. In Katwa, of the 7.30% of its urban population to the total sub-divisional population the Muslims constitute only 0.48%, Hindus 6.80%. In Kalna the urban population amounts to 5.43% of its total population. Of them Muslims hold 0.08% whereas Hindus constitute 5.34%, But the picture is quite different in Asansol. In Asansol sub-division the Muslims constitute 10.04 per cent of the total population of the sub-division. But of the total urban population of the sub-division their number is 14.03%. Thus in Asansol sub-division the majority of the Muslims live at urban areas.
As I attempt to show the Hindu-Muslim relation of rural Burdwan, I think it appropriate to pick up villages from Katwa, Kalna and Sadar sub-division only. The distribution of population (percentage-wise between Hindu and Muslims) of Sadar sub-division represents to a great extent the District population. Therefore I have selected Sadar sub-division for my field of investigation. In between Kalna and Katwa I have preferred Katwa because in the mediaeval period it was considered as the key to Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal under Muhammadan Governor. Muslim invasion also occurred throughout this way. In the mediaeval period, this place was a famous trading centre. Therefore the place is still rich in Muslim culture. At the sometime Katwa an old town, is considered to be sacred by the Hindus, especially by the Vaishnavas, Chaitanya, a great preceptor and reformer of Hindu religion led his ascetic life here. The river Ganga whose soil and water is accepted by Hindus to purify unclean objects flows by its side.

The pattern of occupation of the district would also justify my selection of these two sub-divisions. Burdwan is the granary of West Bengal. Of its total working members 46.17 per cent is engaged in agriculture. Table-4, shows the distribution of population of several sub-divisions according to occupational pursuits.

The proportion of workers engaged in agriculture to the

9. Part-1, Table-4.
total workers of each sub-division is higher in Katwa where 69.36 per cent of the total workers are engaged in agriculture. The next position is acquired by Kalna (67.11%). At Sadar the workers engaged in agriculture envisage 66.68 per cent. Whereas in Asansol sub-division only 17.95% of the workers are engaged in agriculture. In mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations orchards and allied activities 32.85% is engaged. In manufacturing other than household industry workers are shown 20.18%. These two columns taken together provide 53.03% of the total workers. In Sadar sub-division after agriculture the next occupation employing maximum number of workers is service (14.43%). In Kalna though service holds second position, its household industry deserves mention (8.01%).

After selecting the sub-divisions and before going on to select the villages I have decided to pick up from Katwa sub-division those villages where Muslims are in majority, with a view to have, if any, the picture of the dominant Muslim culture and also to exhibit the position of Hindus where they are in minority. In Sadar sub-division I have decided to pick up a village where the Muslims are in minority. I think it also necessary to have a village where the two groups show more or less same percentage. In all these villages the majority of the workers would be engaged in agriculture. Communication system of the village is also taken into account. While searching out villages I came to know that from the point of view of the Muslims a village may be categorised either as Idga
village where there is no mosque (a common prayer hall), or a Masjid village. Also a village may be called a Muhammad village where the Muslims belong to sect Ahl-i-Hadis. They are strict to the life and teachings of Quran and of the great Prophet and for their explanation they recognise six books called Siha setta (composed by Bokhari, Moslem, Abu Daud, Ebne Maja, Nasai and Tirmiji). On the otherhand, a Hanafi village is one which adheres not only to the verses of Quran or the life and teachings of great prophet, but also to the interpretation of Abu Hanif. These two sects belong to Sunni sect. The customs, rituals and festivals of the followers of Sect. Ahl-i-Hadis differ from those who belong to sect Hanafi. All the three villages picked up from the Sadar sub-division belong to sect Hanafi. Therefore while searching out a Muslim dominated village from Katwa sub-division, I found Kulsuna where the Muslims belong to sect Ahl-i-Hadis and constitute 72.95% of the total population. The village is also famous for the learning of Islam and two Madrasa are established for this purpose. Both the clean and unclean caste Hindus reside in the village. The Hindus also perform several religious worships and festivals. Therefore the village would give us an opportunity to observe the religious life of the two religious groups and their interaction. Moreover, like other villages, village Kulsuna is essentially agriculture oriented.

As in the case of the selection of other villages, the selection of village of Khemta is also purposive. As the object of investigation is to study the Hindu-Muslim relations in
rural Burdwan, villages containing different population alignments representing two religious groups are selected. This village represents one where Muslims constitute 60.11% of the total population and Hindus constitute 39.89% of the total population.

The village is of course an agricultural village where 55.95% of its workers are engaged in cultivation. What is significant is that this village is situated not far away from the urban areas. As Kotsimul or Tailara (selected for survey) are far away from the P.S. Raina or District Town, Burdwan, this village is in close touch with these centres.

Moreover, the village is marked by the residence of Pir Sah Sufi Sultana, a great saint and preacher of Islam and also of several Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Therefore, it is also expected to give an opportunity to study the religious life of the two religious groups and to see whether there is any inter-relation of the two religious groups on their religious performances.

The village Kotsimul is selected for obvious reasons. The village is inhabited by multi-religious groups where numerical distance between the Hindus (60.38%) and Muslims (38.52%) is rather opposite to village Khemta. It is also one of those typical villages which are at a long distance from the urban area and where majority of the population depends on cultivation. However, the village was once a centre for Muslim culture during Mughal rule when Bambare Khan, the predecessor of the
present Khan generation was the Jagirdar of this locality. And, the village was once the old capital of 'Rarha' bearing name 'Kodibaris'. Thus, the village has become a significant meeting point of several cultural streams coming from both the so-called Hindu and Muslim culture. There is more than one justification of the selection of village Tailara, for the purpose of the present survey. In the first place, the villagers are dependent mainly on agriculture, where (71%) of the total number of households are engaged in cultivation. Secondly, the village is also a remote one keeping itself away from the effects of urban culture. Thirdly, the village is noted for a longstanding Brahminic culture and as many as 26 households (out of 101) belong to the Brahmin caste group. But the fourth and the most important cause for picking up this village is that the village contains only 2 Muslim households or 1.52% of its total population whereas the Hindus constitute 98.48% of its total population. The village is selected to investigate the relation between the two religious groups of which one is distinctly in minority vis-a-vis the other religious group. It will be our purpose to see the kind of interaction that takes place between the Muslims forming a very weak minority and the Hindus who are numerically preponderant i.e. whether the interaction is one of submission domination type or one of mutual exclusiveness or one of mutually advantageous co-existence.

For the observation of rural societies, several methodological tests are used by social scientists. The observations made on four villages are based partly on participant observation and partly on the systematic use of a carefully prepared schedule and questionnaire. For the collection of data on each household which is taken as the primary unit of social relation, Household Schedule is used at random. In addition to the use of Household Schedule for each household some of the villagers carrying every caste and caste-like group are interviewed through a prepared questionnaire.

The use of these tools for the collection of information points up some of the difficulties which as an investigator I experienced. Sociologists like S.C. Dube\textsuperscript{11} and M.N. Sinivas\textsuperscript{12} have described some of the problems of the study of a rural society in India. It may also be mentioned here the experiences of S.M. Hafeez Zaidi\textsuperscript{13} and A. Farouk\textsuperscript{14} while studying East Pakistan (new Bangladesh) Society. Though the problems faced by these two sociologists relate to the study of East Pakistan Society, a large number of these problems may be faced as I

\textsuperscript{13} S.M. Hafeez Zaidi: 'The Village Culture in Transition', East West Centre Press, Honolulu, 1970.
myself faced as an investigator in studying rural society in West Bengal. Some of the problems which I had to encounter while conducting the village surveys are worth mentioning here.

Two (Kotsimul and Tailara) of the four villages selected for investigation are disturbed by flood of river Damodar and therefore undertaking any scheme of investigation during rains is hardly possible. Moreover, most of the villagers under survey are cultivators and become very busy during the sowing and harvest times of the year. During these periods, they spend their busiest time in the field and it becomes difficult to catch them for the purpose.

Next comes the problem of accommodation in rural areas. Flying from an urban areas outside the village and to return to the shelter after collecting data becomes troublesome. On the other hand the villagers who view the stranger with suspicion and dislike to unfold them, do not like to receive the stranger as a paying guest. If the investigator is able enough to create confidence, he would get shelter as a guest but not on payment of reasonable price charges because the payment of change price from a person in lieu of giving accommodation is not likely to be accepted by any villager. Some students and friends of mine and some school teachers residing in the village under survey gave me accommodation and solved the problem to a large extent. The survey of two villages Kotsimul and Tailara, become easier because of my participation on N.S.S. Camp conducted by N.S.S. Unit, Syamsundar College, Burdwan.
The job of finding out a companion who would introduce me to the villagers is another difficulty. A stranger is often viewed by the villagers either as a Government official to collect information about land holding in order to seize it or about number of children for the purposes of family planning, or as a political person. The fear can partly be withered away if a villager who gains respect from other villagers explain the purpose of the investigator. If that villager becomes an active member of a political party, the villagers belonging to other political party would not trust him. I had also faced these problems but I won their mind after a month's stay and then I found it easier to proceed.

Moreover, my experience of investigation about rural areas is that the use of rigid methodological tools like printed questionnaire, open questionnaire etc. would get less favour in rural areas where the villagers are in most cases ignorant, suspicious and fatalist. The rich and the influential persons are always ready to talk about them and their role in the village and sometimes give biased and irrelevant information. The aged persons do like to portrait the glory picture of their youth. These are some of the hazards that I experienced as an investigator of the four villages.

A point concerning the general methodology and the procedure of social research on rural areas may also be noted here. Opinions among the sociologists differ in regard to the reality of the village as a unit of social organisation in the study
of rural areas. Prof. M.N. Srinivas is of opinion that "The completely self sufficient village republic is a myth. It was always part of a wider entity. Only villages in Pre-British India were less dependent economically on towns than villages are today." "The villagers social field is thus much wider than his village. Kin, economic, religious and other social ties enlarge the field to include a circle of neighbouring villages." He, therefore, warns "The social anthropologists who studies a single village should not only bear in mind the fact that it has important ties with other villages, but also that political and economic forces set in motion in the larger society affect it fundamentally." Prof. S.C. Dube also shares the same view. "No village in India is completely autonomous and independent, for it is always one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organised political society. An individual is not the member of a village community alone; he also belongs to a caste, religious group or tribe which has a wider territorial spread and comprises several villages ....... Politically the villagers are under the legislative, executive and judicial authority of the Indian Union and one of its constituent states." I also agree with the views of these two eminent Indian sociologists. The four villages under survey are linked


in several spheres with other villages and are also part of a wider society. But this does not mean that the village represents no special reality. So far as the Bengal village is concerned it is self-contained in many ways. The performance of caste-occupation and Jajmani system, some of the features of agricultural production, the worships of village deities, management of several village associations, long-drawn customs and traditions - all these strengthen the bond of the villagers as a unit and give it a sociological reality. Influences from outside may set pressure or change the system but the process of change would depend, to a large extent, on the intensity of contradiction of the forces instead of making it an easy flow.

In addition to this, another limitation may also be pointed out. The Hindu-Muslim relations in a rural area (here, rural Burdwan) can be approached from various levels. For example, the relation may be studied in terms of social structure, the customs, beliefs, worships of the area under discussion. It may also be approached in terms of economy—the process of production, consumption, marketing etc. Further, it may be studied from the political standpoint. Thus, for a comprehensive analysis all these levels compete for one's attention. I first decided to take all of them in turn but after two years of investigation I realised that in these days of specialization of social sciences, it is hardly possible for an investigator to present ably and completely such an all pervasive analysis. I therefore deemed it to be more reasonable
to concentrate only on economic and social sphere. It is, therefore, neither the purpose nor the claim of this work to deal with political or administrative aspects of the Hindu Muslim relations. On the other hand, the work deals with the social context within which the economic and social life of the two religious groups operate and the pattern of interactions between the two.

The field survey of the four villages has been conducted through several phases and was spread over a period of five years between 1976 to 1980. The first phase of investigation includes village Kotsimul and Tailara and then I proceed to cover village Kulsuna and Khemta. On several occasions, I had to keep returning to the same village with a view to gathering some more detailed information which I did not obtain at the first phase of investigation of that village. The period of the year I found convenient for survey ranged over several weeks from the month of October to June every year.

The work is divided into two parts each of which is covered by several chapters. The second part (Pat-II) contains four sections representing the socio-economic condition of four surveyed villages namely, village Kotsimul (J.L. No.208 - Sec. A), village Khemta J.L. No.19 (Sec. B), village Tailara J.L. No. 201 (Sec. D) of Sadar Sub-division and village Kulsuna J.L. No. 104 (Sec. C) of Katwa Sub-division of District Burdwan. Each of these four sections include four chapters. Chapter-I introduces the village in brief. Chapter-II deals
with the economic life of the village and the participation of the Hindus and Muslims in several economic pursuits. In this context, note has been taken of the several caste or caste-like groups and the relation of these groups with their occupation.

The unit of analysis is family. While classifying several occupational pursuits, I am indebted to the Primary Census Abstract 1961 which divides the workers into nine occupational categories. But instead of following it in toto, I have classified them in a slightly different way. Occupational categories like agriculture, agricultural labour, Trade and Commerce and service are taken into account. For the presentation of some occupations which are peculiar to the village economy of Bengal I have mentioned some other categories — fishing and animal husbandry, rural craft, rural service and other occupations.

In agriculture, there are land-owners who cultivate land themselves or lay out land to the share-cropper. The owner-cultivators are in some cases personally engaged in agriculture or put in only supervisory work. There are others who do not possess bullock, other implements and therefore, cultivate land through hired instruments, bullocks and labourers. Some share-croppers who are also included in this category, possess land while others are entirely dependent on lease land. The informations on share-cropping, especially the amount of land cultivated and the person who has let out that land is difficult to collect. There is fear on the part of the owner of recording land and on share cropper of missing land in the
next session.

Some families in the villages purchase paddy (unhusked rice) and sell it after husking. In most cases the capital is the small amount of paddy produced by the cultivator. And instead of consuming it (which would satisfy the family for only a few months) they invest it as capital and consume from the profit of this processing. This pursuit has been termed as Agro-processing.

Rural craft covers occupations like blacksmithy, netting for fish, basket construction etc. In Rural service, I have placed occupations of the barber, musician, dai, palanquin bearer, thatcher and the priest. These occupations have a special significance in village life and in many cases are related to a particular caste member. In other occupations I have placed the occupations of a cowboy, maid-servant, tube-well mechanic, beggar etc. Whether begging alms can be called a occupation is a matter of debate. But in Bengal sometimes a distinction is made between religious begging and profane begging and religious begging is sometimes followed by religious mendicants who take it as a noble profession.

While dealing with the occupation of the household, it is observed that some households provide workers to different occupational pursuits and even a worker is engaged in more than one occupation. I have taken into account all those occupations and have arranged them as Principal occupation, whose return is higher than other occupation and second third, fourth occupation
and so on according to the income prospect of each occupation.

Chapter-III of each section deals with the social relations between the members belonging to two religious groups. The social relation as is revealed in the following fields is investigated:

a) membership of a group; (b) selection of marriage partners; (c) occupation; (d) commensality; (e) touching; (f) the concept of purity and pollution; (g) participation in several religious worships and festivals; (h) participation in rituals and life-cycle ceremonies—birth, marriage and death. Each religious group is further sub-divided by some castes/caste-like groups. Therefore, in dealing with social relations, both intra-group and inter-group relations of a religious group has studied in some detail. The festivals and life cycle ceremonies of each religious group are also taken into consideration and are placed on Chapter-IV.

The First Part (Part-I) which is the main part of this work, is divided into six chapters (If part-II is considered as a storehouse of basic information relating to economic and social life of a village), Part-I is the analytical study of these facts. An attempt is made in the first part of this study to interpret these facts for understanding Hindu-Muslim relations in economic and social fields. The work is divided into

In Chapter-I (Introduction) I have mentioned the object
of investigation and have presented not as a critic but as an observer some views put forward by celebrated authors in this field and have noticed the need for an objective assessment for the study of Hindu-Muslim relations. In order to fulfil this purpose, rural Burdwan is picked up for field investigation.

Chapter-II (present chapter) gives an idea of the method which I have followed in my investigation. It also delineates the field of investigation and explains the reasons for the selection of some villages as representative samples. The sources of information of the investigation are also put on record in this Chapter.

Chapter-III deals with the economic realities of rural Bengal. This chapter is, in fact, the summarised version of chapter-II of several sections of Part-II. In this context, note has been taken of the existence of several castes/caste-like groups. Both the hereditary occupation of several castes and occupation other than caste occupations are taken into consideration. The participation of several religious/castes/caste-like groups on these economic pursuits and the relation of the workers engaged in those categories are observed.

Chapter-IV deals with the social relation of the two religious groups as are found in the surveyed villages. Both intra-group and inter-group relations of each religious group has been studied. The religious festivals and life-cycle ceremonies of the Hindus and the Muslims are also considered and are placed on a Chapter-V.
The last Chapter (Chapter-VI) summarises the concluding observations of the work. The emphasis is given to stress on the factors which are responsible for the amicable settlement of the two religious groups and also the areas where the two differ from one another.
Chapter-III

Economic realities and the two religious groups — Hindu & Muslim.

Studies on the economic life of rural Bengal are still in their infancy. A few of the scholars who have made good contribution to this field, have either concentrated their attention to observe the degree of dependence of several caste groups on their traditional occupation without going into details the existence of caste and its function among other non-Hindu groups who also live along with several Hindu caste groups; or they deal with the economy without stressing the relation between caste and occupation. In fact, the villages are not always composed of the members of a single religious group; on the other hand, most of the villages of Bengal are the domicile of different, say, Hindu and Muslim, religious groups. This chapter deals with the interaction of the two religious groups — Hindu and Muslim, on several economic pursuits of rural Burdwan, a District of West Bengal.

