

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1: A Note on the Muslims of India

Indian population is composed of groups of varied backgrounds. Some of these groups are large enough and are well known, while some others are comparatively small or lesser known and living in segregation or relative isolation. From the very ancient periods, the reach economy and culture of India attracted restless tribes, conquerors, merchants and travelers of diverse creeds who did much to shape India's turbulent history. India is known for its different religious minorities among them the Muslims are very significant one. Being a principle minority and lesser known community the Muslims of India deserve social and scientific study but unfortunately research studies on them are quite scanty particularly in anthropology and sociology.

The spread of Islam and the development of Muslims in India were a multilayered phenomenon and followed different patterns in different regions of the country (Titus, 1959). The bulk of the Muslims in India have been drawn from the diverse segments of the Indian population. It was spread by other means rather by the sword and the conversion to the faith (Islam) was not a sudden switchover of faith. It was a process of two ways. In one way, Islam itself undergoes a change in the process of converting the Hindus or others and on the other the former may change to suit the latter (Eaton, 2000). Muhammad bin Quasim was considered the first Muslim invader of India but the real credit for establishing a Muslim rule in India was goes to Muhammad Ghorī who invaded India in 1191. There followed a succession of dynasties extending to the end of the Mughal era in 1857, a span of nearly 666 years (Gill, 2008). Through out this long span of Muslim rule, the strong appeal of the democratic social system of Islam

attracted the downtrodden peoples of the depressed caste of Hinduism to accept the new faith gradually. And it is to be believed that the present day Muslim populations of India are the result of the methods of peaceful penetration and constant efforts from Muslim missionaries (Titus, 1959). Islam came to Bengal comparative in a later period. The building up of Muslim society in Bengal was a long process of gradual growth. The composition of the society quite naturally differed from century to century with the immigration of foreign Muslims and the conversion of local people (Eaton, 2000). Islam entered in Bengal both by land and water. By land the Turkish conquerors came with their religion and culture, while the Arab traders came through waterway. About the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century, Bakhtiyar Khalji, a Turki general of the Delhi Sultan Kutubuddin Aibok, marched into Bihar and Bengal. He defeated Lakshman Sen of the Sen Dynasty and conquered large parts of Bengal. His military exploits in the east resulted in conversions to Islam. With the military occupation of Delhi by the Mughals, a fresh wave of Muslim migration to Bengal started (Mondal, 1994, 1997). These stream of Muslim invaders from various corners led expeditions and converted the common masses as well some Hindu Rajas respectively (Gill, 2008). These newly converted Muslim rulers and other officials played one of the most vital roles to propagate Islam and to constitute Muslim society in Bengal either by establishing marriage alliances or by the mass conversions of the indigenous peoples (Mondal, 1997).

The Muslims in India are sharply divided into three categories – *Asrafs*, *Ajlafs* and *Arzals*. The former have a superior status derived from their foreign ancestry. The *Asrafs*, or those who claim a foreign descent, are further divided into four castes, *Sayyads*, *Shiekhs*, *Mughals* and *Pathans*, in that order of rank. The *Ajlafs* are alleged to be converts from clean occupational castes of Hinduism, and are therefore drawn from the indigenous population. The *Arzals* are the

indigenous converts from unclean occupational castes and these last two categories in turn are divided into a number of occupational castes (Mondal, 1994). The term '*jat*', equivalent to '*jati*' in the Hindu caste system, is used to refer to caste like stratifications, and the *Asrafs* are referred to as '*oonchi jat*' (high caste) and the *Ajlafs* and *Arzals* are as '*neechi jat*' (low caste) respectively. Muslim *jats* are related to each other in a hierarchical manner and the superiority or inferiority of a *jat* is determined by the relatively pure or impure nature of the occupation associated with each.

Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in India (13.4%) and thus the largest religious minority according to 2001 census. India's Muslim population is amongst the largest in the world, exceeded only by Indonesia's. Numerically, the majority of the Muslims in India are living in four states UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Maharashtra which had at least ten million Muslims each. UP has the largest Muslim population in India with 22 percent of India's Muslims living there according to the 2001 census and the state West Bengal has a Muslim population of about 25.2 percent according to 2001 census. They are not only minority in numerical strength but also in terms of their socio-economic and political status. They are a backward community in terms of their education and participation in political and public affairs. In March 2005 the Hon'ble Prime Minister appointed Justice Rajindar Sachar to prepare a report on the socio-economic and educational condition of the Muslims in India and the report was published in November 2006. The report shows various statistics regarding the socio-economic condition of the Indian Muslims and recommended policies for improving or upliftment of the community. The Muslim Population has for historical reasons a more urban profile than the rest of the population. According to the 2001 census 35.7% of the Muslim population was urban compared to 27.8% for the overall population of the country. The report says that the Muslim child mortality in both indicators i.e., IMR (Infant mortality

rate) and U5MR (Under five mortality rate) is lower than the average of the overall population. The report attributes it to probably higher levels of urbanization among Indian Muslims and points out that within urban areas the Muslim child mortality rates is closer to the average mortality rates prevalent in urban India. The report endorses the various surveys such as NFHS-1, NFHS-2 and the Census which shows higher than average TFR (Total Fertility Rates) for Muslims when compared to the overall population. The TFR for Muslims is supposedly higher than the average for the rest of the population. The report stresses that the overall trend since the past two decades has been a decline in fertility rate among all religious groups including the Muslims (Sachar, 2006).

However, the bulk of the Indian Muslims are converted from depressed Hindu castes to Islam with the hope of escaping from the ritual degradation and caste oppression of Hindu society. But contrary to their expectations, these converted Muslims were subject to a variety of prejudices and discrimination by the Muslim upper classes. The conversion of these groups of people remained largely confined to the realm of faith and did not succeed in mitigating their socio-economic backwardness and exploitation. The Muslim elites merely took an interest in the religious education of these converts and did not encourage their modern education. As a result of their educational and social backwardness, these backward groups continue to practice their traditional menial and servicing occupations. Their representation in educational institutions and government jobs are grossly inadequate. These Muslims have been designated with similar groups of other religious communities as 'backward classes' by various commissions set up from time to time by the union and state governments and have been entitled to draw the benefits of reservations in government jobs and seats in educational institutions. Hence, there is a need of urgent study of these lesser known Muslim

communities for affirmative action for their social, economic and political development.

1.2: Background and Statement of the Problem

The Darjeeling Himalayan region is an example of social, cultural and religious diversity which creates interests for research studies on various Himalayan communities. The present study is an ethnographic and exploratory study of the Muslims, an obscure community of Darjeeling Himalaya. An effort has been made here to sketch an account of the society and culture of the Muslims through an extensive field work in the Himalayan town Darjeeling, West Bengal. The study helps to dispel an established monolithic believe regarding the social and cultural homogeneity of the Muslims and come to prove the differences in their religious ideologies, cultural practices and ethnic characters. All these differences constitute the Muslims society of Darjeeling Himalaya a heterogeneous outlook. In order to understand Islam and Muslims in Darjeeling Himalaya, it is of vital importance to look at these groups or social segments individuality, cultural practices and traditions.

Religion has always fascinated by anthropologists and sociologists since the beginning of these disciplines. It was a common perception that Anthropologists were interested only on studying tribe and ethnic groups. But it is not true in contemporary times although they initially focused mainly on the so-called 'primitive cultures'. Islam as a monotheistic believes was first attracted by the historians and they wrote a series of books on the history and development of the faith. Those days, anthropologists considered studying Islam less attractive than studying 'primitive' religions since many of them perceived Islam as lacking interesting cultural and symbolic features, such as complex symbolic rituals or ceremonies. In other words, Islam appeared too plain or simple to them to conduct study (Marranci, 2008). But in India anthropologists met Muslims mainly in urban

centers with complex kinships, lineages, and compound hereditary economics and social status which was totally deviated from their popular believe on Islam and Muslims. Thus for the first time they have needed a comparative approach for Muslim societies.