1. Amal Das : Trends of occupation pattern through generations in rural areas of West Bengal, 1968.


District of Burdwan which is described as a granary of West Bengal, is dotted with 2665 inhabited villages, big or small, where 2521768 persons or 81.30% of its total population live. Of them, four villages are selected for the present purpose. None of these four villages are self-contained in the strict sense of the term. New employment opportunities outside the village, the effect of industrialisation and commercial economy have affected the economic pattern of the rural community and made villages part of a wider entity. For educational, official, medical and religious purposes, they are to depend on agencies outside the village. Politically also they are a part of an organised political society. But, in spite of these features, there are some elements that have made the village as a unit. Division of labour among several castes and their inter-dependence, lack of incentive among the villagers to find out new job opportunities outside the village and to leave, if it becomes necessary, the village for that purpose, dependence on few shops for everyday marketing purposes, lack of adequate thinking on education and medicine among most of


the villagers, dependence on tradition and superstition, performance of several festivals and ceremonies, to safeguard the village from flood, thieves or any other disturbances are some of the factors that still integrate the village and is viewed as a unit.  

Each of the four surveyed villages which are inhabited by both Hindus and Muslims is characterised by several castes and caste-like groups. Every caste group belonging to Hindu religion is supposed to have a prescribed hereditary occupation. So far as the occupational pattern of these four villages is concerned, only a few of the workers follow their caste-based occupation. Even those who follow their caste occupation


5. cf. A. Mitra (ed): The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, Land & Revenue Department, West Bengal, 1953, P:- 4.

H.H. Risley: The People of India, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Delhi, 1969, PP:- 76-78.


also depend upon subsidiary occupation; some, on the otherhand, follow caste-based occupation to draw their subsidiary means of livelihood. At village Kotsimul, only 20 households (Mahishya-8, Dule-10, Baishnab-1 and Suri-1) or 19.42% of the Hindu households follow their caste occupation to draw their principal means of livelihood. It is also revealed that the households of the same caste/caste-like group follow different occupations. For example, among 25 households belonging to Tili caste group, 21 households are engaged in agriculture (owner-cultivator/owner/share-cropper), one household depends on agricultural labour; one is engaged in Trade and Commerce; one is in service and the remaining one acts as cook to a clean caste household. Similarly, the Sekh households of the Muslim religious group number 40 of whom 30 households depend on agriculture; 6 depend on agricultural labour; one is in rural service and service each and the remaining two depend on begging alms.

In village Khemta, only 6 households (Brahmin-1, Satgope-5) or 12.24% of the Hindu households depend on their caste occupation to draw their principal means of livelihood. Some households, ofcourse, follow subsidiary occupations to support their family income and some of these subsidiary occupations


7. cf. Ibid.
are related to their caste occupation. Thus, 24 households of the Dule caste group follow their caste occupation of fishing and some of these households also follow the occupation of bearing palanquin. Two households belonging to Hari caste group are attendants of prospective mother during delivery. One household of this caste group is also palanquin bearer. One member belonging to Muchi caste group is the player of indigenous instruments called Dhak and Dhole. Thus 34 households (covering 53 workers or 40.15% of the total workers) or 69.39% of the total households belonging to Hindu religious group are attached to their caste occupation either to draw their principal or subsidiary means of livelihood. Also, the members of a particular caste/caste-like group follow different types of occupations.

In village Kulsuna, the number of Hindu households depending on caste occupation is only 22 (Brahmin-1, Satgope-13, Gope-8) or 25% of the total Hindu households. 24 households (Napit-1, Gope-11, Namasudra-1, Bagdi-2, Muchi-7, Dom-2) of the Hindu religious group follow their caste occupation to draw their subsidiary means of livelihood. Moreover, households belonging to a particular caste/caste-like group are following different types of occupation. For example, among the three households of the Brahmin caste, one draws its principal means of livelihood from caste occupation i.e. priesthood; another depends on agriculture; and the remaining one is following agricultural labour to draw principal means of livelihood.
Village Tailara also presents the same picture. It is revealed that only 17 households (Brahmin (P)-4, Brahmin (A)-1, Satgope-2, Mahishya-4, Malakar-2) or 17% of the total Hindu households draw their principal means of livelihood from their caste occupation. 15 households (Brahmin (P)-5, Brahmin (A)-2, Napit-2, Rajak-3, Hari-3) are following their caste occupation to draw their subsidiary income.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that though every caste group belonging to Hindu religion is supposed to follow prescribed hereditary occupation, only a few of the households follow their caste-based occupation to draw their principal means of livelihood. Secondly, in three villages, the number of households who follow caste-based occupation to draw subsidiary income far exceeds the number of households who follow caste-based occupation to draw principal income. Moreover, the unclean caste groups depend more on their caste-based occupation whereas households belonging to clean caste group depend less on their caste-based occupation. Only village Tailara presents a different picture. Here the percentage of clean caste households depending on caste-based occupation is high.

However, most of the households who are still following their caste-based occupation show their preference to shift from caste-based occupation to other 'better-paid' occupations. Some of the households have abandoned their caste occupation because they find more money in other occupations. A few
households, (mainly belonging to Napit caste group) of course, have changed their caste occupation because they came to look upon it as an impure occupation. One Napit household of village Kulsuna depends on agricultural labour because he is not skilled enough to satisfy the younger generation who cut their hair in the saloon of the nearby market. Some Brahmin households living in village Kulsuna and Tailara have to depend on agricultural labour because their caste occupation did not satisfy their needs and as they serve several households (clean and unclean and even Muslim) they are thought to be polluted for priesthood and are, therefore, prevented from performing their caste function. Thus, the economic needs as well as introduction of new economic system has affected the dependence of several caste groups on their caste occupation. Moreover, because of the Jajmani system, some households though eligible to perform their caste functions have no right to serve the villagers because they are immigrants of the village they now reside.

The caste-like composition of the Muslim is also based on occupation but leans more heavily on the

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R.K. Bhattacharya: "The concept and ideology of caste among the Muslims of Rural West Bengal" in Imtiaz Ahmed
descent of its followers. The pattern of occupation of the Muslims of the four surveyed villages reveals the fact that except hereditary occupation of a caretaker of a Pir or deity, the Muslims do not follow any hereditarily prescribed occupation and they live mainly by agriculture. The cultivators with a large amount of land send workers in better-paid jobs or establish shops. Some occupations (Maulawi, i.e., religious teacher, businessman of cows) are followed by the Muslims.

One of the striking features of the caste occupation is that it creates a kind of interdependence among several castes. Thus, a Brahmin who performs the function of priesthood is dependant on Napit (Barber) for cutting or dressing hair; on Malakar for preparation of garlands etc.; on Rajak for washing clothes; on Hari for nurshing the prospective mother during delivery and in a similar way on Karmakar (blacksmith), Gope (Milkman), Muchi, Dule, Bagdi (Musician, fisher, palanquin bearer, thatcher etc.). In this way several castes are dependent on each other and form the village economy as a tightly knit system (though it is not self-sufficient). The

(ed).—caste and social stratification among the Muslims, Ibid. PP:- 126-127.


Muslims are also part of this village economy. The caste services rendered by several caste groups are not confined to the Hindus. The Muslims also receive these caste services. The services of Napit (barber), Brahmin (priest), Hari (woman-attending prospective mother during delivery), Gope (milkman), Karmakar (blacksmith), Bagdi, Dule, Muchi (musician, thatcher, palanquin bearer), Rajak (washerman) etc. are rendered both to the clean caste Hindus and to the Muslims.

The numerical strength or weakness of that caste/religious group in receiving caste services are not counted at all. The Hindus also do not hesitate to send offerings to Pirs and to receive 'prasada' from the Muslim caretaker of a Pir or a deity.

Moreover, in respect of some of these caste services, these services are received by clean caste of the Hindu religious groups and Muslims whereas unclean castes are prevented from taking these caste services. Bagdi and Dule—these two caste belonging to unclean caste group, of course, take some of these caste services. Bearing this exception, other unclean castes do not receive caste services. For example, a Hari woman serves clean castes, Bagdi and Dule of the unclean caste-group and the Muslims but does not serve another unclean caste say, a Rajak (washerman) who in the eye of a Hari, belongs

to a social stratum much below that of a Hari. Rajak (unclean caste) on the other hand, refuses to wash clothes of a Hari (unclean caste) because Rajak treats Hari caste as inferior to Rajak caste. This proves that Muslims are also a part of the caste-oriented village economy and their position may roughly be compared to the clean caste Hindus and surely superior to that of the unclean caste groups so far as these caste services are concerned.

A few years ago these unclean caste groups who had no right to enjoy other caste services, had to depend on another member of that caste to perform these caste services. Today, they go to the nearby market where this discrimination is hardly maintained.

The services rendered by several castes to other caste members and also to the Muslims are of course guided by caste norms. Several castes, while serving a clean caste, take meal in addition to other charges. But while he/she serves a Muslim household, he/she does not take meal but receives rice/paddy in addition to similar other charges. It may be mentioned here that the same is happened when a clean caste member serves an unclean (Bagdi & Dule) household.

Although these caste norms still regulate the behaviour of the villagers, yet there has taken place a considerable change in the economic relationship which binds together these several castes/caste-like groups. A few years ago a caste member (i.e., a barber or a dai) used to receive from the
household served, paddy or rice which was fixed for the year or a small area of land was granted for recompensation of these caste services. Today, they prefer (the household that receives that service also prefers) to receive money in cash. Thus the traditional system has largely been replaced by cash payments.

Apart from these caste-based occupations which draw less than 25% of the total number of households of each village to draw their principal means of livelihood, the villagers follow some other occupations. Among these non-caste-based occupations agriculture can be mentioned first because the villagers depend largely on agriculture. At village Kotsimul, out of 175 households, 102 households or 58.28% of the total households draw their principal means of livelihood from agriculture. 54% of the total households of village Kulsuna are drawing their principal income from agriculture. At village Khemta, the cultivators hold 46.39% of the total number of households and at village Tailara they hold 42% of the total population. Moreover, the involvement of several castes/caste-like groups of these four surveyed villages on agriculture reveals the fact that agriculture which is the prime occupation of the villagers, is not confined to a particular caste or caste-like

13 A. Mitra & Ranjit Guha (ed): West Bengal District Records—Burdwan, Letter issued (1788 - 1800) 1956, P:- IXVI.

group. In the Hindu caste divided society it is said that every caste prescribes a particular occupation of its members. However, in the list of castes of Bengal we find only two caste groups — Satgope and Mahishya who claim agriculture as their caste occupation. But these caste groups were not originally related to agriculture. In fact, in Bengal there is no caste whose name is confined to agriculture. "As in 1891, so in 1931, Hutton listed the castes according to their usual occupations and we may summarise some of the castes as follows; Bagdis, Bauris, Pode, Rajbanshis to whom large portions of our State belongs, are primarily agriculturists by profession." The list also covers some tribal groups whose occupation is agriculture. But as regards the occupation of the clean Sudra caste groups and their involvement in agriculture, nothing is reported.

R.K. Mukherjee is of opinion that in pre-British days, the dominant form of Socio-economic organisation was the "Village Community System." This was a self-sufficient unit in which the main occupation was agriculture, with the usual complement of weaving, pottery

16. A. Mitra (ed): The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, Land & Land Revenue Department, West Bengal, 1953, P:-4.
making, carpentry, oil-pressing etc. land was held by the entire village, each household living on subsistence production on a plot allotted to it for its use. The individual hold on land was in terms of possession not of ownership.  

However, it is not our present purpose to test the hypothesis of Mr. Mukherjee. Mr. A. Mitra is of opinion "that long before the rise of the Zamindari Estates, it was customary for the residents of a village to allot waste lands as compensation for certain services received by the community. Grants were often made to persons connected with the administration and defence of the village like patwaris and paiks as well as to several categories of communal producers. Even under the Mughals when the introduction of relatively more standardized survey and assessment established a greater degree of official control over landed property, subordinate officers could still grant away small areas of land free of rent provided, as Colebrooke says, the villagers consented to it. (Colebrooke — Remarks on the Husbandry and Internal Commerce of Bengal, Para 93 ). This semi-official recognition of the right to make a grant of land by common consent possibly indicates a historical memory of the original corporate character of our rural economy."  


"Subsequently, with the transformation of Zamindars into proprietors and the consequent absorption of much communal property into their private estates, a considerable amount of the free lands turned into freeholds paying a cash or in crop. At the same time, the Zamindars regranted a large part of the lands free of rent on the condition that the service of the grantees were now placed at the disposal of the Zamindar rather than that of the community. In other words, communal lands were turned into chakran lands... The grantees of such chakran, mostly peasant producers tilling their own lands now settled in the nucleated village around the Zamindar's mansion rendering a multitude of services of the lands as washerman, barbers, blacksmiths, potters, sweepers, carpenters and above all as paiks, barkandares and attendants directly associated with the job of maintaining law and order and collecting revenue. These numerous services actually represent the surplus labour, that is labour rent, appropriated by the Zamindar from the Chakran ryot." 20 The statement of the Roy Royan dated 31st August 1787 and a letter issued on 28th Dec. 1787 by J. Sherburne Collector of Birbhum confirmed the above analysis of Chakran lands as providing the typically feudal fund of labour rent. 21

The picture presented by Mr. Mukherjee and Mr. Mitra in their analysis of agrarian economy of rural Bengal, reveals the existence of free peasants who gave rent either cash or in

20. Ibid : P:-IXVI.
21. Ibid : P:-IXVI.
crops on the one hand and peasants who gave labour rent in the form of labour service rendered to their grantors and there is no doubt that some of these services included the services of several caste groups. But there is no information about the caste composition of the free peasants.

The occupational pattern relating to the several castes/caste-like groups of the four surveyed village reveal the fact that agriculture which is the main occupation of the villagers is not confined to a particular caste/caste-like group. It is also revealed that the percentage of Muslim cultivator households to the total Muslim households is higher than that of the Hindu cultivator households to their total number of households. The percentage of the agricultural households of these two religious groups is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kotsimul</td>
<td>44.66%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khemta</td>
<td>30.61%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulsuna</td>
<td>36.36%</td>
<td>60.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailara</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, the percentage of the agricultural households belonging to clean caste group of the Hindu religion is higher than that of the percentage of the agricultural households belonging to unclean caste group:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Clean caste Hindu</th>
<th>Unclean caste Hindu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kotsimul</td>
<td>95.23%</td>
<td>21.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khemta</td>
<td>86.37%</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulsuna</td>
<td>88.22%</td>
<td>20.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailara</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>27.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus households belonging to clean caste group of the Hindu religion are in majority cases cultivators and most of the households of the unclean castes are agricultural labourers. About several caste-like groups of the Muslims, no such generalisation can be made. In village Kotsimul, out of 70 Muslim households, all the households belonging to Khan (K) Mir, Molla, caste-like groups and most of the households belonging to Sah, Khan caste like groups are cultivators. Of the 40 Sekh households, 32 households are cultivators. Of the total Muslim households (77) at Khemta, 44 households (57.14%) are cultivators. Except Sekh, Khan and Mondal households all the households belonging to other caste-like groups are cultivators. Among 42 Sekh households, only 15 households (35.71%) are cultivators; 6 households of this caste-like group draw their subsidiary income from agriculture. At village Kulsuna, of the 278 Muslim households, 167 households are engaged in agriculture. Here also, it is not confined to a particular caste-like group though the larger amount of land belong to Sekh caste-like group.
It is further revealed that many agricultural households have their workers in subsidiary occupation to supplement their family income. Of course, the percentage of households of several occupational groups having one occupation is higher in case of agricultural households and smaller in case of households following trade and commerce and service. The analysis of secondary occupation performed by the agricultural households clearly reveals that the nature of secondary occupation is to a large extent determined by the economic background of the family. For example, agricultural households possessing a larger amount of land send workers in 'better-paid' jobs (teacher, doctor, Government office-holder, trader etc.) whereas households with a small amount of land produce workers in 'poor paid' jobs (agricultural labour, thatcher, hawker etc.) and here caste/caste-like consideration has little to affect the situation. In some cases, of course, taking subsidiary occupation (as is also the case for taking principal occupation) is determined by caste. For example, the acceptance of the occupation of a priest or a barber or washerman is confined to the respective caste groups. But here also, they are guided by the economic consideration, such as return from the service etc. Thus one Brahmin of village Kulsuna and another Brahmin of village Tailara are acting as agricultural labourer though they are well aware that ploughing a land is tabooed for a Brahmin. And, as soon as they took such an occupation they were prevented from acting as priests. In another case, the cultivator belonging to Napit caste is economically
strong and therefore has given up caste occupation ( barber ) which he looks upon as a dirty occupation.

The participation of the villagers ( including both Hindus and Muslims ) in agricultural activities is not alike. Prof. Mukherjee 22 classifies the cultivators of Bengal in British period into three classes -(1) a landed gentry composed of land holders and supervisory farmers, (2) a class of self-sufficient cultivators with proprietary rights on land -(3) a class of share-croppers and agricultural labourers. Prof. Mukherjee also proceeds that this economic structure of rural Bengal is by no means ancestral to it; it is the result of socio-economic changes introduced during the British period. He also holds that class-(1) and (3) emerged out of a split within class-(2) originates in the settlement Act of 1793 which introduced in Bengal the British concept of land property. He also holds that the relation class-(1) class-(3) i.e. landholder and tenant as it is found today, did not exist in pre-British days but is the product of socio-economic changes introduced during the British period. This proposition of Prof. Mukherjee, of-course, is still a matter of debate and needs further study.

The investigation of the four surveyed villages presents that there are some owner cultivators who cultivate land either by handling plough himself and hire labourers only at the busiest session ( sowing and harvest time ) of cultivation;

or pay only supervise work and hire manual labour throughout the year. The first category covers those cultivators belonging to any caste/caste-like group with a considerable amount of land to maintain bullocks throughout the year. Within this category may also be mentioned those share-croppers who cultivate their small amount of land along with those lands let out by the owner for cultivation to the share-cropper. Letting out land is not guided or controlled by caste or religious considerations and in several cases it is found that Muslim cultivators are cultivating land of a Brahmin or any other caste-member belonging to Hindu religious group.

The Brahmin households are, of course, the exceptions of the first category. Though many of them possess a small amount of land, they do not cultivate that land himself but hire agricultural labourer. They fall within the second category which covers cultivators who render only supervisory work and hire agricultural labourer throughout the year. Only one Brahmin cultivator of village Tailara ploughs land though he is aware of the fact that ploughing a land is a taboo for a Brahmin. And as a result, he lost his caste right of priesthood. Most of the cultivators (both Hindu and Muslim) with a large amount of land think ploughing a land is detrimental to the dignity of a Bhadralok and they, therefore, render only supervisory work in agriculture and hire agricultural labourer throughout the year. Some cultivators who are otherwise engaged in more profitable jobs such as service (teacher, doctor, Government
officer etc) render supervisory work in agriculture and hire agricultural labourer. In all the cases mentioned above, the cultivators possess bullock, plough and other agricultural implements.

The third category covers those cultivators who do not find it profitable to maintain bullocks throughout the year to cultivate their small amount land or find it difficult to cultivate land because of their involvement in other services or have no adult male member to look after them. In such a situation they either cultivate their land by hiring bullocks, plough and other agricultural implements along with labour or let out their land to the share-cropper. Today, the owners of the land prefer the first path because it is less risky from the measures taken by the Government. But the number of households letting out land is not negligible. Some households of course hire agricultural implements in lieu of their caste services or other services. Another type is seen when the cultivating households possessing bullocks and other agricultural implements cultivate land for the monsoon but let out some of their land to the share-cropper for robi crops i.e. wheat, potato, pulses etc. The classification is based not on religion but on economic considerations. Within each group are households belonging to both the religious groups. Therefore it may be

concluded that taking any of these measures is least affected by caste/religion but by economic considerations.

The relation between the share-cropper and the owner of the land is conventional i.e. guided by some fixed rules though in recent times the relation is going to be based on fear and distrust. The owner gives his land in lieu of fixed product, generally six maund paddy per bigha. The seeds, plough, labour, fertilizer etc. are given by the share-cropper. This system is called 'Sanja'. The reference of 'Sanja' is available in the analysis of the nature of rent in Burdwan on the eve of the permanent settlement. During this period "we find throughout the countryside in Bengal a co-existence of money rent with produce rent and labour rent .... cash rent in Burdwan was known as Nagad while produce rent depending on the manner in which it was assessed fell into two categories— Sanja and Khamar." 24

"As defined in a report on Mandalghat ( P: -264 ) the Sanja was payable in kind with the quantity of grain specified." "Some details are further available in a letter from an officer on deputation on Bishnupur where the prevailing forms of rent must have been more or less similar to those of Burdwan. The Sajah lands, write Mr. Hesilrige in a letter dated 16 March 1790, pay at all times the same, be the season more or less favourable or the lands altogether unproductive. According to

their quality they pay from one and a half to five maunds of grain per annum.\textsuperscript{25}

It has been pointed out in this report that the Sanja, as it prevails today is a relatively modern renovation introduced by Mahajan landlords who purchase ryoti holdings originally paying a mere money rent and resettle these on terms of produce rent, thus reducing the cultivators to helpless dependence on small class of grasping usurers.\textsuperscript{26} This system of Sanja rent still prevails and controls the relation between the share-cropper and the owner of the land.

At Sanja, the share-cropper pays at all times the same amount of paddy, be the season more or less favourable. There is another type where the amount of the paddy produced is counted. Thus, sometime the owner lets out his land and gets half of the paddy produced from the share-cropper. The owner contributes half of the cost of fertiliser. This system closely resembles the old system of Khamar rent described in the Collector's letter to the Board dated 20 May, 1788.\textsuperscript{27} At village Kulsuna, another type of sharing of production between the owner and the share-cropper is found. Generally, the share-cropper takes 37.5\% (\textsuperscript{'}\textsuperscript{\textdegree}) of the total product and the land owner gets 62.5%.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid: P:- IXIII.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid: P:- IXIII.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid: P:- IXIII.
The cost of production except bullock, plough and labour, is distributed in a similar way. The share cropper contributes bullock, plough and his labour as surplus. In another system known as 'Botera Bhag', the owner of the land maintains bullock, plough etc. The share-cropper supplies manual labour needed and 1/3 of the total products. The owner of the land, on the otherhand, supplies bullock, cart, plough, seeds etc. and gets 2/3 of the total products. Now, share-cropping is ofcourse in a hidden form because the owner of the land (belonging to both the religious groups) who are otherwise engaged or possess a small amount of land or have no adult male member to look after them, prefer to cultivate land by employing hired labours instead of letting it to the share-croppers who may, as cultivators fear, record their name as share-cropper (Bargadar). Some of the share-croppers are ofcourse anxious of the unwillingness of the land owner to let out land to the share-cropper and they hesitate to record their name as share-cropper (Bargadar).

The relation among cultivators belonging to different caste/religious group is mutually beneficial. This is revealed in sowing and harvest times. For irrigation purposes and other agricultural activities such as making exchange of cattle, seeds etc. the cultivators cooperate with each other. During harvest time, they guard the field against crop-theft. Until recently, the wage of the agricultural labourers was decided by the cultivators and any attempt by the agricultural labourers to raise their wage was taken, as is still taken, by the cultivator as
against their common interest. Of the four surveyed villages, two villages (Kotsimul and Khemta) have also set up cooperative society for getting fertiliser at a cheap rate and helping cultivator by giving loans on a cheap interest and easy instalment.

Most of the cultivators appoint agricultural labourers. This appointment may be either temporary i.e. for a day or for a few days or for a longer term of one year. In appointing an agricultural labourer, the religion/caste of the labourer is not at all considered. The only consideration is whether he is fit for agricultural activities. In a question asked to the cultivator who employs hired labour — "what type of labourer do you require?"—All cultivators belonging to both religious groups answered — "Skilled worker of any religion". In another question it is asked — "Here certain caste names are mentioned, you are asked to show your preference to pick up the labourers". The responses vary. Some of the cultivators of both the religious groups hesitate to pick up agricultural labourer from Brahmin caste group. A few admitted that "they never fell in a situation where a Brahmin approached them to act as agricultural labourer. If such a situation arises in future, it would be considered. Others, instead of showing preference pick up labourers from any caste/religious group.

In appointing an agricultural labourer, other considerations also play their part. The agricultural labourers are not always free to sell their labour according to their own choice.
Agricultural activities provide them with occupation for only a few months of the year. During slack season, when they find no opportunity to engage themselves in any work, take loan from the owner cultivator on condition that he would serve the cultivator in busiest session with a rate normally lower than the rate of the time. Generally, the rate of wage is higher in busiest session of cultivation than that of off-season. The loan given to the labourer solves to some extent the problem in favour of cultivator. It gives certainty to the cultivator to have labourer and at the same time the rate of wage is comparatively cheap. Another form of getting labourer at cheap rate is letting out one Bigha of land to an agricultural labourer. The said agricultural labourer cultivates this land with the help of the employer cultivator and in lieu of that concession, the agricultural labourer serves the cultivator, by the call, at a rate of one Rupee per day. Sometimes the owner cultivator lets a bank of a pond to the shelterless labourer to settle. For example, a Muni (Muslim) household of village Khemta gave up a bank of a pond to Muchi (Hindu) household to make agricultural labour easily available.

Like agriculture, agricultural labourer is not the prescribed occupation of a particular caste or religious group. The percentage of the households of agricultural labour of the four surveyed village are as follows: Kotsimul 25.14%; Khemta 38%; Kulsuna 27% and Tailara 26%. If the proportion of the households engaged in agricultural labour to the total households of that
caste (clean and unclean) and religious group is taken, it will be found that the proportion is higher in case of unclean caste households of the Hindu religion. The following table shows this:

The percentage of households engaged in agricultural labour:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Clean caste</th>
<th>Unclean caste</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kotsimul</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>77.33%</td>
<td>11.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khemta</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90.90%</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulsuna</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailara</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table indicates, the agricultural labourers come in most cases from unclean castes of the Hindu religious group. The previous occupation of some of the agricultural labourers was agriculture but due to economic hardship, they were compelled to turn into agricultural labourers. Some households who were performing their caste occupation now depend on agricultural labour because their caste occupation failed to meet the needs of the households. Some of them are still performing their caste function to supplement the family income while others (as for example, Brahmin) were prevented from performing their caste function. Among the Muslims, agricultural labourers come
from several caste-like groups though at village Kulsuna and Khemta they come mainly from Sekh caste-like group.

The income of an agricultural labourer is not enough to maintain his family. He, therefore, finds alternative to supplement family income. The secondary occupation of an agricultural labour household (both Hindu and Muslim) is to a large extent similar—hawking, cowboy, maid-servant, manufacturing of basket etc. Of course, some of the households belonging to unclean caste group perform their caste function in addition to their involvement in agricultural labour. Except these, the agricultural labour households whatever be their religion, supply much-needed but poor-paid workers into other economic pursuits.

The agricultural labourer may be classified into several types according to the terms and condition of their service. Some agricultural labourers are appointed for a year and get a fixed amount (varying from Rs. 400 to 1000, according to the skill of the labourer) and napkins and clothes. They also get two major meals, one breakfast and bidi everyday. Instead, they serve the employer's house from morning to evening. They are called Kirsen (corrupted from of Krishan). There are others called Nagda who are appointed by the cultivator for a day and get a fixed money (varying from Rs. 2.00 to 4.00) and rice (varying from one Kilogram to one and a half kilogram as wage. A few years ago, the labourers got a fixed money (varying

from Rs. 1.00 to 2.00) and meal. Today they prefer to get rice instead of meal because rice, taken in lieu of meal, may feed another member of the household. In some cases, the labourer gets a small amount of land, say one Bigha, from the cultivator. The said agricultural labourer cultivates this land with the help of the employer-cultivator and in lieu of that concession, the agricultural labourer serves the cultivator, by his call, at a rate of Rs. 1.00 per day. Some of the labourers who do not get any employment in off-season of cultivation, takes loan from the cultivating households and in lieu of it serve the cultivator at a cheap rate. Again, some of the shelterless agricultural labourers take shelter from the cultivator who gives a bank of a pond or a field to settle and in that case, the labourer is bound to serve the cultivator at his disposal. All these terms and conditions are applied irrespective of religion or caste consideration.

The agricultural labourers are employed by the cultivating households irrespective of any religion. In one question asked to the agricultural labourers: For what family do you like to serve? the answer comes from every corner - "Any household with fair treatment." The wage is also the same for a Hindu as well as Muslim agricultural labourer, though taking meal is guided by caste norms. Thus, when an agricultural labourer of clean caste group is employed to an unclean caste group or to a household of Muslim religious group, he does not take meal but receives rice for it. When an agricultural labourer of
unclean caste group is employed to a household of clean caste group, he does not hesitate to take meal but when he is employed to a Muslim household, he does not take meal. A Muslim agricultural labourer, on the other hand, takes meal except meat from a clean caste household but when he is employed to an unclean caste household, he does not take meal but receives rice. Only a few agricultural labourers do not hesitate to take meal from any caste/religious group. But here also the reason is not because they deny these norms but because they are poor. Thus taking meal is guided by caste norms and it is applicable not only to the Hindu caste groups but also to the Muslims, though there is no preference to serve any well behaved household of any religion.

The relation between the agricultural labourer and his employer is generally cordial. The agricultural labourer renders his service in lieu of fixed wage and status. The poor agricultural labourer of any religion takes his miserable condition as imposed, a curse of God and a consequence of his offence in the previous incarnation. He is very much loyal to his employer with whom some sort of personal relation is established. This cordiality of relation is of course changed with the neglect of service rendered or with any demand for increase of wage. The demand of the agricultural labourers to increase the rate of wage, their unwillingness to serve from morning to evening and their political consciousness have in recent time made their employers wary of them. The employers' common say
"If you do not watch, they would do nothing" — reflects the change of the traditional relation between the employer and the employee in agricultural field. In village Tailara, the agricultural labourers demanded in 1977 to raise their daily wage and called a strike. The owner-cultivators became apprehensive of agricultural trade unionism and refused to pay the wage demanded. They also reported that the so-called 'chotolok' agricultural labourers forgot how to behave with a 'bhadralok'. However the dispute ended with the acceptance of the demands of the agricultural labourers, though the events made conscious both the cultivators and the agricultural labourers. The cultivator of another three surveyed villages are also forced to accept the increased rate of wage.

Fishing and animal husbandry are taken by a small section of the villagers to draw either their principal or secondary means of livelihood. Fishing is generally taken as caste occupation of Kaibarta and Dule caste groups. Of the four surveyed villages, 10 households or 5.91% of the total households of village Kotsimul depend on fishing to draw principal means of livelihood and 11 households draw their secondary income from this occupation. All these households belong to Dule and Bagdi caste group. The women of the Dule caste group mainly follow this occupation. In village Khemta 24 Dule households also depend on catching fish. They catch fish and sell it to the villagers irrespective of any religion. At village Kotsimul, barter system still prevails. Most of these households who are
related to catching fish are agricultural labourers though the
women of these caste groups do not work in the field. Animal
husbandry (rearing of cows and supplying milk, curd, ghee etc.)
is the caste occupation of Gope caste group. Of the four sur-
veyed villages, only at village Kulsuna Gope caste reside. The
Gope households of this village follow their caste occupation
to draw secondary income in addition to their first occupation
on agriculture. In village Khemta, a household belonging to
Baishnab caste group follow their occupation alongwith agricul-
ture as principal occupation. At village Kotsimul, three house-
holds belonging to Bagdi caste group and at village Kulsuna,
two households belonging to Sekh caste-like group rear goats
in addition to their engagement in agricultural labour.

So far as Trade and Commerce are concerned, some of the
households of both the religious groups follow these to draw
either principal or secondary means of livelihood. Grocers'
shop, flour mill, tailor's shop, tea-stall-cum-sweetmeats shop
etc. are run by households belonging to both the religious
groups. All these households are also related to agriculture.
The capital which they invest is drawn by making surplus from
cultivation. Some of the households (Hindu and Muslim) depend-
ing on agricultural labour are also related to Trade and
Commerce. They depend on hawking vegetables, ice-creams etc.
Selling of wine which is the caste occupation of Suri caste
group (Hindu) is followed by Suri households of village Kot-
simul and one Bagdi household of village Tailara. Selling of
livestock is followed by some of the Muslim households. Here also only households with a small amount of land or landless agricultural labourers follow this occupation.

Moreover, the traders (and also those who depend on fishing and animal husbandry and Agro-processing) draw their customers not only from their own religious group but also from the other religious group and they do not make any discrimination among the customers on grounds of religion. In a question: "where do you formally been your daily necessities from"? Any particular supplier?—The responses vary. Most of the customers prefer a shop where the rate is comparatively cheap. But when a loan is needed, the customers borrow goods from a particular supplier who is agreeable to giving loans. In some cases, caste norms are also violated. Thus a Brahmin while acting as a priest is unwilling to serve an unclean Sudra caste or a Muslim, but he does not disinterested in making garments of the members of these caste groups/religious groups. A member of a clean caste or a Muslim does not hesitate to take a glass of wine from a shop run by a Suri or a Bagdi household. Similarly, a Hindu does not hesitate to take a cup of tea from a Muslim shop-keeper. In another question asked to the traders "Do you get your customers only from —

1) Your caste member.
2) Member of any caste.
3) Member of any religion.

invariably in all cases the answer is—"The member of any
religion."

Agro-processing is run mainly by the poor households having little or no land to cultivate. At village Kotsimul, it is followed by several caste groups of Hindu religion, whereas at village Kulsuna, it is followed by the Muslims. At village Tailara, only two households belonging to Tili (clean Sudra) caste group follow it to draw subsidiary income. At village Kotsimul, two households have no adult male member and the widows follow this occupation to draw their principal income. In all other cases, the households are either related to agriculture with a small amount of land or to agricultural labour.

In respect of rural craft (i.e. manufacturing of tools and implements for agricultural purposes, basket construction, netting for fish, manufacturing dresses, ornaments etc. by Sola (felt) etc.) it is found that only a few of the households depend on rural craft to draw either principal or secondary means of livelihood. The villagers are to depend to a large extent upon the manufacturing of tools and implements like plough, yoke, borrow, spade, sickle, pasuni, bullock-cart etc. for agricultural purposes. The manufacturing of these tools and implements are assigned to a particular caste named Karmakar of the Hindu religious group. Of the four surveyed villages, Karmakar caste resides only at village Kulsuna. Out of 9 Karmakar households of this village, 8 households are engaged in their caste occupation along with agriculture. The villagers of three other villages depend on Karmakars (blacksmith)
of surrounding villages. Some of these tools are of course manufactured today by industry on a large scale and the villagers buy them from the market. Manufacturing of basket which is assigned to Dom (unclean Sudra) caste group, is followed by two households of Dom caste group of village Kulsuna. One Muchi (unclean Sudra) caste group of the same village also manufacture basket. One household belonging to Sekh caste-like group (Muslim) of village Kotsimul manufactures basket. All these households who manufacture basket depend on agricultural labour to draw their principal occupation. Two Malakar (clean Sudra caste) households living at village Tailara, draw their principal means of livelihood by following their caste occupation. Their function is very important in different ceremonies and festivals of both the religious groups. A Malakar takes an important part in dressing the images of the deity by preparing several dresses and ornaments made by Sola (felt). He also manufactures 'Topara' (a cap) used by the Hindu bride and bridegroom during marriage ceremony and Taj (a high and crown cap) used by the Muslim bride and bridegroom during marriage ceremony. Two Malakar households get customers not only from both the religious groups residing in his own village but also from the Hindus and Muslims of the surrounding villages. These products are, of course, now available in any market place for sale.

Within the category "rural services" are included the services of the priest, barber, washerman, palanquin-bearer,
dai (attendant of prospective mother during delivery) thatcher, etc. Among these services some are also found in urban areas. But there is a wide difference between the nature of these services in urban areas and that in rural areas. Moreover, in urban areas, some of these services are performed by any caste group, but in rural areas, these services in most cases are performed by a particular caste. These services are also very important in rural life. That's why, in spite of several limitations, the words "rural services" are used to cover these services. Some of these services are explained beforehand while explaining the caste services of several caste groups.