There are a good number of studies on caste or social segments and stratification of the Hindu society came into existence in the academic intelligentsia during the colonial times but research studies on Muslim societies in India were very scanty and inadequate. It may be broadly stated that it was the British who first realized the need of study the Muslims to understand thoroughly the people with whom they had constant transitions and daily intercourse in the relations of public officers, soldiers and subjects in administering the government of the country (Sharif: 1832). The British were interested mainly in mapping the phenomenon of distribution in space and social-cultural diversity of India and their accounts were always in the form of general ethnography. However, from the middle of the 19th century some gazetteers prepared by them have given some idea of the Muslim groups and their backgrounds in varying details. Most of the compilers of these glossaries such as Crooke (1896) and Risley (1891) deliberately referred to the Muslim groups as caste while Ibbetson (1883) have referred them as classes. Max Weber (1958) observed extreme assimilation of caste order in Indian Islam. Subsequently Hutton (1946), Smith (1947), Bose (1951) and Srinivas (1968) also notice caste or some of its elements in Indian Muslim society. All of them mainly viewed the Indian Muslim society from the perspective of caste which is the larger system embracing different religious communities in India.

However, within the dawn of the independence considerable interest in the advancement of research studies among the Muslims has been gradually increased for the academic as well as developmental necessities. Hence, their observations on the Muslim communities in India reveal the fact that the uniqueness of the Indian

Muslim society lies both in its structure as well as in its activities. It is noticed that empirically the Muslim society is deeply segmented in various orders and there are tremendous social divergences among them (Ahmed, 1973; Ansari, 1960; Bhattachariya, 1973; Marriott, 1960; Siddiqui, 1974, Mondal, 1994).

According to 2001 census the Muslims constituted 13.4 percent of the total population in India and became the largest minority community of the country. In west Bengal they constituted 25.2 percent of total population of the state. They are not only minority in numerical strength but also in terms of their socio-political status. They are a backward community in terms of their education and participation in political and public affairs. They inhabit in almost all the districts of West Bengal but a lowest concentration is in the district of Darjeeling. The district Darjeeling is divided into two parts on the basis of its topography - one is hill part and another is plains. The hill part consists three sub-divisions namely Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Where as the plain part consists only one sub-division i.e. Siliguri. The Darjeeling Himalayan region consists these three hill sub-divisions where Muslims are found concentrated majority in the Darjeeling Sadar subdivision and mostly in the town Darjeeling.

The social and cultural life of the Muslims in the multi-ethnic environment of the Darjeeling Himalayas shows a very distinctive character as it bears both the Islamic great tradition as well as the local or little traditions. The system of caste of the dominant Hindu society has a great impact on social and cultural life of the Muslims of this region. According to Mandelbun (1970:548) Indian Muslims share some of the basic socio-economic characteristic of the region in which they live in and which is reflected in their *jati* arrangement.

The Indian Muslims are broadly divided into three categories 1) *Asraf* or *Khas* who claim a foreign descent and 2) the *Ajlaf* or *Aam* i.e. the indigenous converts and 3) *Arzal* or *Raizal* i.e. degraded section,

though theoretically Islam advocates for an egalitarian social order. Superiority or inferiority of a *biradery* or caste like group is determined by the relative pure or impure nature of the occupation associated with each section. Siddique (1974) identified nearly 60 endogamous castes like ethnic groups among the Muslims of Kolkata. Mondal (1997) identified 15 important ethnic and occupational Muslim groups of Siliguri, a sub-Himalayan city of Darjeeling Himalaya. The census of India in 1901 listed 133 Muslim groups who had some features of Hindu caste system like hierarchy of social groups, endogamy and hereditary occupational activity etc. Some of these backward occupational groups those who belong to *Ajlaf* category are *Ansari* or *Jolha* (weaver), *Fakir* (religious mendicants), *Mansuri* or *Dhunia* (cotton carder), *Kureshi/Kasai* (butcher) etc. Many of these lower status Muslim social/ethnic/caste/occupational groups are currently placed under the category of OBCs. The Govt. of West Bengal identified eight such OBC Muslim groups on the basis of the nature of their occupation and the extent of backwardness among them. In March 2005 the Hon'ble Prime Minister appointed Justice Rajindar Sachar to prepare a report on the socio-economic and educational condition of the Muslims in India and the report was published in November 2006. The report shows various statistics regarding the socio-economic condition of the Indian Muslims and recommended policies for improving or upliftment of the community. The report was reviewed by Mondal (2007) and some others.

However, Darjeeling has a thriving Muslim population basically migrated since the colonial times. The establishment of Darjeeling and the economic opportunities available on there attracted marginal occupational groups of Muslims to migrate during the early colonial times. They have largely been a syncretic and pluralistic culture. From time to time they migrated from various regions and lived together along with the Nepalis and other hill communities in harmony. Because of the long history of contact and cohabitation with the

Nepalis or other hill communities, the Muslims of Darjeeling form a new type of identity intermingling of different cultural influences like language, literature, food, habit etc. They are quite similar to *Pahadis* in terms of language, appearance, and costumes. They claim that their culture is very much mixed with *Pahadi* ambience. Over time, they adopted typical *Pahadi* norms in clothes, language and cultural patterns, though not leaving their religious customs. In this context it is very important to know the dynamics of their identity and cultural process. The present study is an attempt to explore the social-cultural and economic features of the Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya in the light of the changing realities.

1.3: Important Concepts Used for the Present Study

1.3.1: Ethnic Group

The terms ethnic group is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, normally translated as “nation”. The terms refer currently to people thought to have common ancestry who share a distinctive culture. However, within the social sciences the usage has become more generalized to all human groups that explicitly regard themselves and are regarded by others as culturally distinctive. Among the first to bring the term “ethnic group” into social studies was the German sociologist Max Weber. He proposed a definition of ethnic group a human group that entertains a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both. Ethnic group is a term associated with a hereditary group which is defined by both its members and others as a separate people socially, biologically and culturally (Marriott, 1958; Mondal, 2006). According to Vivelo, ethnic group is a self perceived group of people who hold common set of culture and tradition which is not shared by others with whom they are in contact. This belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists (Weber, 1978).

1.3.2: Ethnography

The literal meaning of ethnography is “writing about peoples” (Barnard: 2007). Ethnography has its roots in social anthropology, which traditionally focused on small scale communities that were thought to share culturally specific beliefs and practices. Anthropologists used the word in two ways. On the one hand it refers to doing field work and taking notes. On the other, it refers to the practice of writing or to the finished writings themselves (Barnard: 2007). The world English Dictionary defines ethnography as a branch of anthropology that deals with the specific description of individual human societies. Ethnography indicates field work in a community usually by means of participant observation. The practice of ethnography usually involves fieldwork in which the ethnographer lives among the population being studied. At the conclusion of a period of fieldwork, the ethnographer writes about his or her experiences. The writing includes a catalog of daily life, along with a discussion of rituals, phenomena and an assortment of other events. (Ember & Ember, 2006)

1.3.3: Identity

Identity in its anthropological or sociological sense as a concept which brings together the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, the personal and the public worlds (Hall, 1992). For Hall here is at the same time a projection of oneself into a given cultural identity and the internalization of its meaning and values in a way which fixes identity to the subjective and objective, social and cultural positions one occupies (Hall, 1992). Identities are analytically complex to study because they are constructed and shifting, not fixed, entities, which can be negotiated, contested and reformulated as categories of representation (Kumar, 1997).

1.3.4: Islamization

It is a cultural process whereby groups and individuals distinguish themselves from non-Muslims by purifying themselves of the so-called un-Islamic customs and practices. It is a form of group mobility as well as individual mobility. It involves adoption of customs and practices of higher status Muslims. It initiates, to behave according to Islamic perception and it uses Islamic view of life as a model of living and code of conduct as an ideal type. The process of Islamization can be classed into four categories. First one is the upward social and cultural mobility in the status of groups through conversion to Islam. Second one is the adoption of customs and practices of the upper class Muslims or *asrafs* by the lower status Muslim groups of so called *azlaf* or *arzal* categories. Third is the adoption of religious orthodoxy by the Muslim groups and the fourth and last one is the adoption of some Islamic values and style of life by non Muslims due to acculturation (Mondal, 1988).