The service of a priest is hereditary in nature and is performed by the Brahmin caste group. Of the four surveyed villages, three villages contain Brahmin caste group and for the remaining one (village Kotsimul), the Brahmin of the nearby village serves. The service of Brahmin priest extends to the clean Sudra caste only and for each of the unclean Sudra caste groups there is another priest called patit (fallen) Brahmin. A devotee belonging to an unclean Sudra caste group of Hindu religion or a Muslim (Muslims also in some cases send offerings to Hindu deities) may of course, send offerings and the Brahmin of the clean Sudra caste group worships the deity for the welfare of the devotee. This is, of course, guided by the concept of purity and pollution. A few years ago a devotee belonging to an unclean Sudra caste group or one professing Islam had no right to enter into the temple of a deity.
worshipped by the priest of a clean Sudra caste Brahmin. Today, of course, the devotees belonging to unclean Sudra caste group may enter into the temple but would not touch the deity or the Brahmin or any utensil to be used for worship. From another side, in most cases they do not enter into the temple because they are conscious of their unclean caste status that would pollute or may create anger of the deity. They ( and also a Muslim devotee ) set offerings on the soil and the priest receives the same from the soil. Some village-deities ( for example, God Dharmaraj of village Tailara ) was once worshipped by the Brahmin of an unclean Sudra caste group but today they are worshipped by a priest belonging to clean Brahmin caste group.

A like-type of priesthood is also found among the Muslim. Of the four surveyed villages, the Muslims of three villages ( village Kotsimul, Khemta and Tailara ) belong to sect Hanafi. In these villages, saint worship is very popular. The service of a caretaker who belongs to a Muslim religion, is hereditary in nature. The devotees of these Pirs ( Pir Gazi, Pir Ghorasahid at village Kotsimul, Pir Sahesa at village Tailara, Pir Sah Sufi Sultana, Pir Morhum Sah Abdul Hasim Majmun Aulia at Khemta ) and deity ( deity Olabibi at Kotsimul ) are not only the Muslims but the Hindus also come to these Pirs and deity to pledge their devotion in order to recover from disease, make dry breast of a woman wet, to turn an unproductive plant or cow productive, regaining one which is lost. The caretaker who cleans the shrine and sets lightened candle and incense on
every morning and evening, receives offerings from the devotee, sets it near the shrine, requests Pir/Deity to tackle the problem and then returns a part of offerings which bear, as it is believed, the mystic power of the Pir/Deity.

Like priesthood, the service of a barber is also hereditary in nature and is performed by Napit (clean Sudra) caste group. Napit (barber) shaves the beard and dresses the hair. He also performs very important function on several ceremonies and festivals. The women of the Napit caste group also perform some functions like cutting nail or painting the border of the feet of the Hindu women with lac-dye. All these four surveyed villages contain Napit who perform caste function along with their involvement in agriculture or agricultural labour. The service of a Napit is rendered not to every household of the village but to the clean caste households and Bagdi and Dule of the unclean Sudra caste households of Hindu religious group and the Muslim households. Thus a Muslim is not excluded from receiving the services of a barber though unclean Sudra castes (Hindu) like Dom, Hari, Muchi and Rajak are excluded from getting the services of a barber. A male member of these respective caste groups performs the function of a barber. With the improvement of economic condition and the increase of land, some of the Napit households gave up their caste function which is viewed by them as a polluted one and engage themselves in agriculture. The demand of a barber is also decreasing with the establishment of saloon in the nearby market and the
younger generation prefers to dress hair at saloon where new fashion runs. The separation of the family, competition in their function, establishment of saloon have forced some of the barbers to act as agricultural labourers to meet their economic needs.

Other servicing castes belonging to unclean Sudra caste group also serve the clean caste and Bagdi and Dule of the unclean Sudra castes of the Hindu religious group and the Muslims. The woman of the Hari caste group acts as a dai i.e. attendant of prospective mother during delivery. Rajak washes clothes. He also serves the clean caste households and Bagdi and Dule households of the Hindu religious group and Muslims but does not serve other unclean castes which are viewed as degraded castes in comparison with that caste who refuses to serve. Thus a Rajak ( washerman belonging to unclean Sudra caste would not serve a Hari ( unclean Sudra caste ) and in the similar way — Hari would not serve a Rajak though both of them belong to unclean Sudra caste group. Some members belonging to Bagdi, Dule, Muchi ( all these three castes belong to unclean Sudra caste group ) caste groups are palanquin bearers and thatchers. They serve the villagers irrespective of any religion. Most of these households depend on agricultural labourer to draw their principal means of livelihood; some households belonging to Muchi caste group are musicians and serve the villagers irrespective of any religion. Of the four surveyed villages only one member belonging to Sekh caste-like
group (Muslims and two belonging to Tili caste group (Hindu)) are thatchers. In most of these cases taking food is guided by caste norms. Only in one case it is not rigidly followed. While the palanquin bearers belong to Muchi and Hari caste groups and they carry the same palanquin, they do not follow the caste norms of commensality among them.

As regards the payment of these services a considerable change has taken place within a few decades. A few years ago, a caste member used to receive from the household served, paddy or rice which was fixed for the year or a small area of land was granted for recompensation of these caste services. Today, they prefer to receive money in cash.

Some of the households belonging to both the religious groups depend on service to draw either principal or secondary means of livelihood. From the study of persons service-wise, it is revealed that persons engaged in medical profession, teaching or any other Government service, come from the agricultural families irrespective of any religion. The service of a maulawi (religious teacher of Islam) is of course limited to the Muslims. Persons acting as cook, at a shop or giving manual labour at factory etc. come from poor families. Thus services which need learning and whose return from service is comparatively higher, are possessed by cultivating families of any religious/caste group, while the services based on manual labour are performed by landless families or families with a
small amount of land whatever religion those households may possess.

In the category of other occupations not mentioned above, some households are engaged either to draw their principal or subsidiary means of livelihood. Some widows belonging to both the religious groups have no other member to depend on. They act as maid-servant to other's household. Some women belonging to agricultural labour households also act as maid-servants. Some households irrespective of any caste or religion depend on begging alms. Similarly some agricultural labour households send their children to act as cow-boy to the cultivating households. In fact, taking these occupations mentioned above, depend to a large extent on the economic condition of the household and not on religious consideration.

It is thus revealed from the investigation of the four surveyed villages that the economic structure of rural Burdwan is by and large the same for both the Hindus and the Muslims. Though each Hindu caste is supposed to have a specialised, hereditary, occupation, only less than 25% of the Hindu households follow their caste occupation to draw principal income. Several caste-like groups, on the otherhand, do not operate in terms of such caste-based division of labour among themselves. Nevertheless, they do form part of the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus and receive services of several caste groups, though these services are not received by some unclean Sudra castes (Muchi, Hari, Rajak, Namasudra)
of Hindu religious group. In some cases functions are becoming specialized for the Muslims. Thus, a large number of Muslims are dealer in cattle and this particular trade is their monopoly. Some of the Muslim households are caretakers of Pirs and follow this occupation as their hereditary right. On the whole, however, the economic structure is by and large the same for both the religious groups and in the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus, Muslims are also part, receive services of the several caste groups and play their role in it either as patrons or as clients.

As regards non-caste-based occupations, the participation of the Hindus and the Muslims on these non-caste-based occupations is least affected by their religious status but is dominated by economic consideration. All of these occupations draw workers from both the religious groups; on the other hand, members of a particular caste/religion do not always follow the same occupation. But though several castes/caste-like groups follow the same occupation, whether in the learned profession, or agriculture, they are still endogamous groups and their same occupation does not breakdown the barriers of marriage endogamy. 29

The occupations mentioned above are also graded into high (i.e. pure) and low (impure). So far as the caste occupations are concerned, the function of a priest is viewed as

high, whereas the functions like that of a barber (Napit caste) dai (Hari caste), palanquin-bearer, thatcher, fisher (Dule and Bagdi caste group), washerman (Rajak caste), are viewed as low. Some households belonging to Napit caste group gave up their caste occupation because they viewed it was low i.e. impure occupation. Some, of course, follow it because they have no better alternative way to earn livelihood. The same can be said of Bagdi, Dule, Hari and Rajak caste households who still follow their caste occupation though they are conscious of their impure performances. Among non-caste-based occupations, the occupation of a teacher or of a Government servant is viewed as high. Such occupations as need only manual labour, for example working at a shop, tea-stall or field are viewed as low. Business is generally viewed as a high profession though business in wine (as is done by Suri caste group) or of cattle (done by some of the Muslims) are viewed as impure. As regards agriculture, ownership of land is viewed as the symbol of high status whereas direct involvement in agriculture by ploughing a land is not viewed as a noble profession. Among the Muslims also, this idea prevails. They regard the occupation of a barber, dai, cleaner of dinner — tables and dishes etc. as impure. The well-off households do not plough the land; instead they employ hired labour throughout the year. Among the Muslims also trade or business is generally viewed as a noble profession though persons who deal with the business of cows and of wine do not enjoy social respect. It is found that the workers belonging to unclean caste groups of Hindu religion
are in most cases the followers of these impure occupation and called 'Chotolok'. In case a man belonging to unclean caste group is following the function of a high i.e. noble profession, his cultural setup is counted and if it is positive, he is viewed 'like a Bhadralok' though the clean castes are not willing to call him a 'Bhadralok'. On the contrary, a person belonging to clean caste group is performing functions which is viewed as low, his behaviour i.e. cultural set up is watched. The person who is performing that function also wants to follow the cultural pattern followed by other 'Bhadralok. Thus in the stratification of several caste groups into Bhadralok and Chotolok categories, descent, occupation and cultural setup of the households are counted, though descent takes the first consideration. Among the Muslims also descent and occupation of a person are counted as the device of calling a person either Bhadralok or Chotolok. 30 The Khan (K) households who claim as the descendant of Ex-Jagirdar, Khan Bom bore, are no longer economically better off and some of them plough land. Yet, they are honoured by other villagers and are addressed as 'Miya Saheb'. The Khan (K) householders are also proud of their lost aristocracy and try to make a distance from other Muslims. Similarly, Muslim households who are the dealers of cattle or agricultural labourers are viewed as Chotolok by other Muslims. Also among Muslims those who are well versed in Arabic language or Islamic literature (though their number

is very small) are honoured. Thus, occupation gives to its followers not only means of livelihood but also a social status and in rural Burdwan the villagers comprising both Hindus and Muslims are divided into two strata i.e. into Bhadrak and Chotolok categories and each of these categories include members of both the religious groups though in their social intercourse their religious affiliation and their class affiliation set different types of relation.

This is further elaborated in the next chapter.
Chapter--IV.

Social interaction between the two religious groups—Hindu and Muslim.

In the course of the study of the Hindu-Muslim relation in rural Burdwan, four villages, characterised by the presence of Hindus and Muslims on different proportions, are selected for Survey. The village Kotsimul is the domicile of 1002 persons, where both the Hindus numbering 605 persons or 60.38% of the total population and Muslims numbering 385 persons or 38.52% of the total population reside. In village Khemta the Hindus constitute 39.89% of the total population, whereas Muslims hold 60.11% of the total population. Kulsuna, another village with the pre-dominantly Muslim population (72.95%) contains a population of 2092 persons of whom the Hindus constitute 27.05% of the total population. At village Tailara, on the other hand, the Muslims constitute only a microscopic minority holding 1.52% of the total population and the rest of the population are Hindus (98.48%). Each religious group is further sub-divided by several castes or caste-like groups.

The two religious groups with their distinctive way of living and religious beliefs and practices live together and create different types of social relations among them. In several spheres of social living they move within their own religious boundary with distinctive culture complex. In other
fields, they co-operate each other. The nature of this relation is explained on some categories such as (a) Hereditary membership; (b) selection of marriage partners; (c) Occupational preference; (d) rules of commensality; (e) concept of purity and pollution; (f) participation in several worship and festivals and (g) participation in rituals and life-cycle ceremonies—birth, marriage and death. Of these, category (e) is explained in the previous chapter, while the last two categories are explained in details in the next chapter.

**Hereditary Membership** :-

As regards membership of a particular religious group, it is generally governed by birth. The child of a Hindu by religion, unless converted to other religion, becomes automatically the follower of that religion. Thus the child gets the religious identity of his parents. As there is no instance of marriage relation between the two religious groups, the question of getting membership of the off-spring to a particular religious group, does not arise. There is, of course, an instance of marriage relation between a Muslim and a tribal woman. But conversion of the tribal woman is arranged first and then marriage occurs. The off-spring becomes a Muslim by religion. Though change of religion by conversion which automatically changes the membership of the person converted, is allowed, only two instances of conversion are recorded by the villagers living in village Kotsimul and no such instance of conversion
is recorded within the living memory of the villagers of the
remaining three villages. A Hindu, Gandhabanik by caste, came
to village Kotsimul to act as an agricultural labourer. Later,
he allowed himself to be converted to Islam. In another case,
conversion of a tribal woman to Islam is followed due to her
marriage with a Muslim.

Marriage:—Regarding marriage, two religious groups are
mutually exclusive and the marriage is confined to the members
of a particular religious group. In case of marriage of a Hindu
with a Muslim, he/she (Hindu) is ex-communicated by his/her
religious group. On the other hand, conversion, instead of ex-
communication of a non-Muslim to Islam takes place when he/she
goes to marry a Muslim. But generally there is no such inciden-
ce of marriage among the villagers and the two religious groups
are endogamous in nature. Only in one case a marriage took

1 cf. J.H. Hutton: Caste in India, Oxford University Press,
1973, P:-47.

M.N. Srinivas: "Social Structure", in Humaun Kabir (preface).

R.K. Bhattacherya: "The concept and Ideology of caste
among the Muslims of Rural West Bengal", in Imtiaz
Ahmed (ed)—Caste and Social Stratification among the
place between a Muslim and a tribal woman referred to above. In the marriage ceremony, of course, some of the members of other religious group participate either to perform some of the caste functions or as an intimate.

**Occupation:**

As regards occupation, specialization and reservation is sometimes found in a religious group. Thus, several caste occupations like the occupation of a Brahmin (priest) Napit (barber), Karmakar (blacksmith), Gope (milkman), Hari (dai), Rajak (washerman) etc. tend to be earmarked for certain caste groups of Hindu religion. On the other hand, some Muslim households are the caretakers of Pirs and possess the hereditary right to worship these Pirs. Business of cattle is more or less the monopoly occupation of the Muslims. Of course,

2. *cf.* A. Mitra (ed): The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, Land and Revenue Department, West Bengal, 1953, P:- 4.

H.H. Rislay: The People of India, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Delhi, 1969, PP:- 76-78.


several caste-like groups of the Muslims do not operate in terms of such caste-based division of labour among themselves as it is found among several castes of the Hindus. Moreover, the Muslims also form part of the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus.\footnote{cf. Ibid : P:- 122} For example, several caste groups of the Hindu religion serve the Muslims though they (caste groups) do not serve some of the unclean Sudra caste groups.

As regards non-caste based occupations, the participation of the villagers is least affected by their religious consideration but is dominated by economic considerations. Occupations like teaching, serving in public offices are open to both the religious groups though only better-paid of these jobs depends on skill and training a family can afford to acquire. The reservation of seats for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have, of course given these caste groups the opportunity to capture the better-paid jobs though here also it is the property-oriented households to avail the opportunity in a less competitive way, Agriculture is also the occupation of both the religious groups. In the performance of agricultural activities the co-operation between the two religious groups is also found. Ownership of land is viewed as the symbol of high status whereas direct involvement in agriculture by ploughing

\textit{N.K. Bose : Op.cit, P:- 219.}
a land is not viewed as a noble profession by both the religious groups.

Rules of commensality:

Some established practices control the behaviour of the two religious groups on the acceptance of food and water. Normally, a Hindu does not take food or water from the hands of a Muslim. He may, however, take rice and vegetables (as is the case of a Brahmin or Kotal (Namasudra) or any other Hindu acting as an agricultural labourer to a Muslim household or may take food and water if the food is prepared by a clean caste Hindu and is also served by him. There are exceptions also, some of the clean caste households express their unwillingness to take food or water from a Muslim household even if the meal is prepared by a Brahmin. Some unclean castes on the otherhand do not oppose taking meal except beef in a Muslim household. Though in majority of the cases, the Hindus are not willing to accept meal from a Muslim household, they do not hesitate to take 'Prasada' of a Pir from a Muslim caretaker. A Muslim on the otherhand, accepts cooked food except meat from a clean caste Hindu, though he would not take the same from an unclean caste household. The cooked food is further restricted by Pakka food (luchi and sweet-

Kaccha food, except meat, can be taken. Only in one case a Muslim belonging to Sekh caste-like group refused to take even pakka food from a clean caste Hindu household. Few agricultural labourers (Muslim) on the otherhand, do not hesitate to take meals except meat from any household, if, ofcourse, the food is prepared and served neat and clean. Further, as regards serving of dishes, the Hindus and the Muslims would not sit in the same now. Separate line is arranged for each of them. However, there is one instance when both the Muslims and the unclean caste Hindus made a joint effort to protest against this discrimination. But their protest did not rule out the rules of commensality.

However, these rules of commensality are only applicable to the male members. The women of one religious group are never in the habit of joining any banquet given by any household of another religious group. Secondly, among the friend-circle (male members only) of the younger generation and also in a tea-stall or in the case of a Muslim vendor or hawker, rigidity regarding commensality is not strictly followed. Thus a Hindu would not hesitate to take icecream or oil products (Telabhaja) from the hands of a Muslim hawker though it was unthinkable a generation ago. Thirdly, these rules of commensality are not also applicable to the devotees of Pir and 'Prasada' (offerings

given to the Pir is received by a Hindu with great care and devotion from a Muslim caretaker.

Concepts of purity and pollution:

The concepts of purity and pollution are also attached to the rules of commensality. Some foods are regarded as polluted by one religious group though they are not treated so by the members of another religious group. Thus pork is not accepted by a Muslim. Even, he (a Muslim) does not take meal unless the beast is slaughtered according to Quranic injunction. The Hindus, on the other hand do not take beef. Some foods like onion, egg, fish, meat and some pulses are not taken by the widow and some of the male members belonging to Hindu religion. Vegetables are, of course, taken by both the religious groups. Rice is the main food of both the communities. As regards serving of dishes, the Muslim's habit of placing dishes on the coarse mat goes against the Hindu's sense of cleanliness. For a Hindu the use of cow-dung purifies the place while the Muslims regard it as an act of pollution. Moreover, for the Muslims, taking meat of an animal is unlawful unless it is slaughtered according to Muhammadan law i.e. by drawing the knife across the throat and cutting the carotid artery while repeating the Ayyat "Bismilla Allaho Akbar", which means "in

the name of great God."⁹ Though wine is extremely prohibited to a Muslim, a large number of Muslims accept wine even from the hands of a person belonging to unclean caste groups of Hindu religion.

Not only in taking food, great care needs also to be taken in touching the person of a Hindu. Thus a Muslim would not touch a Hindu and if he does, that touch would pollute him (Hindu) and it would compel him to get purified by taking a bath in the river or in a pond. Of course, this concept of pollution is not applicable to the caretaker of Pirs and Goddess Olabibi and the Hindus do not hesitate to take 'Prasada' from the Muslim caretaker. The concept of pollution is also applicable not only in respect of the human body, it is also applicable on the utensils and dresses used by the Hindus in everyday life. To touch a cooking utensil or a cloth by a Muslim or a member of an unclean caste, would pollute that utensil/cloth and would call for some act of purification.¹⁰

The concept of purity and pollution which control and guide the relation between the two religious groups are also revealed on some other fields such as marriage and occupation. The concept of the purity of blood is the main factor of making

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marriage endogamous. Some of the occupations are treated as impure by both the religious groups and acceptance of these occupations pollute one. For example, the occupation of a dai, washerman, palanquin bearer, agricultural labourer, dealers in cattle, are viewed as impure by both the religious groups. Ploughing a land pollutes not only a Brahmin; well-off households of both the religious groups treat it as impure function. Incidentally, the concept of purity and pollution are becoming less and less rigidly observed. In case of marriage, it is still observed and both the religious groups are strictly endogamous in nature. In other fields, it is observed by the women and Brahmins of the Hindu religious group. Except these, it is becoming less and less observed. Thus, a Muslim is found to gossip, dine with a Hindu or giving subscription for the worship of the Hindu deity (except in village Kulsuna) though his entrance to the temple is strictly prohibited.

Trivial and ludicrous though these practices may seem, they do indicate the kind of social distance which is assiduously maintained between the two religious groups—Hindu and Muslim. The relation is, thus, neither open nor closed, but is guided by some rules and regulations. It may, however,

11 cf. Ibid : P:- 47.

be pointed out that some of these features are also revealed among several castes/caste-like groups among whom the relation is guided by some long-standing customs and traditions, making a social distance between each of them.

"The structural basis of Hinduism is the caste system" and the Hindu society is divided by several caste groups. The membership of a particular caste is determined by birth. In the classification of castes, H.H. Risley also stresses on the accident of birth which "determines irrevocably the whole course of a man's social and domestic relations and he must throughout life, eat, drink, dress, marry and give in marriage in accordance with the usages of the community into which he was born". In case of a person of debased birth, he does not get the caste status of his father or mother but creates a new caste. The Manu Samhita prescribes the origin of some of these castes. H.H. Risley also mentions some such castes having been formed by cross marriage. Creation of new castes may also be made by other ways like tribal absorption, by migration, by changes of custom, by changes of occupation etc.

The Hindus of the four surveyed villages are sub-divided

by several caste groups and the membership of each caste group is determined by birth. There are some instances of change of caste membership due to violation of caste norms. In village Khemta, a Brahmin because of his marriage to a woman belonging to Baisnab caste (a sect now turned into a caste) is excommunicated by his caste fellows and has now become a member of Baishnab caste. At Kulsuna, another village, a Brahmin who married a Bagdi woman, is excommunicated by his caste. Similar is the case of a Gope man who married a Bagdi woman. Regarding membership of the off-spring of such cross-marriages, it does not lead to the formation of a new caste but the child is known by the caste of his/her father or of his/her mother but who belongs to lower stratum. Some Brahmin households belonging to Acharya caste group which is treated as degraded in comparison with other Brahmins (Bipracharya), change their surname and claim equal status like other Brahmins but their claim is not recognised by other Brahmins nor the change of their surname affect their status. Similarly, the Chandra caste (unclean) of village Kulsuna, claim their caste status superior to Bagdi or Dule castes though their claim is not recognised by others. The hereditary membership of a caste is further strengthened by endogamous marriage.

Among the several caste groups of the Hindus, marriage is endogamous. Thus a member of a particular caste group can

marr a member of his/her own caste group. Even a Brahmin (Bipracharya) cannot marry a degraded Brahmin (Grohacharya/Patit Brahmin). In case of any marriage of a person outside his/her own caste group and if that caste belongs to a lower stratum, he/she is excommunicated by his/her caste members and takes the lower caste status. But such an incidence of marriage is rare and among the living Hindus of the four surveyed villages, only three instances of such marriages are found. The reason of the endogamous marriage is to maintain the purity of blood. Among the Brahmins, of course, marriage within the same gotra is prohibited. Hypergamous marriage is also found among the Brahmins.¹⁹ Thus, a Kulin Brahmin can take woman from a Brahmin (known as Moulik) other than Kulin but a Kulin woman cannot marry a Moulik Brahmin.

Scholars who have written about the Hindu caste system, also notice that "the majority of castes have a traditional calling." Though every caste group is supposed to follow prescribed hereditary occupation, only a few (less than 25%) of the households of the four surveyed villages follow their caste-based occupation to draw their principal means of livelihood. Of course, there are some households who follow their caste-based occupation to draw secondary means of livelihood and the number of these households far exceed the number of households who follow caste-based occupation to draw principal income. Moreover, the unclean caste groups depend more on their caste-based occupation whereas households belonging to clean

class group depend less on their caste-based occupation. 20 Only village Tailara presents a different picture. As early as 1901, it is shown in the Bengal census Report that the proportion of a caste that actually follows the traditional occupation may vary greatly. It is shown in Bengal census Report, 1901, "that of the Bengal Brahmins, only 17 per cent ... are engaged in religious functions .... that two-thirds of the Kayasthas in Bengal are agriculturists and that only thirty-five percent of the Telis follow their traditional profession. 21 The observations of Prof. N.K. Bose, Jyotirmoyee Sarma, P.K. Bhowmick 24 also confirm this.

The caste occupations are not only prescribed but also graded into high and low. 25 Thus, the function of a priest is viewed as high, whereas the functions like that of a barber, dai, palanquin bearer, thatcher, fisher or washerman are viewed as low. Some households belonging to Napit caste group gave up their caste occupation because they thought it as low i.e.

impure occupation. Some, of course, follow it because they have no better alternative way to earn livelihood. The same can be said of Bagdi, Dule, Hari and Rajak caste households who still follow their caste occupation though they are conscious of the uncleanliness associated with their job. Among non-caste based occupations, the occupation of a teacher or of a Government servant is viewed as high. Such occupations as need only manual labour, for example, working at a shop, tea stall or field are viewed as low. Business is generally viewed as a high profession though business of wine (as is done by Suri caste group) is viewed as impure. As regards agriculture, ownership of land is viewed as the symbol of high status whereas direct involvement in agriculture by ploughing a land is not viewed as a noble profession.

In the Hindu social system, functions of several caste groups are not only graded, several castes are also graded and are set on a social hierarchy. Each caste group is, in fact, a status group and determines to its members the whole course of social and domestic relations. There is, of course, a close correspondence between the gradation of caste occupations and gradation of social ranking of several caste groups. Thus priesthood and learning which are viewed as high occupation are designed as the occupation of a Brahmin caste which belongs of the top of the clean caste group. The function of a Hari, Rajak, Bagdi, Dule are viewed as low and their social status are also low and they belong to unclean caste group. There are two instances where the change of occupation has changed the caste
status of its followers. Thus, Mahishya caste who is now treated as a clean caste was originally a Kaibarta (fishing) caste but they changed their caste function of fishing and followed agriculture. Satgope, another clean caste, was originally Gope caste but they also gave up their caste occupation and followed agriculture. There are exceptions also. The function of a barber (Napit caste) is viewed as a low though the caste group belongs to clean caste group.

The social hierarchy of the Hindus of the four surveyed villages are not based on four-fold varna division i.e. the division of the society in Brahmin or priest and teachers, Kshatriya, the keeper of law and order, Vaishya, the trader and husbandman and Sudra or servant of the other varna. Here only two varnas namely Brahmin and Sudra are present. The real essence of caste is the existence of numerous jatis viewed as innumerable sub-divisions of varna. Jati is the hereditary social unit demarcated from other by the main attributes of common hereditary occupation, endogamy and commensality. Each caste group i.e. Jati is ranked and occupies a position of social superiority or inferiority in relation to other caste.

groups. At the apex of this hierarchy is the Brahmin caste group. In village Tailara, the Brahmins are further sub-divided by two endogamous groups — Bipracharya (priest) and Grohacharya (fortune-teller and astrologer). There are also fallen Brahmins (Patit Brahmin) residing in other villages to serve several unclean caste groups. Each group is endogamous and taking food and water is also restricted. Next come clean caste groups within the Sudra caste covering Tili, Kalu, Napit, Gandhabanik, Mahishya, Satgope etc. Baidya and Kayastha (though these caste groups are not found of the four surveyed villages — these two castes claim high ranking over these clean Sudra castes but below the Brahmin caste group. Baishnab, originally a reformist sect, is now turned into a caste group possessing a social position somehow akin to a clean Sudra caste group. Each caste belonging to clean Sudra cast group claims superiority over one another. In village Kotsimul and Tailara, Tiliranks at the top of the clean Sudra caste group because of their numerical strength and the landed property they hold. At village Khemta and Kulsuna, on the other hand, Satgope caste takes the upper rank of the clean Sudra castes. The Brahmin takes food and water from these caste groups though a few years ago only 'pacca food' was received by them. Also, the touch of a clean Sudra caste member does not pollute a Brahmin. Though each of the caste members belonging to clean

Sudra caste groups take food and water from another clean caste, marriage is strictly confined within each caste group.

Within the fold of unclean Sudra caste are several unclean caste groups. A member belonging to a clean caste group (either Brahmin or Sudra) does not take food and water from an unclean Sudra caste group. Also, some of these castes do not get the service of another caste group. Thus a Hari does not serve a Rajak (washerman), though both of them belong to unclean Sudra caste group. Moreover, each of these caste groups maintains a social distance from another, though the social position of one in relation to other is not always clearly defined. At village Kotsimul, Suri caste ranks at the top of the hierarchy of unclean Sudra caste group because of their landed property though other caste groups clean and unclean are not prepared to accept their explanation. Of course, Suri, Bagdi, Dule and Namasudra—these castes possess relatively high status in comparison with Hari, Rajak, Muchi caste groups. At village Kulsuna, Gope caste though belonging to an unclean caste group possess high ranking among the unclean caste groups. Each of these castes are endogamous. The members of the clean caste group do not take water or food from the hands of the unclean caste group. Each of the unclean caste group, on the other hand, do not accept water and food from another unclean caste group. In respect of worship too, Brahmin of the clean caste group would not worship the deities.

when such an worship is arranged by an unclean caste group. Hence each of the unclean caste groups has to maintain a particular Brahmin priest of its own, who is socially down-caste by his clean caste counterpart.

Moreover, the concept of purity and pollution also control the behaviour of members of several caste groups within the Hindu fold. The touching of an unclean caste is regarded as a reprehensible act for a member of a clean caste group. Taking food is also restricted. As regards serving of dinner plates, it is strictly maintained that the members of the clean and unclean caste groups must not sit on the same row.

However, the rules of purity and pollution are not strictly observed these days. Only in case of marriage i.e. to maintain purity of blood it is still observed. Among the friend circle, or in a tea-stall, these concepts are loose one though the women and the Brahmins still follow these rules.

All the caste groups are further sub-divided into two strata — Bhadralok and Chotalok. Within the first fold, are several clean caste groups whereas within the second fold are several unclean caste groups except Gope caste. The interaction between the members of these two strata is based on systematic hierarchical order of caste relationship.

The social distance of the several caste groups of the Hindu religion is further strengthened by the ideology of birth
The Hindus believe that the birth of a child is predestined by the cumulative merit of his activities during his previous incarnation. Therefore, the birth of a child to a Brahmin caste group is supposed to be a reward of God and that of an unclean Sudra caste group, is a punishment for his work done in the previous incarnation. The concept of Karma, on the other hand, justifies the occupation of the several caste groups and tries to give stability to the social order. It demands that a member of a particular caste is to fulfil the task assigned to him by his caste rule and to perform it in the best way is the best means of serving God.

Unlike the ideological support of the caste hierarchy and social distance maintained therefrom among the Hindus, Islam stands for equality in social religious and political affairs. The Muslims over and again stresses on this equalitarian appeal on Islam and for the first time of investigation any social distance among to Muslims could hardly be found. But after a repeated investigation, it is observed that under the shade of equalitarian outlook, social distance is there among the Muslims. However, a number of glossaries of castes and tribes on various parts of India compiled by British


administrators like Hunter, Ibbetson, Risley have suggested the existence of castes among the Muslims in India. A number of scholars like Abdul Karim, Ahmad Hasan Dani, Titus, Imtiaz Ahmed have also suggested the existence of some caste contributions in Muslim society in India. So far as West Bengal society is concerned, R.K. Bhattacharya and M.K.A. Siddique have carried on valuable investigation on

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this subject and have reported the presence of caste-like features in West Bengal also.

The Muslim society of the four surveyed villages is based on social hierarchy of several ethnic groups. In village Kotsimal, the Muslims are divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are eight Khan (K) households who address them as Khandani Muslim (Ashraf) and claim linear descendant of Khan Bambore who came to this village, according to legends, eight generations ago, as Jagirdar. They maintain a social distance from other Muslims who, according to them (Khan), are local Muslims. The other Muslims as well as the Hindus call them as Miya Saheb. The Khan Muslims maintain a social distance from the local Muslims and in spite of their growing economic distress, they are conscious of their lost aristocracy and glory. The respondent from Khan family repeated once and again that they did not join in any feast or banquet given by any household of the local Muslims. Nor did they establish any marriage relation with the local Muslims. Only a generation ago, for the first time in their family records, there was a marriage to a local Muslim family. Here also, the reason was, as reported by him, their poverty and the absence of Khandani Muslims within an easy reach. Their women strictly maintain pardah and refuse to go outside the residence without a palanquin.

The local Muslims of this village and also other villages are further sub-divided by some caste-like groups due to ethnic composition or occupational specialization. Generally, the
Muslims are divided into four ethnic groups which are also hierarchically arranged.\footnote{43} At the top of the hierarchy is the Sayyid who is, as one Sekh respondent replies, the descendant of Ali, the grand-son of Prophet Muhammad. There is no Sayyid caste-like group in any of the four surveyed villages. Sayyid is generally viewed like the Brahmin of the Hindu social system. One Sayyid who comes from village Korsun of Bankura District acts as religious teacher (Guru) to the Muslims of village Kotsimul. Next come the Sekhs who are said to be the descendants of the Khalifs — Abu Bakar, Oman and Othman. While the title Khan denotes the descendants of Pathans, Mirja denotes the descendants of Mughals. Apart from these fourfold division of the Muslims (applicable to both Khandani and local Muslims) there are several other caste-like groups among the Muslims bearing the title Mir, Molla, Mondal, Sah, Hazari, Chowdhuri etc. The social ranking of all these caste-like groups is not clear and one tries to mention one's social ranking higher than another. At village Kotsimul, the relatively higher position is maintained by Sekh (except Khan (K) Muslims) because of their numerical strength and landed property they hold in comparison with other Muslim caste-like groups. At village Kulsuna also, the relatively upper position is maintained by Sekh due to the aforesaid reasons. At village Khemta, on the other


hand, Hazari and Mirja caste-like groups hold the upper position.

A study of the social hierarchy of the Muslims reveals the fact that the Muslim society is not based on the egalitarian outlook. In their social intercourse, their caste-like group status determines, to a large extent, the nature of the behaviour of the Muslims. Thus, as regards marriage, the Khan (Khandani) prefers to take bride/bridegroom from the households of Khandani Muslims, inspite of the existence of several Khan households within the village. The Sekh informants affirm their preference to take wives/husbands from the Sayyid and Sekh caste-like groups. They are not opposed of taking wives/husbands from Mollah, Khan, Mirja caste-like groups, but are opposed of taking wives/husbands from Mallick, Jollaha, Khansama, Hajjam, Momin, caste-like groups. Taking wives from lower caste-like groups may be permitted, while giving daughter is generally avoided. From the information taken above, it is thus clear that the Muslim caste-like groups are divided into three tiers at the apex of which stands the Sayyid, at the Middle are groups like Sekh, Khan, Mir, Molla, Chaudhuri, Hazari etc and at the bottom are Mallick, Jollaha, Khansama, Majjam, Momin caste-like groups. It may, of course, be mentioned that, of the several caste-like groups mentioned on the third category only Mallicks reside at village Kulsana and none of the other caste-like groups of belonging to the third category reside in the four surveyed villages and, therefore, it prevents
me to investigate the hierarchical interaction between the Muslims of the third category (mainly Jollaha, Momin etc) and the rest.

As regards interdining, the Khan (K) households did not participate in the banquet of any local Muslim household. Today, of course, the male members of the Khan (K) participate though women do not. The women of the Khan (K) households do not even go outside the residence without keeping pardah which is also used as a device of demarcating a local Muslim from a Khandani Muslim. As regards interdining among other Muslim groups, there is no restriction or discrimination but they refuse to take meal in Jollaha or Momin household. The concept of pollution arising out of touching one by another caste-like group is also less applicable and the same is the case for religious performances in the mosque. At religious congregation at the mosque, the Muslims are all alike and do not discriminate among them. It is true that in some cases of religious performances, the Sayyid enjoys some special privileges.