1.3.5: Marginal Community

The term "marginal" is borrowed from the discipline economics to apply in determining the position of human groups on a national scale of socio-cultural development within a society. The term "marginal community" indicates a group of people who because of their physical or cultural characters are single out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regarded themselves as objects of collective discrimination (Wirth: 1945). In case of Muslim communities in India the core element of the term are economic impoverishment, physical isolation and a conspicuously large content of pre-Islamic elements of culture in the form of little tradition, which helped in determining the marginal position of the group in the Muslim society (Siddiqui, 2004). The relative segregation or isolation of a group, its scanty numerical strength, impoverishment, occupational pursuits held in low social esteem as well as rigid maintenance of exclusive community

boundaries can be also to be taken as consideration of marginality of the group (Siddiqui, 2004).

1.3.6: Minority

Minority is an ancient social grouping after family according to anthropologists. In sociological context the term “minority” can be interpreted in terms of social relationship between larger and smaller; superior and inferior; and super-ordinate and subordinate. This relationship is based on social ranking or status within a stratified group or society which has become institutionalized and is generally accepted as legitimate (Massey, 2002). Glazer and Moynihan defines minority as a “groups of society characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent - forms a social life that are capable of renewing and transforming themselves” (Connor, 1984). The whole concept of ‘minority’ may be based either on primordial or instrumental point of views. Primordial point of view refers to identity and security where as instrumental perspective refers to the exploitation of identity factors by the vested interests which are used as a bargaining process for achieving desired results (Massey, 2002). The UN Convent on Civil and Political Rights mentioned in their article numbered 27 that there are objective and subjective criteria are used to understand the concept of minority. The objective identification criteria of a minority group are -

1. Group must be numerically less as compared to majority.
2. Determination must be based on population of that state.
3. The group must have certain stable constitutive features like race, religion, language or culture.
4. The group must be in a non-dominant position.
5. Members must be nationals of the country.

Where as subjective criteria for identifying minority refers to the will of the members of the group to preserve their constitutive features in relation to other members of the society (Massey, 2002).

1.3.7: Muslim *Jat*

The doctrine caste, a basic principle of Hindu religion, insists on a social segregation of groups to one another. There exists a well defined social hierarchy on the basis of their hereditary occupational specializations. However, the philosophy of caste is quite contradictory to the ideological beliefs of Islam which implicitly emphasizes equality and universal Muslim brotherhood. As the majority of the Indian Muslims are the indigenous converts, the social polity of the Muslims gradually began to split during the course of time on the lines of the already established Hindu caste system (Ansari, 1960). Castes among Muslims developed as the result of close contact with Hindu culture and Hindu converts to Islam. Those who are referred to as *Asrafs* are presumed to have a superior status derived from their foreign Arab ancestry, while the *Ajlafs* and *Arzals* are assumed to be converts from Hinduism, and have a lower status (Mondal, 1983). According to Mandelbun (1970) Indian Muslims share some of the basic socio-economic characteristic of the region in which they live in and which is reflected in their caste or jati arrangement. The Indian Muslims are broadly divided into three categories 1) *Asraf* or *Khas* who claim a foreign descent and 2) the *Ajlaf* or *Aam* i.e. the indigenous converts and 3) *Arzal* or *Raizal* i.e. degraded section, though theoretically Islam advocates for an egalitarian social order. Superiority or inferiority of a *biradery* or caste like group is determined by the relative pure or impure nature of the occupation associated with each section (Mondal, 1994; Siddiqui, 1974).

1.3.8: Other Backward Class and Muslim OBCs

Other Backward class is a collective term, used by the Government of India, for castes which are economically and socially disadvantaged. Sociological studies on the social structure of Muslims in India have emphasized on the presence of descent based social stratification among them. Features of the Hindu caste system, such as hierarchical ordering of social groups, endogamy and

hereditary occupation have been found to be amply present among the Indian Muslims. The census of India in 1901 listed 133 Muslim groups who had some features of Hindu caste system like hierarchy of social groups, endogamy and hereditary occupational activity etc. Some of these backward occupational groups those who belong to *Ajlaf* category are *Ansari* or *Jolha* (weaver), Fakir (religious mendicants), *Mansuri* or *Dhunia* (cotton carder), *Kureshi/Kasai* (butcher) etc. Many of these lower status Muslim social/ethnic/caste/occupational groups are currently placed under the category of OBCs. These Muslim groups as a result of their educational and social backwardness continue to practice their traditional menial and servicing occupations. Their representation in educational institutions and government jobs are grossly inadequate (Mondal, 2003).

1.4: Review of Literature

It may be broadly stated that it was the British who first realized the need of study of the Muslims and expressed a deep interest to prepare a concise book where a full account of all necessary rites, customs and usages observed by the *Musalman*s would be written in a familiar style for the Europeans who would not only read it but would derive much useful knowledge from its perusal to understand thoroughly a people with whom they had constant transitions and daily intercourse in the relations of public officers, soldiers and subjects in administering the government of the country (Sharif, 1832). Hence, on personal request from Dr. H. A. Herklots, a surgeon on the Madras establishment of the East India Company, Jafar Sharif wrote the book *Qanun-I-Islam* or the Customs of the Muslims in India in the year 1832 where he traces the customs, traditions, ceremonies, religious practices and superstitions imposed on Indian Muslims. The account begins with the ceremonies of the mother's pregnancy, rites performed by the parents during the maturity of the children and the ceremonies of matrimony followed by the fests and festivals which occurred in the different months of the year. The French and

Portuguese administrators also studied the social and cultural life of the Indian Muslims in their respective areas. One of the famous works was “Memoires Sur Dons L’Inde”. It was written by profound orientalist Monsiur Garcin de Tassy in 1832. The memoir was an attempt to show how Muslims in India have adopted certain religious practices which are in contravention of the Muslim scriptures. Ali (1832) on her “Observations on the *Mussulmauns* of India” described the social and cultural life of the Muslims who occupies the higher socio-economic position particularly the Shia sect of Muslim community residing in India. It was like the description of the practices and events, which she saw as a wife of a Shia Muslim family in Lucknow city.

From the middle of the 19th century some gazetteers prepared by the British administrators like Ibbetson (1883), Risley (1891), Crooke (1896) etc., have given some idea of the Muslim groups and their backgrounds in varying details. Their observations reveal that the system of caste of the dominant Hindu society has a great impact on social and cultural life of the Muslims of this sub-continent. On the basis of these observations, the census of India in 1901 listed 133 Muslim groups who had some features of Hindu caste system like hierarchy of social groups, endogamy and hereditary occupational activity.

In postcolonial period various Social Anthropologists and Sociologists have studied the Indian Muslim communities for the sake of academic necessities as well as for policy making and planning. However, their studies are categorized into three broad interrelated areas viz., Muslim social structure, sociological study of Islam in India, and the interaction of Muslims with non Muslims. Ghaus Ansari (1960) who in his book entitled “Muslim caste in Uttar Pradesh: A Study of culture contact” shows the origin, growth and development of caste system among the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh. Although his monograph was based on published census reports where he carefully identified

the existing castes among the Muslims and analyzed the structure of Muslim society. He had also discussed the inter-caste relationship within the community. Misra's (1963) work on the Muslim communities in Gujarat, which showed that there are 130 different Muslim communities in Gujarat, there, is virtually no work which brings out the variety of Muslim communities and their social organization in other parts of the country. Gupta (1956) and Ahmad (1962) also observed the system of caste and their hierarchical order among the Muslim of Northern India.

Since the late sixties of the last century scholars have devoted their attention to develop a theoretical framework as well as methodological conceptions for proper understanding the problem of their studies on Muslim society and also to go on the more contemporary situation. Ahmad's (1973, 1976 & 1984) work on Muslim social structure, family, marriage, kinship, rituals etc., are the best examples of that category which lead to the conclusion that social scientists are somehow interested in working on the Muslim social life and organization though a vast area of their identity issues are remained unexplored.

However, brief accounts of related works particularly on the social-cultural attributes of the Indian Muslims are discussed here. Reviews of some important studies associated on Muslims of Himalayas are noted below though no such serious Anthropological or Sociological studies were conducted among them.

1.4.1: Works on Muslims of India

Aggarwal's (1971) published monograph *Caste, Religion and Power on the Meos of Mewat, Rajasthan* is a well known monograph during his time where the research started with the interesting question of why the Meos, who for about 300 years had been nominal Muslims whose religious practices included many Hindu rituals,

became more committed to their Muslim identity after the partition, when the reverse might have been expected to happen.

Ahmed (1973) compiled a collection of 12 articles in his edited book "*Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*". Eminent Anthropologists and Sociologists from various corners of India contributed and focused on the concept of caste in Islam and the social stratification in Indian Muslim society. The papers were based on the empirical observations of the contributors.

Ahmad (1976) edited a book entitled "*Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India*" which was the second volume of the series of four on the social structure and religious beliefs of Muslims in India. There were 12 papers dealing with various aspects of family, marriage and kinship pattern of the Indian Muslims based on empirical field observations by the authors.

Ahmed (1984) edited a book entitled "*Rituals and Religion among Muslims in India*", in which various aspects of belief pattern and system of religious practices of Indian Muslims was critically examined. The focus of the book was on religion as the Muslim communities in India practice it. According to him the Islamic faiths in India are very much influenced by indigenous character.

Ali (1832) on her "*Observations on the Mussulmauns of India*" described the social and cultural life of the Muslims who occupies the higher socio-economic position particularly the Shi'ah sect of Muslim community residing in India. It was like the description of the practices and events, which she saw as a wife of a Shi'ah family in Lucknow city.

Ansari (1960) in his empirical study entitled "*Muslim caste in Uttar Pradesh: A Study of culture contact*" shows the origin, growth and development of caste system among the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh. He carefully identified the existing castes and analyzed the structure

10 MAY 2013

250635



of Muslim society. Author had also discussed the inter-caste relationship within the community.

Ansari (1989) edited the book "*The Muslim Situation in India*" which has examined the situations and problems of the Indian Muslims. The author critically analyzed the reasons of backwardness of the Muslim community in India.

Dube's (1969) *Matriliney and Islam on the Muslims of Lakshadweep* took up the theoretical issue of how a matri-lineal kinship system works in a society which otherwise adheres to Islam 'which in its ideology as well as in its prescriptions, mandates and injunctions assumes and emphasizes a patrilineal social structure

Famous nineteenth century French Indologists, Graeïn de Tassy's book is a pioneering work on the Islamic practices, customs and festivals of early Indian Muslims. De Tassy never visit India like many other early French Orientalists but was self taught. He learnt Urdu (Hindustani) and the book (Memoir) was an attempt to explore how the Muslims in India adopted certain religious customs and practices which had no sanction in Quran and not found in other Muslim countries. Originally the Memoire was written in French and published from Paris. But the present volume was translated from French to English by Waseem (Oxford: 1995) which contains to his reviews of Mrs. Hassan Ali's observations on the Musulmans of India (1831), and Jafar Sharif's "Qanoon-i-Islam" (1831) which were appeared respectively in *Nouveau Journal Asiatique* (June, 1832).

Hasnain (2009) in his edited book "Beyond Textual Islam" write about the ways of understanding the perception of Islam from a global view point. The book is composed of book views and field views to understand the Islam covering the Muslims of North Caucasus, Bosnia, Bangladesh and India There are two ways to understand the all about of Islam. The philosophical and theological view point was the "textual Islam" which was reflected from various books and scripts. And

another way was to understand the Islam from its contextual part i.e. from people's perspective. The historical development of the religion and the Muslims way of living under the guidance of 'Islam' was the focal point of contextual part. The book also revealed the fact that the followers of Islam i.e. the Muslims are not only follow the religious scriptures for their very survival but there are some thing beyond it. The book also discussed issues from Jihad, Rise and Fall of Muslim Empires, Islamic Democratic Theory, Ethnic Identity and Exogamy to Popular Islam and Misogyny, Modernization of Madrasa Education and aspects of livelihood of Indian Muslims.

Hunter (1871) in his famous book "*Indian Muslims*" described mainly the economic, social, educational life of the Muslims and also noted political issues of the Wahabi activists in India. Many Muslim intellectuals criticized his work at that time.

Imam (1975) edited a book entitled "*Muslims in India*" which contains 13 articles on different aspects of the Indian Muslims. Most of the paper were related to historical and political issues, socio-economic changes and a very few on the organizational structure of the Indian Muslims.

Miller (1976) has made a general portrayal or monograph of the *Mopilla* Muslim community of Malabar Coast with glimpses of their history and culture. The *Mopillas* with their ethnic individuality have left a rich legacy in the socio-historical sphere of Kerela. Their impact on Kerela's life and culture is significant. The authors made a brief note on the spread of Islam on the Southern India particularly the coastal regions of Malabar and their rivalry with the Portuguese.

Sharif (1975) on request of Dr. G.A. Herklots wrote the book "*Qanun-I-Islam*" in 1832 which was translated by Dr. Herklots in to English where the manners, social habits and religious rites of the Indian Muslims particularly the Muslims of Southern India were compiled. The book beautifully described the rituals from birth to

death including various festivals, dress, ornaments, foods, drinks, games, magical believes and practices of the Muslims of South India popularly known as *Dakshini* Muslims. The work was one of the oldest work on the customs and traditions of the Indian Muslims.

Titus (1930) has made a significant contribution on "*Islam in India and Pakistan: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan*" In his writings he systematically described the religious objectives of the Muslim conquerors, spread of Islam, organizational structure, religious orders as well as on interactions and interrelationship with the Hindus.

Basu (1985) has conducted an anthropological research on the slum dwelling Muslims of Calcutta during 1972-73 under the banner of Anthropological Survey of India and enlisted the findings in the book entitled "*Anthropological profile of the Muslims of Calcutta*". On the basis of some somatometric and somatoscopic observations he mainly examined the question of affinity within the Muslim groups as well as ethnicity and morphological variations. Many Muslim authors have also discussed the geographical variations, social groups and occupational activities of the Muslims on the basis of jati arrangement.

Bhattacharaya (1991) in his book "*Moslems of Rural Bengal: A study in social stratification and socio-cultural boundary maintenance*" has discussed the social stratification of the Bengali Muslim society particularly the Muslims of rural Birbhum. He noted that though theoretically Muslims form a egalitarian society, there are caste like stratification in practical life which is the result of the direct influence of dominant Hindu community living with them.

Mondal (1994) in his empirical study on "*Dynamics of Muslim Society*" presented an analysis of social organization, social structure, social stratifications and social segmentation of the Muslims of West Bengal in particular and India in general. According to him the social and cultural life Muslims displays a distinctive character as it is

influenced by both the Islamic great tradition as well as the Indian local traditions. He also critically analyzed the interaction of Islamic great tradition with the little traditions within the Islamic framework of Bengali Muslim society. The study also displayed the demographic, socio-economic and educational conditions of the Muslims.

Mondal (1997) conducted a field study in Siliguri town to examine the historical background and socio-demographic life of the Muslim community living in this sub-Himalayan city. He also discussed the nature of inter-relationship between these segments and their functional relationship with the city population. The nature of social identity and religious identity of the Muslims were also critically discussed by him.

Mondal (1997) in his book *“Educational Status of Muslims: Problems, Prospects and Priorities”* has beautifully analyzed the level of education, educational status, problems and prospects of Muslim education in West Bengal. Empirical facts for this study were collected from 6 villages of three different ecological settings of rural West Bengal. He also critically examined the relation between formal modern education and informal religious education. He identified various factors acting as barriers towards modern education among the Muslims in general and West Bengal in particular.

Mondal (2005) in his another comprehensive study on *“Rural Muslim Women”* has made a discussion on the condition of Muslim women in India with particular reference to North Bengal. He explained the role and status of the Muslim women within Muslim society, their socio-economic life and the changes and problems that they are facing in the line of contemporary changing global situation.