Thus, the interaction among the different Muslim groups and their notions of social hierarchy is not as elaborate and systematic as it is found among Hindus. The Muslim caste-like groups of the four surveyed villages belong mainly to the second category and lack Sayyid, Jollaha, Momin caste-like groups and this demographic situation does not offer much scope for systematic interaction among them. Moreover, the egalitarian concept of Islam contradicts a social arrangement in terms
of interethnic stralification. Further, unlike Hindu caste system, the Muslim caste-like groups are less associated with any specific caste occupation. These are some of the causes of the weakness of castism among Muslims. Nevertheless, the Muslim caste-like groups seem to share some caste features like fixed membership of a caste-like group, endogamy, restrictions on commensality.

The several caste like groups of the Muslims are further subdivided into two strata resembling the Hindu stratification of the castes into Bhadralok and Ghotolok categories.\textsuperscript{44} The criteria of determining a Muslim either Bhadralok or Chotolok are descent, occupation, and cultural habits. As most of the Muslim ethnic groups of the four surveyed villages belong to the same category (category two), occupation and cultural habits are getting more weight. Only at village Kulsuna, the ethnic composition of the Mallicks who belong to third category and at village Kotsimul, the ethnic composition of Khan (Khandani Muslim) are counted. In other cases, the occupation and cultural habits of the Muslims are counted. Some occupations are viewed as low by the Muslims and those who perform these occupations are viewed as Chotolok. The persons who give manual labour in agriculture, business of cattles, hawkers are generally degraded occupations and the persons who follow those occupations are viewed as Chotolok. On the otherhand, ownership

of land, service in Government offices or teaching or knowledge in Arabic literature are highly valued. Restrictions on marriage and commensality between the two strata are also found.

It is thus revealed from the foregoing discussion that a social distance is maintained not only between the Hindus and the Muslims but also among several castes and caste-like groups within each religion. Each religious group is characterised by social hierarchy of several fixed endogamous groups among whom restrictions on marriage and commensality are also found. It is true that interaction among several caste-like Muslim groups is not as elaborate and systematic as it is found among the Hindus. Yet, the Muslims also share some other caste-like features which dominate social interaction among several caste-like groups of the Muslims. Some scholars of course opine that the "Stratification of Muslim society in India and Pakistan was on gradations inherent in Islamic society in its historical development and would have been so even without the social environment". The above hypothesis is yet to be tested by more facts. Several scholars, on the other hand, opine that the development of caste among the Muslims, more or less similar to those among the Hindus, is the result of acculturation and they like to call the Muslim society an 'Situational' one. Whatever it may be there


is no doubt that the Muslim ethnic groups in Bengal share some caste-like features as it is found among the local Hindus. And what is interesting is that these features control and guide the interaction of not only several castes or caste-like groups of each religious groups but extend to the social interaction of one religious group with another religious group residing the village. The social interaction of one religious group with another is not closed but is regulated by these caste norms. In some cases the Muslims are privileged section in comparison with the unclean caste Hindus whose social ranking is lower in the eye of a clean caste Hindu or of a Muslim. They are also prevented from taking some caste services though these services are received by the Muslims.

Moreover, social distance is not the only picture of caste distance. In it lies the caste inter-dependence and the Muslims also form part of this caste interdependence and play their limited role in it either as clients or as patrons.47 The remarks of Prof. N.K.Bose may be mentioned here. "The success of caste's economic sub-structure was so marked that even Muslim converts in rural India continued to pay homage to it by a virtual allegiance to the hereditary pattern of endogamous guilds."48

Caste co-operation is found not only in the economic field
but also on the performances of several life-cycle ceremonies and religious festivals. Several caste groups are interdependent for the performance of their life-cycle ceremonies i.e. concerning birth, marriage and death of a person. For example, in case of birth of a child, on whatever religion the family of orientation of the child belongs, he needs a barber, dai, caretaker of Pir etc. The same can be said of marriage ceremony. It may of course be noted here that the dependence of this type is a loose one at village Kulsuna where the Muslims belong to sect Ahl-i-Hadis.

The spectacle of villagers acting as a single group regardless of their religious or caste division is also revealed on some other occasions e.g. to save harvest from flood or from the thieves, to irrigate land, in case of a football competition with another village, to solve a village dispute, to stage a drama etc. A new type of social relation is also found among the villages and it cuts across the religious/caste boundary. In village Kotsimul, the unclean caste groups joined hands with the Muslims against the social discrimination which was operated by the clean caste Hindus. Moreover, the members belonging to several castes/caste like groups are now supporters of a particular political party. It is a platform where members of several castes/religious groups gather together and also members of a particular caste/religion develop a tension-relation among them. The incidence of 1977 at village Tailara about the rising wage of the agricultural labourer is a suitable example.
This does not mean that the unity and solidarity of a particular religious group is disappearing. On the contrary, in the performances of several religious festivals, the members of a particular religious group are united and it gives solidarity and a sense of belonging together among its members.\textsuperscript{49} The invitees are, in most cases, caste members or members of own religious group. Then the boundary extends to cover the friends. For the performances of the Worships of Goddess Kali or Siva, the Hindus are united. On Friday congregation prayer the Muslims irrespective of their caste-like status are united on the mosque. Instances are there where the members of one religious groups were united against another religious group for religious performances.\textsuperscript{50} These incidents created tensions temporarily among the members of the two religious groups but solved very soon by the Hindus and Muslims sitting together.


\textsuperscript{50} Part-II, P:- 152-153.
Chapter-V

Religious worships and life cycle ceremonies.

The study of religion can be approached from different standpoints. The purpose of this chapter is not to explain the virtues and vices of the two religions — Hindu and Islam; nor does it attempt to make a comparative assessment of the two. On the other hand, this chapter will try to throw some light on the nature of relation of the two religious groups (Hindus and Muslims) in their religious worships and several life-cycle ceremonies — birth, marriage and death. This can be approached from two different angles. In the first place, nature of religious worships and festivals of the two religious groups may be described to point out whether one religious group is influencing or being influenced by the other. In the second place, it can be observed whether the members of one religious group participate in the religious worships and ceremonies of another religious group.

In the theoretical context of religion, the two religious groups — Hindus and Muslims have outwardly very little in common among themselves. The Hindus are polytheists. They believe in the doctrine that "everything in the universe is animated by God and that all the various deities are only forms assumed
by the same Brahma."¹ K.M. Sen views Hinduism "more like a tree that has grown gradually than like a building that has been erected by some great architect at some definite point of time. It contains within it.... the influence of many cultures..... The cultures of the Dravidian and the non-Dravidian peoples before the so-called Aryan invasion, the actual sanskritised Aryan culture, the culture of the later invaders, the influences of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism (to which Hinduism gave birth) and of Islam and Christianity (which came from outside) can be traced at various stages of the evolution of Hindu thought"², and practices.

The Basic doctrines of Islam, on the otherhand are few and simple. "Literally, Islam means submission to or acceptance of the will of God. Its universal quality is expressed in the belief that it is the eternal religion continuously revealed through prophets sent by God to all the peoples of the earth and that it has attained its final and perfect form in the teachings of the Quran and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad."³

The simplicity of doctrine is enshrined in the Kalimah or


profession of the faith – "There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah". The basic commands of Islam are prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, performance of all that is enjoined and abstinence from what is forbidden and Jihad, or string in the way of God with all the resources at one's disposal." 

The mode of worship of the two religious groups also differ. The Hindus, in most cases, need a hereditary priest belonging to a Brahmin caste, who acts as a mediator between the devotee and God. In Islam, there is no hereditary priest, at least in theory, enjoying any superior status. Also, the congregation prayer observed by the Muslims is not found among the Hindus. The variety of rituals and ceremonies covering the religious life of the two religious groups also differ from one another.

But in practice, the religious observances of the Hindus and Muslims of the four surveyed villages of Burdwan do not always conform to this view. Apart from the worship of the

4. Ibid. PP: 467, 468.


deities which have either their origin or sanction in sanskritic texts or of local origin (described by some scholars as popular or unofficial or non-sanskritic) some deities and personages worshipped by the Hindus with great care and devotion, are directly related to the influence of the Muslims. Mention may be made the worship of Goddess Olabibi. Olabibi, as the Goddess of epidemic diseases, is a Muslim variant of Goddess Olaichandi, a Hindu deity. In order to save the members of the family from epidemic diseases, the womenfolk (both Hindu and Muslim) after taking bath and wearing a clean Sari, bring offerings (Shirini—a mixture of milk, flour, banana, sugar etc.) to the deity. The Goddess Olabibi is worshipped by the Hindus and the Muslims of village Kotsimul not only in their individual household capacity; the deity is viewed by the villagers as the village deity and special offerings is made on the month of Baisak/Jaista when the villagers as a whole gather together on a day and perform 'Falar' festival. The villagers of Tailara also worship the deity and for that purpose join hands with the nearby village where the shrine of the deity exists. The priest of Goddess Olabibi belongs to Muslim but in case of taking 'prasad' from

the hands of a Muslim priest, a Hindu devotee does not hesitate at all.

The religious life of the Hindus in rural Burdwan is also marked by the worship of Muslim Saints who, as it is believed, hold miraculous power to help or to heal. Some saints are supposed to exhibit certain virtues that others do not possess. Thus, Pir Ghorasahid has the power, as the inhabitants of village Kotsimul hold, to search out missing things. A person who has lost anything, promises to send offerings to Pir Ghorasahid. While Pir Ghorasahid has the power to compensate for what has been lost, Pir Gazi has the super power of healing one from illness. The diseased person or any relative appeals to Pir Gazi and after recovery sends offerings which include shirini and a hubble-bubble (instruments of smoking). The priests of the two Pirs mentioned above belong to Muslim religion. These two Pirs also attain the honour of village personage and the villagers take 'Falar' on a day of the month of Baisak/Jaista.


Madar Sah is another Pir who attains respect and honour from the inhabitants of village Kotsimul. Pir Madar Sah is believed to guard the village at night riding on a horse so that no evil spirit can enter into the village and if so happens, Pir Madar Sah warns the villagers. Both the Hindus and the Muslims worship these Pirs. A common custom among the villagers (Hindu and Muslim) is to make the bridegroom bow at the tomb/dwelling place of the Pirs while going to marry and also while returning home with his bride.

The Hindus (and also the Muslims) of village Tailara worship a Muslim personage, Pir Sahesa with great care and devotion. A place near the residences of Sekhs is treated as the tomb of Pir Sahesa. The Pir, as it is believed, has the superhuman power of healing woman, whose milk of the breast is sucked, in order to give a barren woman child. The households also send offerings to Pir Sahesa to get more crops or to get milk from their cows. The caretaker i.e. any of the members of Sekh households receive offerings from the devotee and gives leaves of the tammarind tree situated nearby and soil near the tomb of Pir Sahesa and these things, as it is believed, bear the blessings of Pir to cure them of disease or to fulfil their expectations.

Pir Sah Sufi Sultana whose tomb is erected on his grave, draws the attention of both the Hindus and Muslims of village Khemta. The Pir, as it is believed, can produce the flow of milk in cows which have gone dry prematurely or can transform
a barren tree into a fertile one. The saint is also worshipped by the parents who seek healing for his sick-boy, by the cultivators who need more products. The saint, if he is pleased, may grant request, fulfil desires and perform miracles. The villagers consisting of both the Hindus and Muslims go to the tomb, submit their request and vows that if the saint is kind enough to fulfil the desires or solve the problems, he will return and make an offering and oblation. The Hindus (also Muslims) also worship Pir Morhum Sah Abul Hasim Majmun Aulia who has the power, as it is believed, to recover one from sick. The caretaker belongs to Muslim religion.

The Hindus also engage in another festival which is known as 'Mohaprabhum Bhog'. An alter is made of mud and the images of Radha and Krishna with several confident of Krishna are placed on the alter. Carol songs are sung. The Hindus participate in the festival irrespective of any caste. According to some, this type of worship is due to the influence of Sufi sect. 9

Inter communal borrowing is not only confined to the Hindus. The Muslims also worship several Hindu deities. The Muslims of the four villages are tolerant of religious practices of the Hindus and except village Kulsuna the Muslims of three other villages participate in witnessing festivals, religious procession, drama etc. In some cases they also give subscriptions.

The Muslim Jagirdar of village Kotsimul also bore the expenses of a Hindu festival. Mul Sanyasi of this festival (worship of God Siva) puts off his garland and gives it to any member of Khan household of Muslim religious group. Moreover, the Muslims of these villages do not plough land on some of the days of Hindu festival. At village Tailara the Muslims also send offerings to Hindu deities. Only one instance of disturbance is there when the Muslims protested against a religious procession followed by the Hindus. It created tension temporarily among the Hindus and the Muslims but was solved by them sitting together. At village Kulsuna participation of the Muslim in Hindu festivals is less observed because the Muslims of this village belong to sect Ahl-i-Hadis who strictly follow the Quranic precepts of Islam and do not recognise these idolatrous practices. But that does not mean that they are not tolerant of Hindu practices. They simply refrain from interfering with these practices.

The religious life of the Muslims of the three villages (except village- Kulsuna of the four surveyed villages) is also intimately connected with the worship of Pirs. The Muslims of village Kotsimul worship Pir Chorasahid, Pir Gazi, Pir Madar; the Muslims of village Tailara worship Pir Sahesa and the Muslims of village Khemta worship Pir Sah Sufi Sultanana, Pir Morhum Sah Abul Hasim Majmun Aulia and Pir Mohanti. These

Pirs are supposed to possess the super power of healing one from disease or to fulfil expectations of the devotees. Pir is a Persian word and etimologically means 'old'. But it is used generally to devote a spiritual director or guide among the sufi or mystics of Islam. According to some scholars the saint worship i.e. Pirism is not in conformity with the ideals of Islam and is surely an influence of Hinduism. According to Abdul Karim "The reverence to the Pir or the concept of super human power of the Pir was not of Bengali origin, rather it was imported from the west through northern India by the immigrants. But in Bengal, they found a fertile soil and were established on a solid foundation. The existing local population, the Buddhists had the practice of worshipping the chaityas or the stupas and adoring them with flowers and burning license. The Hindus had an identical idea in their avatari­sm. The Pirs appeared to them either as the tantric gurus or the teachers of the Sakta Order. It is no wonder that the conver­ts found the Pirism in Islam somewhat parallel to their own traditions and superstitions. 12

The Muslims of the three villages mentioned above worship Satya Pir who has his Hindu counterpart Satya Narayan. "In the 18th century, Satya Narayan and Satya Pir were regarded as

identical by Bengali poets, but whether Satyanarayan was transmuted into Satya Pir after the Muslim conquest of Bengal or Satya Pir was Hinduised in course of time as Satya Narayan, still remains a matter of conjecture. Both the Hindus and Muslims worship Satyanarayan and Satya Pir respectively when taking procession of a newly constructed house, to celebrate the birth of a child or get out of an impending disaster. The nature and method of worship is alike. No image is constructed but a wooden plank is used as the object of worship. In case of worship of Satyanarayan, a stone known as Narayan Sila is placed on the plank. As regards offerings, flour, shirini, betel nut, betel leaf are offered. In both cases Panchalis or long poetical works in praise of the God are read out on the occasion of worship. The only difference is that in case of the worship of Satya Narayan, the Brahmin priest worships the deity; but in case of worship of Satya Pir, a Muslim who is a specialist in reading Satya Pirer Panchali (Songs of Satya Pir) officiates in the worship.

As regards the origin of Satya Pir, whether he is a historical personage or a legendary figure or merely a spiritual invention, no satisfactory answer can be given. Amitabha Mukherjee presents some views in this respect. One is the identification of "Satya Pir with Mansural Hallaj, the famous


Sufi Saint of Bagdad who had boldly proclaimed the doctrine of unity of Being." According to another popular tradition, Satya Pir was born of a daughter of Alauddin Hussain Sah, the famous Muslim ruler of medieval Bengal. Dr. Sukumar Sen, on the other hand, holds that there may be some truth in the tradition current is North Bengal and refers to Krishna Hari Das in his voluminous "Panchati of Satya Pir that Satya Pir was the son of a virgin princess, Sandhavati of Malancha. Abdul Karim, however, maintains that Satya Pir was merely a spiritual concept which originated through a mixture of the Muslim idea of Pir and the Hindu nation of their deities. According to him, "It is the result of the Pirism or the Muslim conception of the super human power of the Pirs. When local people were converted to Islam, they got their conception of Pirism mixed up with their old ideas of the supernatural power of the deities. A further evolution of their process saw the culmination in the personification of the Pirism in Satya Pir or the Pirism itself began to be conceived as a super human power." Apart from the worship of these Pirs, the Muslims of the three villages perform some other religious festivals not sanctioned by orthodox Islam and are presumably of local origin. One of them is the festival of "Q·azi Saheber Khana"


arranged on the first day or first week of the month of Magha. Quazi Saheb is viewed as fire God who is in charge of fire. Therefore the Muslim arrange the festival to satisfy fire God. They collect subscriptions, assemble together on a spot and prepare foods. A prayer is also arranged where some Muslims chant some Ayyat from Quran. Fakirs and children are to be fed first and then the remnants of the foods are distributed among them. The Muslims of village Kotsinul worship another Goddess, Bala Masibat, who is in charge of small pox and other epidemics. No image or idol is erected. On a day after the 13th of Baisak, the Muslim worship the Goddess and the festival is known as 'Khesipara'. The Muslims buy a goat or goats. On the appointed day a field is cleaned and the goat is slaughtered according to the Mohammadan law in the name of Goddess Bala Masibat. Then the goat is turned into pieces equal to the number of Muslim inhabitants of the village. Then each family buys the pieces of meat according to his family member and pays the price. The meat is taken as a divine grace which would save them from small pox and other epidemics and any violation of this rule is treated as a sin that would, as it is believed, rouse the Goddess to angry to cause them suffer from small pox and other epidemics.

As the festival of 'Khesipara' is done to satisfy Bala Masibat, Goddess of epidemic, 'Velar Parab' another festival is performed to satisfy Khwajah Khidr, another personage in charge of water. In the month of Bhadra (after 11th day of
Bhadra) a shelter is constructed with the curved bark of a banana tree by every Muslim household. Within the construction made thereby, a betel leaf, one betel nut, one piece of tumeric, one paisa and one Kari (once used as coin in India) and a lightened lamp — all these are placed. Some fruits are also offered within the construction which is then set adrift on the water of river Damodar which flows on the east of the village.