Siddique (1974) in his pioneer research work *“Muslims of Calcutta: A Study in Aspects of their Social Organization”* identified nearly 60 caste like ethnic groups among the Muslims of Calcutta city. He stated that most of the segmentations of the Muslims of Calcutta

are on the basis of nationality, regionality and ethnicity. He critically examined the higherarchy or social stratification among the Muslims. He also critically described the spiritual believes system and sacred places of the Calcutta Muslims.

1.4.2: Works on Muslims of Darjeeling and Adjoining Mountain Areas

Dastider (1995) in her book "*Religious Minorities in Nepal*" stated that the ethno-cultural affiliation of the Muslims in Nepal gives a distinct identity in a predominantly Hindu-Buddhist set up. She gives the demographical profile of the Muslim community of Nepal and raised various issues of their identity crisis, national integrity etc. She finally called for a new framework of study for ethnic and religious minorities of Nepal.

Dastider (2010) on her works among the Muslims of Nepal profiles the society and culture of the Muslims in a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural environment of Nepal, a predominantly Hindu kingdom of Eastern Himalaya. She raises various issues central to the projection of Nepal as a land of ethnic harmony.

Mondal (1997) has done an excellent research works among the Muslims of Eastern Himalayan region. In the article "*Muslims of Nepal: Aspects of Their Economy, Society and Culture in Relation to Habitat*", he carefully described the demographic details of the Muslims residing in Nepal. The paper also provided us the ethnic variations and socio-religious components of the Nepalese Muslims. He also discussed the inter-relationships of social segments within their religious framework and relation with the larger Nepali society.

Mondal (2000) made an interesting research work on the Muslims residing the mountainous state of Sikkim. In the paper "*Muslims of Sikkim*" he gives the socio-demographic profile and discussed the social structure, economic activities, social categories and identity dynamics of the Muslims of this Himalayan state.

Mondal (2001) has published another article entitled "*Tibetan Muslim refugees in India: The problem and prospect*". In this paper he mainly discussed the settlement, social organization, adaptation and the traumatic experience of the Tibetan Muslims in exile. He also critically raised some questions regarding the abuse of human rights of the Tibetans with special reference to Tibetan Muslims.

Mondal (2001) in his study "*The Muslim Minority in the Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan: A Socio-cultural Perspective*", has gave an ethnographic profile of the Muslims of Bhutan. Their socio-cultural life, occupational categories and the relationship with the larger Bhutanese society was also examined by him.

Mondal (2004) has given a brief profile about the Nepali Muslims residing in Eastern Himalayas. In his study he also discussed their origin, history as well as the society in an abridged form.

Nadwi (2004) was probably the first person to write a book on the socio-historical accounts of the Tibetan Muslims in Urdu which later translated in English and published in 2004. The translation was carefully done by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives from its original Urdu text "*Tibet and Tibbati Musalman*". The author in this book attempt to illustrate the historical accounts of the Muslim community in Tibet though the social cultural life with detailed description is invisible here. Tibet is the land of Buddhism and cut off almost all the global currents until the Chinese occupation during fifties of last century. Tibetan Muslims form a very visible segment of the Tibetan society. Their cultural contribution has helped to enrich many aspects of Tibetan civilization. The book has five parts or sections. The initial section of the book is about the origin of Tibet, its geographical location, climate, its early kings, people's life ways, and the emergence of Dalai Lama and so on. Second part narrates the propagation of Islam in Tibet, the early invasions and the history of early immigrant Muslims. According to Nadwi Tibetan Muslims

belongs to two distinct immigrants group - one group came from east which ultimately formed a group after marriage with ethnic inhabitants popularly known as Huis or Hopaling and the other came from Kashmir or Ladakh whose lives are very intimately connected with the Tibetan society. Popularly they form the Tibetan Muslim identity. They have their own society, council, economy. The third part is the historical mirror. Fourth section discussed the Chinese occupation in Tibet and the migration of Tibetans to India. And the last part gives us the picture of the problems and difficulties of the Tibetan Muslim refugees.

Siddiqa (1993) in her book "*Muslims of Nepal*" described the life and culture of the Muslims residing in the *Terai* and hill regions of Nepal. Their organizational structure, life style, gender issues and other problems were also discussed by her. This book is basically ethnography of Muslims of Nepal.

1.5: Research Gap

It is ubiquitous that the anthropological and sociological research studies among the Muslims in India are scanty because of the less attention by the Anthropologists and Sociologists. All the early works on the Indian Muslims are done by exclusively historians and obviously their approach was not sociological or anthropological. They only systematically describe the historical development of the Islam and Muslims in India. However, after independence some serious anthropological or sociological studies on them were initiated by some notable scholars where the differences between text and context are detected.

From above these reviews it is clear that the studies on the Muslims of Himalayan region particularly of the Eastern Himalayan part are scanty and inadequate. Only a few studies are available covering the historical, political and religious issues of Muslims of Nepal, Tibetan, Sikkim and Bhutan. But very little is known about the

socio-cultural dynamics of various Muslim groups, specially the marginal and weaker sections of Muslims of Darjeeling Himalayan region. Muslims in Darjeeling Himalaya consider themselves ethnically separate to some extent from the rest of Muslim communities in India and adjoining Himalayan regions. Thus this present study presents an excellent opportunity to study the economy, society, culture and identity of the Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya. It is expected that this research study certainly fill up the gaps in our knowledge about religious minority or more particularly the Muslims of Eastern Himalayas.

1.6: Aims and Objectives of the Present Study

The aim of the present study is to explore and examine the socio-cultural life of the Muslims living Darjeeling, an internationally known town of Eastern Himalaya. To delineate this basic aim the study has been framed to fulfill the following objectives.

1. To explore the origin of the Muslims i.e. the history of migration of the Muslims of Darjeeling Town.
2. To examine the demographic and socio-economic attributes of the Muslim groups living in Darjeeling town.
3. To explore the major economic activities of the Muslims living in Darjeeling town.
4. To examine the social structure and social organization of the Muslims living in Darjeeling town.
5. To examine the dynamics of their culture and identity.
6. To examine the role and status of women in Muslim Society of Darjeeling town.

1.7: Research Questions

Some research questions are formulated as per the aims and objectives of the present study. These are -

- ◆ Why the Muslims of Darjeeling is segmented into various orders or groups and how it persists though theoretically Islam advocates an egalitarian social order?
- ◆ What are the groups that constitute the social structure of the Darjeeling Muslim society?
- ◆ How the Muslim groups constitute the overall configuration of the Muslim society in Darjeeling.
- ◆ What are the major economic pursuits of the Muslims living in Darjeeling?
- ◆ What are the major cultural attributes of the Muslim groups associated with their life ways?
- ◆ What is the role and status of Muslim women?
- ◆ How the Muslims are accommodating with the changing realities of Darjeeling hills?

1.8: Research Methodology

1.8.1: The Locale of the Study

The present study has conducted at the town Darjeeling which is a mountain town situated at the Sadar sub-division of district Darjeeling. According to 2001 census the district has a least Muslim population of about five percent and the majority are concentrated only in two towns - one in hills i.e. Darjeeling town and another in plains i.e. in Siliguri town. The district Darjeeling is the northern most district of the state West Bengal, India which has four sub-divisions and out of four three are in Darjeeling Himalayan region. However, the title indicates that the present study is an exploratory work of the Muslims living in Darjeeling town.

The town Darjeeling lies in northern West Bengal of the district Darjeeling, India. The district lies between 26° 31' and 27° 13' north latitude and between 87° 59' and 88° 53' east longitude. Darjeeling stands at a height of 2134m (7053 ft) on a mountain ridge, Comprising mainly of mountain terrain. Almost every year Darjeeling's

temperature drops below freezing during the winter season, from November to February. In summer, Darjeeling is delightfully cool with the maximum temperature reaching about 20°C. Rain falls mostly during months from June to September. The annual recorded rainfall in Darjeeling is 320 cms.

There is a lack of authentic statistical account of the Muslim population and their migration to Darjeeling. Some secondary sources reveals that Darjeeling town has a thriving Muslim population since the colonial days. Arthur Campbell, a surgeon of the East India Company and Lieutenant Robert Napier were responsible for establishing the hill station Darjeeling. After that the development of Darjeeling as a sanatorium and health resort proceeded briskly. Campbell's efforts to develop the station, attract many people to cultivate the slopes and stimulate trade resulted in a hundredfold increase in the population of Darjeeling between 1835 and 1849 (Dash, 1947; Sen, 1989). The first road connecting the town with the plains was constructed between 1839 and 1842. In 1848, a military depot was set up for British soldiers, and the town became a municipality in 1850. Commercial cultivation of tea in the district began in 1856, and induced a number of British planters to settle there. Scottish missionaries undertook the construction of schools and welfare centers for the British residents, laying the foundation for Darjeeling's notability as a centre of education. All these above mentioned activities were actively or passively stimulus the migration to the town.

By the last decade of nineteenth century, Darjeeling was transformed from a sanatorium into a vibrant urban centre. Migration took place to the town. Initially migration was usually temporary i.e. migrated persons maintained a close link with their place of origin. The settlement pattern however, underlines a distinct element of racism and cultural isolation. During early colonial times native Indians were not allowed to enter the present *Chourasta* as of the European settlements. All the natives' houses were just below the

houses or places of Europeans. Even the palace of Bardhaman Maharaja was just below them where the marginal Muslims are dominated.

Table: 1.1

Religious Distribution, Darjeeling town - 1891

	Hindu	Christian	Muslim	Buddhist	Jain	Others*
Male	5535	363	1030	1937	28	30
Female	3073	161	268	1720	N.A.	N.A.

* category 'others' includes Sikh - 27 and Parsi - 3
(Ref. Census 1891)

If we look into the Darjeeling town's religious distribution of 1891 census (table: 1) we would found that most of the migrated communities were without females or low number of females. And more particularly the number of females was insignificant among the Muslims. Hence, it is to be clearly speculated that majority of these non-familial male Muslims later got married the local native hill girls and settled permanently at Darjeeling.

During the colonial times, Muslim households were only found at the present *Zakir Hussain Basti* or *Butcher Basti*. Later very few families built households at *Tungsung basti* and *Lebong* though the major concentration was in *Butcher basti*. For the present study household survey was conducted at *Butcher basti*, *Kakjhora*, *Lebong* and *Tungsung basti* and few others were found scattered. On the basis of their concentration, the Muslim habitation at the town is divided into three broad categories for the proper understanding of the present study. These are -

- ◆ High (more than 50 families)
- ◆ Medium (20-50 families)
- ◆ Low (less then 20 families)

Butcher basti (present name Dr. Zakir Hussain Basti) has the largest concentration of Muslim population. And it is categories as

only the single 'High' region because of the maximum number of families reside there permanently since the very inception of the town. It is now a multi ethnic locality but initially exclusively for the Muslim butchers and other Muslim occupational groups. According to the classification Kakjhora only falls under the category 'Medium' and considered as a very new habitation for the Muslims. Tibetan Muslim families are exclusively residing there. Lebong and Tungsung *basti* are considered as 'Low' as only a few i.e. less than 20 families are found to be residing there though these two locality are considered very old habitation for the Muslims of Darjeeling town.

1.8.1.1: History and Growth of Darjeeling Town

Darjeeling is a small mountainous town in the Darjeeling district of the Indian state of West Bengal and situated on the lower range of Eastern Himalaya. It is surrounded by the Indian state of Sikkim in the North, Nepal in the West and Bhutan in the East. The town is blessed with tranquil natural surroundings. One can view the enchanting beauty of the Himalayas, at the foot of which the town lies. The district Darjeeling lies between 26° 31' and 27° 13' north latitude and between 87° 59' and 88° 53' north longitude. The 'Queen of Hills', Darjeeling town is arguably the most popular tourist destination in northeast India, Situated at 2134m (7053 ft) mountain ridge. The town covers an area of 11.44 sq. kms. Almost every year Darjeeling's temperature drops below freezing line during the winter season, from November to February. In summer, Darjeeling is delightfully cool with the maximum temperature reaching about 20°C. The rain falls mostly during the months from June to September. The annual recorded rainfall in Darjeeling is 320 cms. *Tista, Great Rangit, Mechi, Balason, Mahananda, Lish, Gish, Chel, Ramman, Murti and Jaldhaka* are the major rivers of the district (Dash, 1947, Sen, 1989).

There are many opinions regarding the origin of the name Darjeeling. Some sources revealed the facts that the name 'Darjeeling'

came from the Tibetan words, '*dorje*' meaning thunderbolt and '*ling*' a place or land, hence it is the place of the land of the thunderbolt (Dash, 1947). Some other sources argue that the name Darjeeling derived from the word "*Dorje lama*", a Buddhist priest of extreme supernatural power who stayed at a "*Gumpha*" (monastery) near modern day *kachari* building (Dozey, 1916). A.L. Waddell who visited Darjeeling in 1889 informed that Darjeeling means "the cave of the Mystic Thunderbolt". Before the British ownership to Darjeeling, the then king of Sikkim *Fun-So-Nayam-Gay* builds a "*Gumpha*" at the observatory or *Mahakal pahar* of Darjeeling. According to Lepcha tradition Darjeeling derived from the combination of three word - "*rdo*" meaning stone, "*rje*" meaning noble or valuable or precious or sacred and '*gling*' meaning place or continent. So the Lepchas believed that it was a religious place for Tibetan Buddhist Lama's who have the precious or sacred stone '*rdorjee*'. Some other views states the fact that Darjeeling is a corrupted form of a Sanskrit word '*Durjoy Linga*' of Hindu mythical god Shiva or the undefeated mountain peak. However the British administrators later made '*Dorjee - ling*' or '*Dorje - lama*' or '*Durjoy - linga*' to Darjeeling (Dash, 1947; Ojha, 1997; O'Mally, 1907; Sen, 1989).

The District Darjeeling is composed of 4 subdivisions - Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and Siliguri. The first three subdivisions composed the Darjeeling Himalayan or hill regions and the last one is the plain. Until the beginning of the 18th century the area around present day Darjeeling district (including hills and plain) was a part of the Kingdom of Sikkim. The tract was full of forests and jungles. The aggressive *Gurkhas* of Nepal took over the rule to the present day Darjeeling for a long period of time. These annexations by the *Gurkhas*, however, brought them into conflict with the East India Company. War between Nepal and East India Company (Anglo-Nepalese War) broke out in 1814 and came to an end in 1815 with the defeat of the Nepalese and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of

Sugauli. Resulting, East India Company signed another treaty with Sikkim in 1817 known as the Treaty of *Titalia* in which former territories, which the Nepalese captured, were restored to the King of Sikkim and the country's sovereignty guaranteed by the British in return for British control over any disputes which arose with neighboring states. In 1828, a dispute occurred between Nepal and Sikkim. The then Governor General sent two Officers — Captain Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Grant to help resolve the dispute. They found the Darjeeling region very suitable as a sanitarium for British troops and also its military significance. So the company negotiated with the king of Sikkim to lease the area. Following a lot of pressure from the British, Sikkim finally in 1835 gifted Darjeeling to British India against an annual payment (Dozey, 1916; Dash, 1947; Ojha, 1997; O'Mally, 1907; Sen, 1989)

After that the tract Darjeeling appears to have become autonomous in structure and in hybridization of its culture. During those periods the tract Darjeeling was known as “British Sikkim” and became a buffer between Nepal and Bhutan. Having acquired the tract Darjeeling, Captain Lloyd and Dr. Chapman were sent in 1836 to explore the tract and to investigate the capabilities of the place as a hill station. They spent the winter of 1836 and a part of 1837 here and on the basis of their report it was decided by the East India Company to adopt Darjeeling as a sanatorium (Sen, 1989). In 1840 Dr. Alexander Campbell, the British Resident in Nepal was transferred to Darjeeling as Superintendent. Dr. Campbell spent last 22 years of his service as Superintendent of Darjeeling and devoted himself to the task of developing the station, attracting immigrants to cultivate the mountain slopes and stimulating trade and commerce. Every encouragement was given to the settlers and immigrants from the neighbouring states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, where Rajas were despotic and where slavery was prevalent. Dr. Campbell actually tries to render Darjeeling not only a sanitarium for the British troops but

also a commercial centre for traders. Surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and Sikkim, Darjeeling had an opportunity to develop as an entry port of Central Asian trade as the challenges of Tibet as a potential centre of trans-Himalayan trade was irresistible. W.B. Jackson, an inspecting officer, wrote in 1852 (Ojha, 1997; Sen, 1989)