Moreover, among the Muslim masses the Mallas i.e. those who are the masters in the day to day practice of Islam have to play an important role. They participate in all the ceremonies and festivals and read some Ayyats from Quran. At village Kotsimul, the system of priesthood also exists where the spiritual teacher locally known as Guru plays a dominant role among the Muslims. The Muslims of Kulsuna recognise only two religious festivals that go under the name of Id. The first of these is called Id-Ul-Fitr and the second is known as Id-Ul-Azha and they view other festivals i.e. Muharram, the Shab-i-Borat, Akheri Chahar Sumba etc. as unIslamic and do not perform these festivals though these are performed by the Muslims of other villages with great care and devotion.


It is thus clear from the foregoing discussion that both the religious groups — Hindus and Muslims, are tolerant to the religious practices of each other. Moreover, the religious practices of one religious group sometimes cut across the religious boundary and extend to cover the religious practices of another religious group.\(^{19}\) Thus the Hindus worship Muslim Pirs or deities with great care and devotion. The Muslims also perform some religious worships and festivals that are not sanctioned by orthodox Islam. This also serves to illustrate the power of local beliefs and rituals on the prescriptions of an organised religion especially one which is alien in origin. It may of course be pointed out that the orthodox sections are not willing to perform these unIslamic practices though the majority of the Muslims perform these practices and sometimes they try to add a Quranic touch i.e. uttering some Ayyat before starting work or slaughtering a beast. This process can not be called Islamization\(^ {20}\) because the very method of conducting the festival itself go against the sanction of Islam. This process can also be observed in the religious performances of the

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Hindus. Some festivals were performed by the Hindus without a Brahmin priest. But today the priest attends the festival and utter some mantras i.e. religious verses though the nature of worship and performance of the festival remain in most cases the same. Some scholars who have investigated religious practices of the Muslims in India mention that incomplete conversion, acculturation, ignorance of the Muslim masses of the Arabic languages, common cultural background are the main reasons of observances of unIslamic practices by the Muslims of India. Though there are some justifications of these explanations another reason which is also important is rather deep rooted. The devastating effects of natural calamities such as flood, drought, epidemic diseases, poverty, unsatisfied desires hit both the Hindus and Muslims with equal severity and the crisis of life compel them to bury their religious differences of to deviate from their orthodox religion which are alien both to them and appeal to these unknown Agents, seek remedies whatever be their religious affiliation.

Ceremonies about birth, marriage and death:

The integration and interpermeation of the two religious groups — Hindu and Muslim, are found not only in the sphere

of some of their religious performances but are also prominent in several ceremonies and customs centering round birth, marriage and death of a person. Both the religious groups believe that birth, marriage and death — these three main facets of human life are ordained by God and are predetermined. They therefore perform some ceremonies and customs on those occasions. Some of these ceremonies are distinct and are performed by the members of a particular religious group while there are a large number of ceremonies which are found common to both the religious groups. Among the Hindus though there are some ceremonies common to every caste group, the ceremonies performed by the Brahmin caste differ from that of a clean Sudra caste. The ceremonies performed by the Hanafi sect ( Muslim ) closely resemble the ceremonies performed by the clean Sudra caste ( Hindu ). Muslims belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis are willing to keep in close conformity with the text of Quran and the life and teachings of the great Prophet. Yet the womenfolk belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis observes some ceremonies which also closely resemble that of the Hindus.

Birth — Mother occupies an important place in social life. A married woman without a child is counted as an unfortunate woman and the woman, if she is a Hindu gives oblation to Sasthi, Goddess of children and if she is a Muslim, gives oblation to Pirs. The birth of a child due to some irregular practices i.e. due to unusual sex relation is hated by both
the religious groups. Some restrictions are put on the behaviour and movement of the expectant mother (whether she becomes a Hindu or Muslim) so that no evil spirit would harm her. She also wears tabij i.e. amulets bearing divine grace.

The Hindus perform a ceremony in the fifth month of pregnancy though it is not performed by the Muslims. But in the seventh month of pregnancy a ceremony known as 'Bhaja' is performed both by the Hindus and the Muslims except those who belong to sect Ahl-i-Hadis. The nature of performance of this ceremony is more or less the same. The pregnant woman is offered fried flattened rice, assorted fried grains and sweetened parched paddy. She also wears a new Sari. All these goods are sent by her parents. The married woman from the same caste/caste-like group or/and from the neighbours attend the ceremony and receive fried flattened rice etc. In the ninth month of pregnancy 'Saad Bhakshan' ceremony is performed both by the Hindus and the Muslims including sect Ahl-i-Hadis. In this ceremony, the pregnant woman is offered by her parents a new Sari, favourable dishes, sweet-meats, and some utensils in which she will take the choicest food.

In both cases, first birth generally takes place in the family of orientation of the prospective mother. The people do not get the prospective mother admitted into the Health Centre unless and until a crisis arises due to the physical disorder of the prospective mother. If the birth takes place at home, a Hari woman (belonging to Hindu religious group) known as
dai attends the prospective mother during delivery. Both the Hindus and the Muslims treat some days following delivery of a child as a period of pollution and keep the mother and the child confined to a particular place and touching is also restricted. After delivery, dai cuts the umbilical cord by a thin strip of bamboo. To-day, of course, safety razor blades are also used. Generally, the birth of a male child is appreciated more than the birth of a female child. Birth of a son of a Hindu is rejoiced at by blowing conch shell horn. Among the Muslims, after delivery, the new-born baby is given bath and maulawi or a man is summoned and the man places his mouth to the right ear of the child and repeats kalima. Then in the child's left ear he agains repeats it with the addition of the formula "stand up for prayer".

For both the Hindus and the Muslims the mother along with her child is kept confined for 21 days as period of pollution. The Hindus and the Muslims except those belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis, perform the first purificatory ceremony on the fifth day when the barber (belonging Napit caste of Hindu religion) comes and cuts the nails of the mother and other women. For the Muslims, the hair of the new-born baby is also cleaned. The Muslims belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis also performed this ceremony. At present, they dislike this ceremony though the mother along with other women cut their nails on that day. The Hindus perform another ceremony known a "Setra Puja" on the seventh day but the Muslims do not observe it.
On the 21st day the final purificatory ceremony is performed. The clothes are washed, the mother and the baby are given a bath and sweets are distributed among the children. The Muslims belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis also perform this ceremony. The Hindus worship the family deity and send offerings to several deities and Pirs located in the village. The Muslims except those belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis send offerings to village Pirs.

When the child (male) attains the age of six months (seven or nine months for a female) a ceremony known as 'Annaprasana' (locally known as Bhujna) is performed. The child gets rice for the first time. New dresses, utensils and other materials are carried on by the maternal uncle who gives cooked food for the first time. The performance of this ceremony is the same for both the Hindus and the Muslims. For the male child of the Brahmin caste (Hindu) another ceremony named 'Upanayana' is performed after the child attains 12 years of age. In this ceremony this child wears the sacred thread and becomes capable of performing religious rites. He becomes 'Dwija' or the twice born in the process.

Two other ceremonies performed only by the Muslims deserve to be mentioned here. On the 7th day or any day after that day

24 cf. Abbe J.A. Dubois: Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies, Oxford University Press, 1959, P:- 160-
(14th/21st or any day before marriage) a ceremony known as 'Akika'\textsuperscript{25} is performed by the Muslims. The hair of the child is shaved by the barber and the hair is weighted against silver which, or the market price of that silver is distributed among the poor. Sacrifice of two beasts (cow/goat/hen) in case of a male child and one for a female child is made in the name of Allah. The meat is cooked and a banquet is followed along with the relatives and Muslim neighbours. Circumcision,\textsuperscript{26} another ceremony, is thought by the Muslims a part of their religious life. Boys are circumcised within the age of twelve. Cutting of the foreskin is generally carried out by the Hajjam who mainly follow this as his occupation. The occasion is generally called 'Musalmanikara'. Reuben Levy is of opinion that circumcision "which is not mentioned in the Koran at all" "was practised by the Arabs of the Jahitiya and adopted without question by the Muhammad, though the schools differ as to whether it is indispensable — the shufites call it wajib and its neglect punishable, while Malikis regard at as no more than sunna, i.e. as commendable. Muslims, with a few doubtful exceptions, in practice, regard it as an essential of the faith. The exceptions would seem to base their neglect on the lack of a positive ordinance in the Koran. Thus the pious caliph Omar


\footnotesize{26 cf. Ibid, PP: - 19-20.}
is said to have declared that circumcision was not demanded from converts for Allah sent Muhammad to summon men (to Islam) and not to circumcise (Tabari-II, 1354, Page-23).”

Marriage — Marriage is viewed by the villagers as a sacred duty for everyone and the parents take it to be their responsibility to negotiate marriage for their children. The Hindus marry in order to continue the line of descent. Though in Islam, marriage is technically a social and legal contract between a couple, it has acquired a deep religious significance and is viewed as predestined and is therefore ordained by God. In selecting marriage partners the Muslims enjoy more liberty than the Hindus because for the Hindus, marriage is strictly endogamous in nature and is therefore confined to one’s own caste group. Any violation of this rule is to excommunicate one from his/her caste group. Unlike Hindus, the Muslims are not, in theory, grouped by some caste-like categories. But in practice, the Muslims also consider caste-like groups while selecting the bride/bridegroom. A Muslim of

foreign extraction, as for example, the Khan households of village Kotsimul can marry a Muslims of foreign extraction. Moreover, caste-like considerations also play a dominant role. For example a Syyid can marry a Sayyid or a Sekh but would not marry a Mallick or Jollaha. Now, of course, due to the preaching of egalitarian outlook of Islam, the caste-like considerations are gradually whithering away, though it is still followed by many households.

Of course, marriage between cousins, both on the fraternal and maternal side, is permitted in Islam. Marriage on the maternal side is sometimes appreciated because it would easily solve the problem of right of inheritance. Quran of course prohibits certain marriage relations. "Forbidden to you are your mothers and your daughters and your sisters and your paternal aunts and your maternal aunts and brother's daughters and sister's daughters and your mother that have suckled you and your foster sisters and mothers of your wives and your step daughters who are your guardianship, both of your wives to whom you have gone in but if you have not gone into them there is no blame on you and the wives of your sons who are of your own cousins and that you should not have two sisters together, except what has already passed." Among the Hindus these restrictions are also found.

Both for the Hindus and the Muslims, the parents/guardians

of the boy/girl take it their responsibility to arrange the marriage. The selection is also made by them though in Islam marriage is viewed as a free choice of the couple. The guardian of the bride at first collects information about the bridegroom and makes an appeal to the guardian of the bridegroom. In village Khemta, a mediator known as 'Ghatak' is also found among the Muslims. After the selection of the bride, the dowry to be given to the bridegroom by the brides' parents is finalised. The dowry includes cash money, ornaments and other utensils. Though in Islam dowry known as 'Del mehr' is sanctioned for the bride by the bridegroom, it is only on paper and in reality it is the bridegroom who receives dowry from the bride's house. If the two parties agree, the date of marriage is fixed. The occasion is known as 'Legan-dhara'.

After the fixation of the day of marriage, the two parties invite their relatives. The Hindus invite their relatives by a betel leaf and a betel nut. The messenger also bears a letter written in red ink and a corner of the envelop is coloured by tumeric paste. The Muslims of three village (except village Kulsuna of the surveyed villages) also follow the same procedure.

The customs and ceremonies connected with marriage are more or less the same for both the religious groups. On the morning of the marriage-day, the Hindus perform 'Gayeholud' ceremony. Tumeric paste with mustard oil is smeared on the body of the bridegroom and the remnants of that oil is sent to
the bride's house with the addition of new clothes, soap, luxury goods, sweetmeats and a mat. Generally the choukidar of the village or a Napit (barber) or a Dule woman belonging to Hindu religious group carries these goods. At the bride's house, the bride uses that oil along with other married women. The Muslims also perform the ceremony in the similar way but before a few days (one/three/five etc.) before the marriage day. The Muslims of village Kulsuna are not today willing to perform the ceremony though it was observed by them a few years ago and still they perform a ceremony a few days after marriage and the ceremony is known as 'Haluddhoyano'.

The main marriage ceremony is performed in the bride's house. On the day of marriage 'Barat' or wedding procession starts from the bridegroom's house. For the Muslim, the main marriage ceremony is the same for several caste-like groups or sects and it differs from that of the Hindus. The marriage of the Muslims is a contract of the couple and the celebration of marriage contract known as 'Nikka' is performed. Maulawi or any one with a few witnesses (one of them acting as a correspondent with the bride) approach the bridegroom and ask the bridegroom whether he is willing to take the bride as his wife on the payment of a fixed dowry. After receiving assent from the bridegroom, they proceed towards the bride and inform her the name, address of the bridegroom and the amount of the dowry and ask whether she is willing to marry. As soon as the assent from the bride is taken, the main marriage ceremony (Nikka) is over and Maulawi repeats some verses
from Quran. Among the Hindus, of course, the main marriage ceremony of the Brahmin differs from that of the non-Brahmins. 'Kushyandih' ceremony which is performed by the Brahmins, is not performed by the non-Brahmins. The Hindus recite verses at the presence of a priest and in front of the sacred fire. The Hindus also perform some ceremonies like 'Subhadrasti', 'Satpakebandha', 'Sindurdan' etc.

Next morning, the bride groom's party returns home. On reaching the village, the Hindus (bride and bridegroom) offer oblation to all the deities and Pirs situated in the village. The Muslims also offer oblation to Pirs. When the bride and the bridegroom enters into the house, the mother or any elder woman gives ceremonial reception by touching a vessel made of bamboo slips (generally used for winnowing grains) containing paddy, grass etc. on the forehead. Both the Hindus and the Muslims except those living at village Kulsuna, perform the ceremony. The Hindus perform some other ceremonies which are not performed by the Muslims. The 'Fulasajya' ceremony is performed by both the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslims also perform, like the Hindus, 'Astamongala' ceremony at the bride's house on the 8th day of marriage. Like the Hindus, the Muslims also observe 'Diragaman' ceremony. On several occasions or seasons several gifts are sent to each others house by their respective parents and the occasion is known as 'Tatta'.

It is, thus, seen that excepting the main marriage
ceremony there are some ceremonies observed by both the Hindus and the Muslims. Ceremonies like 'Ashirbad', 'Gatrahiridra', 'Badhubaran', 'Fulsajya'. 'Astamongala' are performed by both the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslims belonging to sect Ahl-i-Hadis do not, at present, follow some of these ceremonies which are viewed by them as unIslamic.

**Death** — Like birth and marriage, death of a person is also believed to be predestined. Hindus believe in the rebirth of the soul which moves towards Absolute Power (Paramatma) through several incarnations. They do not bury the deadbody but burn it. If, of course, a baby dies, the deadbody is buried. The Muslims, on the other hand, do not believe in the rebirth of the soul. They believe that a day would come when all would be destroyed and the souls would be asked by the Almighty about their activities—right and wrong. Therefore, they preserve the deadbody in the burial ground. In the grave yard, the Muslims dig a hole east-west wise so that the face of the corpse is placed towards Mecca; while the Hindus place the corpse north-south wise so that the face is placed towards the north in which direction Himalaya lies. Both for the Hindus and the Muslims, the pregnant mother and those bearing Tabiz (Tabiz, as it is said, bears divine spirit) do not touch the corpse. In both cases generally the women do not participate in the procession. The attendants take both before they come back to their residences. Moreover, both the Hindus and the
Muslims observe few days as the period of pollution and observe purificatory rites. The purificatory rites for the Hindus are elaborate. The Muslims perform purificatory rites on several but fixed days and recite religious verses from Quran. But the Muslims of village Kulsuna do not perform any purificatory rites because they view these performances as unIslamic.

It is thus revealed from the foregoing discussion that though there are differences in beliefs and some of the practices about birth, marriage and death, there are some practices and rites similar to both the religious groups. Some scholars of course opine that "many Muslim rituals have, in general been influenced by those of the Hindus and vice versa. The common attitude, therefore is a direct result of the process of intergroup fusion and assimilation which has gone on for many centuries". Some on the otherhand point out that the observance of unIslamic practices which are deep rooted among the Muslims is due to their incomplete conversion.

Several attempts are made by the orthodox section to get rid of these unIslamic practices. In some ceremonies they perform the ceremony in the traditional way but only with the addition of repeating some religious verses from Quran. This tendency is also observed among the Hindus. The Brahmin interference has in many cases added some rites or practices but has little

to change the traditional method of the observance of these ceremonies. Thus so far as the observance of these life cycle ceremonies by the Hindus and Muslims are concerned, the orthodox section of both religious groups have touched only the fringe of rural Burdwan and have only added some practices to the local and traditional practices which are in most cases common to both the religious groups. The orthodox section of both the religious groups are trying to modify or avoid these practices. At the same time the profound influence exerted by these practices have also modified both sanskritic based Hindu religion and the orthodox Islam religion. It is, of course, easier for a Muslim to call any of these practices un-Islamic after reviewing it from the precepts of Quran. But it is not easier for a Hindu to regard any of such practices as against Hinduism because both philosophically and ritualistically speaking, Hinduism is less rigid and allows one to be accommodative of other people's virtues.
Chapter VI

Concluding Observations.

One of the interesting issues that draw the attention of the intellectuals of both pre and post independent India concerns "The Hindu Muslim relations in India". But the observers differ in their method of treatment and conclusions. In most cases the observation is based on the official documents which in several cases, are not adequate or clear enough to sustain any valid general proposition. The First Chapter of this present work enumerates some of such observations. Moreover, "Hindu Muslim Relations" seem to have varied from place to place and from time to time and has always been bound up in an extremely complicated manner with socio-economic, political and cultural developments. The study under consideration, is but a little step to investigate into this vast and complex subject by attempting to investigate the "Hindu-Muslim Relations in the Socio-economic sphere in Rural Burdwan, a district of West Bengal.