“What has been done here, has been done by Dr. Campbell alone. He found Darjeeling an inaccessible tract of forest, with a very scanty population by his exertions an excellent sanitarium has been established for troops and others; a Hill Corps has been established for the maintenance of order and improvement of communications; no less than 70 European houses have been built, with a bazaar, jail and building for the accommodation of the sick in the depot; a revenue of Rs.50,000 has been raised and is collected punctually and without balance, a simple system of administration of justice has been introduced, well adapted to the character of the tribes with whom he had to deal; the system of forced labour formerly in use has been abolished and labour with all other valuables has been left to find its own price in an open market; roads have been made; experimental cultivation of tea and coffee has been introduced and various European fruits and grapes; and this has been effected at the same time that the various tribes of inhabitants have been conciliated and their habits and prejudices treated with caution and forbearance which will render further progress in the same direction an easy task.”

From 1860 onwards, the rapid growth of tea industry made a drastic change in the growth and development of Darjeeling town in particular. Various communities of different creeds and ethnic backgrounds attracted to its rapid urbanization process came and settled permanently and developed a cultural complex for their survival interest in spite of their cultural differences. Some trading communities like the Tibetans, Biharis, Marwaris and a considerable number of marginal Muslim communities used to come to the town for business purposes as seasonal migrants. Some times these non-

familial single male individuals settled permanently to marry the local girls. A large number of Nepali communities from Nepal settled Darjeeling as the labourers of tea estates. During the year 1849, population rose from 100 to 10,000 and the population was found to be more than 22,000 when a rough census was taken in the year 1869. This was due to the huge influx of the immigrants and migrants noted by Sir Joseph Hooker (Dash, 1947).

The land acquired by the British government was named as district Darjeeling (officially recognized as a district in 1840) and included in the Rajsahi division until October 1905 and transferred to the Bhagalpur division as a result of *Bangavanga* (partition of Bengal). With the rearrangement of the provinces in 1912, it was again retransferred to the Rajsahi division and since then it is in the jurisdiction of the said division until the year of India's independence. The independence of India in 1947 saw the district Darjeeling being merged with the state of West Bengal consisting of the hilly towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and some parts of the plains including Siliguri (Dash, 1947; Ojha, 1997; Sen, 1989).

1.8.1.2: Ethnic Composition of Darjeeling Town

The ethnic and social plurality is perhaps the most powerful demonstration of Darjeeling Himalayan town. The social groups of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds create a cultural mosaic with ethnic distinctiveness. Various racial groups mostly of mongoloids constitute the social contour of Darjeeling Himalayan society. Majority of them are of Nepali speaking caste and tribe groups along with some Lepchas, Bhutias and Tibetan Buddhists. Apart from this, many communities from plains like Bengali, Bihari and some Marwari families of both Hindu and Muslim origin are also accommodated within the social contour of the Darjeeling hill town. The region has now populated by lacks of people belonging to different creeds and ethnic varieties but there were not more than thousand inhabitants

when the East India Company first came into contact with the place. It was reported by them that the original inhabitants of the Darjeeling hills are the Lepchas (O'Mally, 1907; Dash, 1947).

1.8.1.3: Muslim Localities of Darjeeling Town

The present study is conducted among the Muslim groups living in five settlements of Darjeeling town which includes Butcher *basti*, *Kakjhora*, *Tungsung basti*, *Darogabazar* and *Lebong*. Out of all these five settlements, Butcher *basti* is the largest settlements where Muslims are living since the very inception of the town. The rest localities are developed gradually after the expansion of Muslim families by marriage. However, on the basis of the population concentration, the Muslim habitation at the town may be divided into three broad categories. These are - high concentration (more than 50 families) which includes only Butcher *basti*, medium concentration (20-50 families) which includes only *Kakjhora* and low concentration (less than 20 families) which includes the families together living in *Tungsung*, *Lebong* and *Darogabazar*.

1.8.2: Conceptual Framework

Ethnographic studies among the Muslims are a very recent development in India where an in depth understanding of history, society, culture, economy, values and traditions of a group or community is obtained. Hence, the theoretical frameworks as well as the methodological conceptions are thus limited for studying the Muslim society. However, it is the late fifties of the last century, a few scholars of both the India and abroad has paid much attention for studying Muslims and their works certainly bridge the gap in the existing monolithic ideas of our knowledge about the Muslims and their society. The present study is categorized as exploratory and descriptive as it intends to gather preliminary information of the Muslims living in Darjeeling. Being an ethnographic enquiry of the Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya the present study has a holistic

approach that perceives human action is a part of whole system where individual and social actions are conceptualized as the manifestation of cultural standards and principles of social-cultural system. The principle of the study has been carried out primarily on the basis of structural functional approach for which extensive and intensive field work has been carried out. The covert (Islamic ideology or textual Islam) and overt (local traditions or live Islam) aspects of the society is also examined as an existing phenomena. The differences between text and context have been focused in the study as the Muslim society in India is deeply fragmented into various social orders.

1.8.3: Research Design

The design of the present research has been formulated on the basis of the nature of the topic. Tools and techniques of data collection have been decided on the basis of study area and the people of the study as per aims and objectives. The study is exploratory in nature and categorized as descriptive research with diagnostic outlook based on Anthropological approach in a holistic manner. The study is a primary research i.e. data has been collected from field yet in some cases data has been supplemented by secondary sources. Hence, the approach of the study is primarily structural-functional to understand the overall configuration of the Muslim society in Darjeeling town. The present thesis is the result of my intensive field work during the period between 2007 to 2011 at the town Darjeeling. The Muslims living in the town are the focal theme of this study. In mid September 2007, I visit Darjeeling town for the first time as pilot survey for my present study. During my one week stay in one of my friend's house at the town, I met some influential Muslims who were prominent figures in Darjeeling Muslim society. Among them *Janab* Md. Ali Akhter is a prominent social activist among the Muslims and was the then secretary of *Anjuman-E-Islamia* who gave me permission to stay at *Anjuman* Guest House whenever I want with free of cost. I visited all the major and minor concentration of Muslim families in the town and

returned from the field after a week and reviewed some available literatures to prepare my synopsis for Ph.D. registration.

I started my full fledged doctoral field work in mid November 2008 after the registration of my Ph.D. topic and which was delayed as because of some political disturbances of Gorkhaland movement at Darjeeling hill regions. Therefore, I had to visit Darjeeling town several times and had to complete my field work in many successful and unsuccessful field trips from 2008 to February 2011.

1.8.4: Selection of the Informant

Empirical data has been collected exclusively from the Muslims living permanently in Darjeeling town at least of three generations for this present study. Temporary settlers or seasonally migrated families have totally been expelled for this study. To map out the households or families of the Muslim ethnic or social groups, kinship linkage has taken into consideration and persons living under the same roof have considered being a household. Basic socio-economic information has collected from the senior member of the households or the adult members. The names of the household heads often collected from the *Anjuman-E-Islamia* office as a good number of old Muslim families of the town are the life members of *Anjuman*. There are approximately 500 permanent Muslim households living in Darjeeling town which was given to me as an unofficial record from Darjeeling Municipality and *Anjuman-E-Islamia* office. For the present study, approximately 30 percent of these households were taken into consideration. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the households as well as the informants or respondents. In many cases age old male and female were my informants or respondents. To collect an overview of the Muslims in the town some non Muslim individuals were also interviewed. Two types of informants were selected for this study – one is the key informants and second one is the occasional helpers or informants. To obtain the necessary information regarding the rite de

passage of the Muslim groups the key informants were selected and interviewed. They were also used for furnishing most of the qualitative data on the basis of some set of questions framed for the present research.