As the object of this investigation is to find out the Hindu Muslim relations in Burdwan in its rural setting and as there are thousands of such villages composed of multi-religious groups, I have selected four typical villages for the purpose of my investigation. However, the selection of
the villages are based not on any subjective consideration but on certain objective considerations that emanate from the conditions prevailing in rural Burdwan. While selecting the villages, its location, ethnic composition and pattern of occupation are taken into consideration. Each village being the unit of study, it is observed first in its economic, social and religious aspects — how the members belonging to these religious groups interact with each other in those fields. The data is collected by means of proforma, printed questionnaire, open questionnaire and participant observation. The Hindus who are divided into several caste groups are not taken as a single entity. The Muslims are also divided among several caste-like groups. Therefore, while collecting data, I have to observe both inter group and intragroup relations. Chapter —II, explains the methodology of the research and also the sources of information of the investigation.

It is revealed from the investigation of the four surveyed villages that the economic structure of rural Burdwan is by and large the same for both the Hindus and the Muslims. Though each caste group belonging to Hindu religion is supposed to follow the prescribed caste occupation, only less that 25% of the Hindu households follow their caste occupation to draw principal income. However, in three villages the number of households who follow caste-based occupations to draw subsidiary income far exceeds the number of households who follow caste-based occupations to draw principal income. Moreover,
the unclean caste groups depend more on their caste based occupation whereas households belonging to clean caste group depend less on their caste-based occupation. Only village Tailara presents a different picture.

However, most of the households who are still following their caste-based occupation show their preference to shift from their caste-based occupation to other "better paid" occupations. The economic needs of the family, the introduction of new economic system, Jajmani system and the concept of purity and pollution have affected the dependence of several caste groups on their caste occupation.

Several caste-like groups among the Muslims, on the other-hand, do not operate in terms of such caste-based division of labour among themselves. Nevertheless, they do form part of the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus and receive services of several caste groups, though these services are not received by some unclean Sudra castes belonging to Hindu religious group. In some cases, some functions are becoming specialised for the Muslims. Thus a large number of Muslims are dealers in cattle and this particular trade is their monopoly. Some of the Muslim households are caretakers of Pirs and follow this occupation as their hereditary right. On the whole, however, in the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus, Muslims are also a part of it, receive services of several caste groups and thus, play their role in it either as patrons or as clients.
A few years ago these unclean caste groups who had no right to enjoy other caste services, had to depend on other member of that caste to perform these caste services. Today, they go to the nearby market where this discrimination is hardly maintained.

The services rendered by several castes to other caste members and also to the Muslims are, of course, guided by caste norms. Several castes while serving a clean caste, take meal in addition to other charges. But while he/she serves a Muslim household, he/she does not take meal but receives rice/paddy in addition to similar other charges. It may be mentioned here that the same thing happens when a clean caste member serves an unclean caste household.

Although these caste norms still regulate the behaviour of the villagers, yet there has taken place a considerable change in the economic relationship which binds together these several castes/caste-like groups. A few years ago, a caste member (i.e. a barber or a dai) used to receive from the households served, paddy or rice which was fixed for the year or a small area of land was granted for recompensation of these caste services. Today, they prefer (the household that receives that service also prefers) to receive money in cash. Thus the traditional system has largely been replaced by cash payments.

As regards non-caste-based occupations, the participation of the Hindus and the Muslims on these non-caste-based occupations
is least affected by their religious status but is dominated by economic considerations. All of these occupations draw workers from both the religious groups; on the other hand, members of a particular caste/religion do not always follow the same occupation. Thus agriculture, which is the main occupation of the villagers is not confined to a particular caste or religious group. Co-operation is also found among the workers following a particular type of occupation. But though several castes/caste-like groups follow a particular occupation whether in agriculture or in the learned profession, they are still endogamous groups i.e. involvement in the same occupation does not breakdown the system of marriage endogamy.

The occupations mentioned above, are also graded into high (i.e. pure) and low (impure). So far as the caste occupations are concerned, the function of a priest is viewed as high whereas the functions like that of a barber (Napit caste), dai (Hari caste), palanquin bearer, thatcher, fisher (Dule and Bagdi caste group), washerman (Rajak) are viewed as low. Among non caste-based occupations, the occupation of a teacher or of a Government servant is viewed as high. Such occupations as need manual labour, for example, working at a shop, tea-stall or field are viewed as low. Business is generally viewed as a high profession though business of wine (prescribed occupation of Suri caste group) or of cattle (as is done by some of the Muslims) are viewed as impure. As regards agriculture, ownership of land is
viewed as the symbol of high status whereas direct involvement in agriculture by ploughing a land is not viewed as a noble profession. Among the Muslims also this idea prevails. They regard the occupation of a barber, dāi, cleaner of dinner tables and dishes etc. as impure. The well-off households do not plough the land, instead they employ hired labour throughout the year. Also, among the Muslims, trade or business, is generally viewed as a noble profession though persons who deal with the business of cows and of wine are not honoured. It is observed that the workers belonging to unclean caste groups of Hindu religion are in most cases the followers of these impure occupations and the persons who follow these occupations are called Chotalok. In case a man belonging to unclean caste group is following the function of a high i.e. noble profession (though the number of such persons is very few) his cultural set up is counted and if it is positive, he is viewed "like a Bhadralok" though the clean castes are not willing to call him a 'Bhadralok'. On the contrary, a person belonging to clean caste group is performing functions which are viewed as low, his behaviour i.e. cultural set up is watched. The person who is performing that function also wants to follow the cultural pattern followed by other 'Bhadraloks'. Thus in the stratification of several caste groups into 'Bhadralok' and 'Chotalok' categories, descent, occupation and cultural set up of the household are counted, though descent is considered first. Among the Muslims also descent and occupation of a person are counted for the purpose of calling a person either 'Bhadralok'
or 'Chotolok'. Thus, occupation gives to its followers not only a means of livelihood but also a social status and in rural Burdwan the villagers comprising both Hindus and Muslims are divided into two strata i.e. into Bhadralok and Chotolok categories. Though each of these categories include members of several religious groups (also several castes/caste-like groups) in their social intercourse, a social distance is assiduously maintained where the relations are neither open nor closed by but are guided by some long standing customs and traditions.

Each religious group is characterised by social hierarchy of several endogamous groups among whom restrictions on marriage and commensality are also found. It is true that interaction among several caste-like groups of the Muslims is not as elaborate and systematic as it is found among the Hindus. Yet, the Muslims also share some other caste-like features which dominate social interaction among several caste-like groups of the Muslims. Some scholars, of course, opine that the "stratification of Muslim society in India and Pakistan was on gradations inherent in Islamic society in its historical development and would have been so even without the social environment". The above hypothesis is yet to be tested by more facts. Several scholars, on the otherhand, opine that the development of caste among the Muslims, more or less similar to those among the Hindus, is the result of acculturation and they like to call the Muslim society in India 'situational one'.
Both of them, thus admit that the Muslim ethnic groups in Bengal share some caste-like features as are found among the local Hindus. These features control and guide the interactions of not only several castes or caste-like groups of each religious group, but extend to the social interactions of one religious group with another religious group residing in the village. In short, the social interaction of one religious group with another is not closed but is regulated by these caste norms.

Moreover, social distance is not the only picture of caste distance. In it, lies the caste interdependence and the Muslims also form part of this caste interdependence. The remarks of Prof. N.K. Bose may be mentioned here. "The success of caste's economic sub-structure was so marked that even Muslim converts in rural India continued to pay homage to it by a virtual allegiance to the hereditary pattern of endogamous guilds."¹

Caste co-operation is found not only in the economic field but also on the performances of several life-cycle ceremonies and religious festivals. For example, in case of birth of a child, the family needs a barber, dai, etc. The same can be said of marriage ceremony. This does not mean that the unity and solidarity of a particular religious group

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is disappearing. On the contrary, in the performances of several religious festivals the members of a particular religious group are united and it gives solidarity and a sense of belonging together among its members.

The spectacle of villagers acting as a single group regardless of their religious or caste division, is also revealed on some other occasions—i.e. to save harvest from flood or from the thieves, to irrigate land in case of a football competition with another village, to solve a village dispute, to stage a drama, etc. A new type of social relation is also found among the villagers and it cuts across the religious/caste boundary. In village Kotsimul, the unclean caste groups joined hands with the Muslims against the social discrimination which was operated by the clean caste Hindus. Moreover, the members belonging to several castes/caste-like groups are now supporters of a particular political party. It is a platform where members of several castes/religions gather together and also members of a particular caste/religion develop a tension relation among them. The incidence of 1977 at village Tailara about the rising wage of the agricultural labourer is a suitable example.

The religious observances of the Hindus and the Muslims of the four surveyed villages reveal the fact that both the religious groups are tolerant of the religious practices of each other. Moreover, the religious practices of one religious group sometimes cut across the religious boundary and extend
to cover the religious practices of another religious group. Thus Hindus are found to worship Muslim Pirs or deities with great care and devotion. The Muslims also show reverence to Hindu deities, send offerings and give subscriptions. The Muslims also perform some religious worships and festivals that are not sanctioned by orthodox Islam. This also serves to illustrate the power of local beliefs and rituals on the prescription of an organised religion especially one which is alien in origin. It may, of course, be pointed out that the orthodox sections are not willing to perform these un-Islamic practices. The majority of the Muslims of course, perform these practices and sometimes they try to add a Quranic touch i.e. by uttering some Ayyat (religious verses) from Quran before starting a work or slaughtering a beast. This process cannot be called Islamization because the very method of performing the festival and even the festival itself go against the sanction of Islam. This process can also be observed in the religious performances of the Hindus. Some festivals were performed by the Hindus without Brahmin priest. But today the priest attends the festival and utters some religious verses, though the nature of worship and performance of the festival remain, in most cases, the same. Some scholars who have investigated the religious practices of the Muslims of India mention that incomplete conversion, acculturation, ignorance of the Muslim masses on Arabic language, common cultural background are the main reasons of the observance of un-Islamic
practices by the Muslims of India. Though there are some justifications of these reasons, another reason which is more important is deep rooted. The devastating effects of natural calamities such as flood, drought, epidemic diseases, poverty, frustration hit both the Hindus and Muslims with equal severity and the crises of life compel them to bury their religious differences or to deviate from their orthodox religion which are alien to both of them and they appeal to these unknown Agents, seek remedies whatever be their religious affiliation.

The integration and interpermeation of the two religious groups are found not only in the sphere of some of their religious performances but are prominent in several ceremonies and customs centering round birth, marriage and death of a person. Both the religious groups believe that birth, marriage and death — these three main facets of human life are ordained by God and are predetermined. They, therefore, perform some ceremonies and customs on these occasions. Some of these ceremonies are distinct and are performed by the members of a particular religious group while there are a large number of ceremonies which are found common to both the religious groups. Some scholars, of course, opine that "many Muslim rituals have, in general, been influenced by those of the Hindus and vice versa. The common attitude, therefore, is a direct result of the process of intergroup fusion and assimilation which has gone on for many centuries". Some, on the otherhand, point out that the observance of unIslamic practices which are deep rooted among the Muslims in Bengal is due to their incomplete
conversion. Several attempts are made by the orthodox section to free the Muslims from these unIslamic practices. In some cases, they perform the ceremony in the traditional way but only with the addition of repeating some religious verses from Quran. This tendency is also observed among the Hindus. The Brahmin interference has in many cases, added some rites or practices but has little to change the traditional method of the observance of these ceremonies. Thus, so far as the observance of these life-circle ceremonies by the Hindus and Muslims are concerned, the orthodox section of both the religious groups have touched only the fringe of rural Burdwan and have only added some practices to the local and traditional practices which are in most cases similar to both the religious groups. The orthodox sections of both the religious groups are trying to modify or avoid these practices. At the same time, the profound influence exerted by these local practices have also modified both sanskritic-based Hindu religion and Islam.

It should be added that the present study does not rule out the possibility of or belittle the importance of studying the occurrence of communal conflict. Instances are there where the Hindus and the Muslims are united against one another to perform their religious practices. It created tension temporarily among them but was soon solved by them sitting together. Also, the Muslims along with the unclean caste Hindus protested against the social discrimination which is the characteristic feature of caste norm and demanded equal social privilege. Since communal harmony is the normal aspect of the relation
between Hindus and Muslims in the rural setting of Burdwan, it is felt that the bases of such a continuing phenomenon should merit through enquiry. One of the bases of this communal harmony is the nature of economic system in the villages. In the system of caste interdependence prevalent among the Hindus, Muslims are also a part of it and play their role in it either as patrons or as clients. As regards non caste-based occupations, the participation of the Hindus and Muslims on these non caste-based occupations is least affected by their religious status but is dominated by economic considerations. Secondly, the social interactions of one religious group with another are not closed, but are regulated by these caste norms. Each religious group is characterised by social hierarchy of several endogamous groups among whom restrictions on marriage and commensality are found. The caste features control and guide the interaction of not only several castes or caste-like groups/each religious group but extend to the social interactions of one religious group with another residing the village. Thirdly, another type of harmony is also found among the villagers across their caste/religious boundary. The consciousness of social status and privileges has brought the Hindus and the Muslims to a common platform and they are united not on the basis of religion but on the basis of their secular interests. Fourthly, the very basis of the cultural and religious life of the area under investigation is itself the cause of communal harmony. The religious beliefs and practices of
the two religious groups are largely influenced by the local and traditional beliefs and practices which are found neither in orthodox Islam, nor in Sanskrit-based Hinduism. The orthodox sections are trying to modify or avoid these practices. At the same time the profound influence exerted by these local practices have also modified both Sanskrit-based Hinduism and Islam. Moreover, the devastating effects of natural calamities such as flood, drought, epidemic diseases, poverty, and frustrations of every description hit both the Hindus and the Muslims of the village with equal severity and the crises of life compel them to bury their religious differences or to deviate from their orthodox religion which are alien to both of them and they appeal to these unknown Agents, seek remedies, whatever be their religious affiliation.
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</thead>
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<td>+23.6</td>
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<td>+6.1</td>
<td>+8.1</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
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Table - II.

Percentage of Hindu and Muslim to the District Population (from 1872-1961)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percentage Hindu</th>
<th>Percentage Muslim</th>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>20,34,745</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>13,90,459</td>
<td>80.49</td>
<td>18.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>13,88,118</td>
<td>80.30</td>
<td>19.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>15,28,290</td>
<td>79.68</td>
<td>18.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>15,33,874</td>
<td>79.34</td>
<td>18.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>14,34,771</td>
<td>77.99</td>
<td>18.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>15.75,699</td>
<td>78.62</td>
<td>18.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>18,90,732</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>21,91,667</td>
<td>83.73</td>
<td>15.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>30,82,846</td>
<td>84.23</td>
<td>15.17</td>
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### Table - III

Distribution of Hindu and Muslim population of the District on several sub-Divisions based on census-1961-P:301.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District (Sub-Division)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3073346</td>
<td>259875</td>
<td>84.23</td>
<td>467669</td>
<td>15.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>561078</td>
<td>491054</td>
<td>85.70</td>
<td>68377</td>
<td>12.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katwa Sub-Division</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>426514</td>
<td>334262</td>
<td>78.30</td>
<td>92220</td>
<td>21.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>31440</td>
<td>29038</td>
<td>93.31</td>
<td>2054</td>
<td>6.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalna Sub-Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>416220</td>
<td>327539</td>
<td>78.69</td>
<td>88556</td>
<td>21.28</td>
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<td>23603</td>
<td>22226</td>
<td>93.33</td>
<td>359</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1149038</td>
<td>970750</td>
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<td>1091074</td>
<td>965324</td>
<td>88.56</td>
<td>109538</td>
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<td>383708</td>
<td>317923</td>
<td>82.85</td>
<td>54866</td>
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### Table - IV.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/Sub-Division</th>
<th>Total Population.</th>
<th>T. Workers</th>
<th>Cultivation (owner)</th>
<th>Ag. Labour</th>
<th>In mining, curing, etc.</th>
<th>At household industry.</th>
<th>In manufacturing other than household</th>
<th>In construction.</th>
<th>In T &amp; C.</th>
<th>Transport &amp; communication.</th>
<th>In other services.</th>
<th>Non-workers.</th>
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<td><strong>Burdwan District (T)</strong></td>
<td>3082846</td>
<td>1039 961 (33.73%)</td>
<td>295 752</td>
<td>144 416</td>
<td>162 305 (15.03%)</td>
<td>317 12 (3.04%)</td>
<td>11 592 (11.14%)</td>
<td>194 07 (1.88%)</td>
<td>647 04 (-6.22%)</td>
<td>340 17 (3.27%)</td>
<td>131 76 (12.69%)</td>
<td>204 895</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Katwa S.D.(T)</strong></td>
<td>426614</td>
<td>118 555</td>
<td>569 54</td>
<td>252 12</td>
<td>3 769 (3.17%)</td>
<td>629 6 (5.31%)</td>
<td>5 131 (4.32%)</td>
<td>743 (5.14%)</td>
<td>142 4 (1.20%)</td>
<td>129 27 (10.90%)</td>
<td>307 59</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kalna S.D.(T)</strong></td>
<td>416 220</td>
<td>127 312</td>
<td>53 061</td>
<td>323 83</td>
<td>3 795 (2.92%)</td>
<td>10 200 (6.01%)</td>
<td>5 595 (4.39%)</td>
<td>718 (3.53%)</td>
<td>670 5 (5.26%)</td>
<td>148 9 (1.16%)</td>
<td>13 436 (10.55%)</td>
<td>285 908</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sadar S.D.(T)</strong></td>
<td>114 9038</td>
<td>348 830</td>
<td>138 509</td>
<td>97110</td>
<td>8 59 (2.44%)</td>
<td>90 76 (2.60%)</td>
<td>16 334 (4.39%)</td>
<td>43 66 (1.26%)</td>
<td>19 916 (5.70%)</td>
<td>8659 (2.48%)</td>
<td>50 341 (14.43%)</td>
<td>80 0208</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asansol S.D.(T)</strong></td>
<td>1091074</td>
<td>445 254</td>
<td>502 28</td>
<td>397 11</td>
<td>14 2922 (32.82%)</td>
<td>6 140 (1.37%)</td>
<td>9 892 (20.18%)</td>
<td>13 850 (3.04%)</td>
<td>319 84 (7.18%)</td>
<td>224 55 (5.01%)</td>
<td>55 82 (12.37%)</td>
<td>64 8320</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
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P: - 24-25.