1.8.5: Rapport Establishment

The present empirical study was depends primarily on the informants i.e. the Muslims of Darjeeling town. Naturally before entering to start my fieldwork among them, there was a process of easy and friendly relationship between the informants i.e. the Muslims and the researcher i.e. me where the art of establishing rapport was very crucial for me as there was a year long agitation for a separate administrative setup for the Nepali speaking ethnic communities. There was no hard and fast rule for the same but finally I convinced them about my conscious choice and decision of my research topic. Initially I went to some influential Muslim personnel's of Darjeeling who were my key informants. I explained them my objectives and finally convinced them to provide me information. Repeatedly I visit to my field area and made them convinced that providing data would not harm them in the complex process of the existing Gorkhaland movement of the Darjeeling hill regions.

1.8.6: Sources of Data

As the study is an exploratory or descriptive one, first hand primary data has been collected from the field. Secondary data from various sources has also been accommodated to furnish the thesis. Standard Anthropological tools and techniques were adopted for collecting data from the field. Data from relevant published books, journals and old census reports has used to furnish the present thesis.

1.8.6.1: Primary Sources

The primary data for the study was collected through intensive field work among the Muslims of Darjeeling town. Standard anthropological tools and techniques were adopted for the same. A

schedule was prepared for conducting household census survey and basic socio-economic data was collected. Thereafter key informants were interviewed both in the form of structured and unstructured. Case study method was adopted for collecting primary data regarding the rite de passage of the Muslim groups, women status and other cultural aspects. Finally observation was an important tool to uncover the social and material condition of the Muslim communities living in Darjeeling town.

1.8.6.2: Secondary Sources

Secondary data from various published and unpublished materials were consulted to furnish this thesis. Published books, book chapters, journal articles, unpublished Ph.D. thesis and various census reports along with some statistical hand books were considered as secondary sources for the study.

1.8.7: Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The study is based on data collected through intensive field investigation. Both primary and secondary data has been collected. The primary data has been collected through anthropological tools and techniques, viz. census survey, interview, case study, genealogy and observation. The census schedule was prepared for collecting basic demographic and socio-economic characteristic of the Muslims living in Darjeeling town. Observation at the 'field' includes two objects space and item at observation. In physical science, space is the laboratory and item of observation are specimen. But in social anthropology space is the society and item at observation is the relation. I took part in various functions, daily activities and rituals as a participant observer. Both the structured and unstructured interview was taken as a part of data collection from the field. Genealogical method helped in tracing ancestral places and occupational mobility of the Muslims. Finally case studies have been playing a key role in

collecting various important data viz. *rite de passage*, history of migration, inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic relationship, and etc.

1.8.8: Data Processing and Data Analysis

As the study is an explorative or descriptive type, majority of the collected data are qualitative though quantitative data are also present. The data has been analyzed on the basis of qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative facts have analyzed on the basis of systematic description of the facts while the quantitative data have mostly analyzed through tabulation and standard descriptive statistical techniques.

1.8.9: Organization of Chapters

The thesis contains nine chapters on the basis of in-depth field studies among the Muslims living in Darjeeling town.

The first chapter is Introduction which introduces the problem including the background, a brief description of major concept used in the study, review of literature, research gap, aims and objective along with some research questions of the study, research methodology, research ethics, significance of the study and limitations of the study were described.

Chapter 2 provides the historical process of the Muslims in India in general and Darjeeling hill in particular. Here a profile of the historical development of Muslim communities in Darjeeling town has depicted.

Chapter 3 depicted the socio-economic and demographic profile of the Muslims of Darjeeling on the basis of collected data from sample population.

Chapter 4 is the economic profile of the Muslims communities of Darjeeling town where the major economic activities along with the economic status of different Muslim group is discussed.

Chapter 5 deals with the social structure and organization of the Muslims where the diversification of Muslim society is depicted on the

basis of tradition, spiritualism and regional characters. The family, marriage and kinship pattern of the Muslim communities is also analyzed in a systematic way. The notion of social gradation and inter-ethnic stratification along with interrelationship of social segments of the Muslim society is also discussed.

Chapter 6 contains the Cultural attributes of different Muslim groups and dynamics of their Identities. Their dress, food and life cycle rituals are discussed in a comprehensive way according to group wise. Apart from this the major Muslim festivals organized by the Muslim groups of the town is also discussed.

Chapter 7 provides the role and status of Muslim women living in Darjeeling hill. There are four major sub-headings in this chapter by which a profile of the Muslim women is depicted

Chapter 8 deals with the multidimensional processes of the Muslims adaptation and integration with the greater society of Darjeeling Himalaya. It also explains some of their determinants like socio-economic adaptation, social integration, cultural syncretism and their participation in inter-ethnic associations.

Chapter 9 confers on major findings, concluding remarks and some aspirations and hopes regarding their crisis which prepared on the basis of produced data presented in the above said systematically arranged chapters of the thesis.

1.9: Research Ethics

Anthropologists have been conducting fieldwork for the documentation of human variation. But the Anthropological research presents some unique problems that are not encountered in any other kind of academic research as we the Anthropologists always study the "other". Here a code of ethics should be remembered while conducting field work in a community. Research ethics means guidelines or codes for fieldwork that is to be saying that an anthropologist should do no

harm to a study population. An ethical behavior goes beyond simply “not harming” his study populations i.e. respect for persons, respect for their culture, not to say anything which hurt them etc. For the present study I spend more and more time among them during the times of my field work and the data were collected after prior consent of the informants. A detailed explanation of the objective of research was given to my informants while visiting their households. I stayed in the mosque and never allow the Muslims of Darjeeling town to think that I am a stranger to them.

1.10: Significance of the Study

The present study on “Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya: Aspects of their Economy, Society, Culture and Identity” is exploratory in its nature and is expected to provide a scientific information and insights about the Muslims of Darjeeling Himalaya or more particularly the Muslims living in Darjeeling town. The data collected from the field will in fact provide a guideline for the researcher, planner and administrators belonging to various fields and departments. The findings of the present study will surely enhance the knowledge about a backward community like Muslims in Darjeeling as there is no proper information. The study made an attempt to present an ethnographic detail of the Muslims living in Darjeeling Himalaya. Afterwards an effort is made to give an idea of the integration of the Muslims within the larger framework of the Himalayan society particularly the Darjeeling Himalayan society.

The NGOs and social workers working in the sector of community development can also use this study for developing welfare projects for these peoples as Muslims are considered as a backward community in terms of their society, economy and education. The findings of the study shall help information of planning's and policies for the Muslims as well as for the Darjeeling town itself.

1.11: Problems and Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations and problems in this present study. Firstly due to lack of secondary sources on the Muslims living in Darjeeling hills it was very difficult to collect appropriate introductory information about the Muslims under study. And secondly when I started my field work, the re-emergence of *Gorkhaland* movement has just initiated. The indefinite strikes declared by *Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha* hampered me a lot while doing field work at Darjeeling town. Some times I had to leave the station as of their sudden indefinite strikes. And moreover due to the political situation of the hills the Muslim of Darjeeling town initially did not take me easily as I am a stranger from the plains of Bengal. So a long period of time was spent to rapport with them. I spent almost the first and second phase of my field work in building rapport with the peoples and the local political leaders of both the Muslims and Nepalis. I had to convince these people by stating the fact that the data obtained from them is only for the sake of my individual research and some secrecy regarding their religious sects and sub sects should strictly be maintained from their other co-religionists. Thirdly the language but any way I learnt a little bit Nepali (which I learnt earlier days from my Nepali friend during my stay at North Bengal University student's Hostel as a student of PG course) or Urdu for the successful communication with the informants during my field visit. Finally some cultural events has not observed as a participant observer though I took residence among them in the *Anjuman* guest house sharing their food and observed their life way activities whenever and wherever chanced received. However, irrespective of all these limitations and problems, I have tried to spend more and more time with themselves during my field stay at Darjeeling. Apart from this I hope this study will surely become an ethnographic detail of the Muslims living in Darjeeling Himalaya.