

## Chapter – 3

### Muslims of Tripura : A Profile

This is an investigation into the demographic and socio-cultural profile of the Muslim inhabitants in the old territory like Tripura characterized by monarchy to democracy. In other words, it is a peep into the past and look into the present of the Muslim inhabitants to have a general idea about the overall conditions of the people. Under the demographic heads, investigation is on the inception of their settlement in the territory and the growth of population as scientifically recorded from 1901 to 2001. While under the socio-cultural heads, there is discussion on the society-structure, the economic pursuits, status of education, political awareness and participation from the past to present, their religious identity, groups, welfare activities and the personalities among the community people. All these are relevant to assess their position in the midst of the multi-ethnic society of Tripura during the long time of history. Before going to the main focus of our present study, this is a venture for the first time to have a preliminary knowledge about the community people.

#### **3.1. Tripura - A North-Eastern State in India :**

Geologically, the territory of Tripura is as old as forty million years. It has risen from the sea-bed about forty million years ago. The soil of the plain lands of west and south Tripura proves that these were submerged in the ocean in the near past. Tripura, Assam and Bengal, these three lands of the north-east region of India, were submerged in the ocean. Then the rise of the Himalaya gave birth of two rivers—the Ganges and Bramhaputra. In course of time, the poli-soil of these two rivers took the shape of a vast land and a tiny portion of that land was named Tripura. The ocean turned to the south. Tripura falls within the Assam-Arakan geological zone (*Ganchaudhury:1985*).

Geographically, Tripura lies between two larger provinces of Bengal and Assam. According to **Majumdar** (1973) ‘The newly formed kingdom was lying between

Chittagong and Sylhet' (quoted in **Roy Chowdhury**:1998) It is a land-locked hilly state of the union of India. The political boundary is bounded by the international boundary of Bangladesh on the north by Sylhet district, on the south by Chittagong and Arakan, on the west by Comilla and on the east by Burma. Only on the north-east border, Tripura meets Assam and Mizoram. Tripura is accessible only through the Cachar district of Assam. In other words, Tripura lies in the west of Assam, west of Mizoram, north-west of Arakan and north-east of the Bay of Bengal. The total area of the territory is 4116 sq. miles with 31, 91,168 populations at present. The climate of Tripura is like that of the north-eastern states and Bangladesh. The land of Tripura consists of mainly two parts, i.e. – Hills in the east, and Plains in the west. There are six major hills, several rivers and many rivulets in Tripura. The greater part of the land is forest which is mainly inhabited by the wild animals, elephants being one of them. Tripura was once famous for its variety of elephants and its abundance.

In respect of communication Tripura is backward for its peculiar geographical location with the international boundary of Bangladesh on its three sides. The Partition of India and the dissection of *Chakla Rosonabad* (the indespensable part of Princely Tripura) are responsible for this. Besides, rugged topography is positively a hindrance to the development of communication. Due to this rugged nature of the territory, the state is not adequately served by railway. The backwardness in communication of Tripura is a legacy of the past. "Tripura had been much bigger than it is now. It had bordered with the China Hill in the north and Burma (modern Mayan mar) on the east" and "Between 1781 and 1835 the Kingdom of Ava (Burma) was unquestionably recognized as the Eastern Boundary of the Tippera State" and also, "the Lushai Land, east of Manipur was once considered to belong to Tripura" (**Debbarman**:2002). Under this extended area of Kingdom, the rulers of the land were indifferent as well as incapable for the development of modern communication system. They had well connection with the main centers of the plain land of Bengal and sometimes they were able to extend their suzerainty over those areas, such as Comilla and Sylhet. In

that time, Comilla was known as ‘Tripura’. It was only in the British period, first initiative for the construction of roads and railways had been taken by the native rulers with the collaboration of the British. (**Debbarman** compiled, 2002).

The present principal and internal communication of Tripura depends on motor vehicles – bus and auto services. Tripura is connected with Assam and other sister states of north-east by airways, railways and roadways of the national highway no. 44. There is a daily air service (Indian Airlines) between Agartala and Kolkata.

### **3.2. The Peoples of Tripura : Ethnic groups and Religious communities :**

The peoples of Tripura are normally categorised in two major ethnic communities, viz. the Bengalis and the Tribal. The other minority ethnic groups are the Manipuri and Assamese from north-east, the Sikhs, Jain and Gujrati from west, the Oriya (Orissa) and the Bihar-i (Bihar) from east, the Telegue (Andhra), Tamil, Keralian (Malayalam) and the Marathi from south.

The major nineteen Tribes of Tripura are the Scheduled Tribes divided into Indigenous and Non-Indigenous. There are six non-indigenous tribes like *Sānthal*, *Orāng*, *Mundā*, *Bhutiā*, *Lepchā* and *Bhil* who came in Tripura as tea garden labourers from Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. They settled here permanently retaining their own language and culture. Among the thirteen indigenous tribes, the nine are of similar ethnological characteristics and identical culture and social traits, i.e. *Tripuri*, *Reangs*, *Jamatia*, *Noatia*, *Halam*, *Kuki*, *Lushai*, *Mog* and *Chakma*. Kokborak is their mother tongue. The rest four, i.e. the *Garos*, *Uchai*, *Chaimal* and *Khasia* are from north-east. All these tribes also have branches and sub-branches. In the economic pursuits, they are mainly agriculturalist– Jum cultivators as well as plain cultivators. But the traditional self sufficient economy of the tribes has been affected in the changing condition of Tripura. Now, a good number of them are in government services.

There are a good number of Manipuri people in Tripura. They originally came from Manipur during the Lushai and Burmese invasion of Manipur in 1824 A.D.

They emigrated through Cachar and Srihatta (Sylhet). Their matrimonial relationship with the royal family of Tripura is one of the causes of their settlement in Tripura. The Bengalis of Tripura consisting of both Hindu and Muslims came from eastern and southern Bengal and the plain Tripura (the Chakla Rosanabad) since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They are found in different occupations and services. Since the monarchical period, the Bengalis have valuable contribution to the development of the state. The record of Administration of Bengal (1888-89) says that the trade of the country was in the hands of the Bengalis. In agriculture, Jum cultivation is replaced by their developed plain cultivation. In all spheres of life, i.e. education, administration and politics, Bengalis are in the dominant role and position.

By religion, the people of Tripura are mainly divided into Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Sikh and Jain. Hinduism is the main religion of Tripura. Majority people are Hindus. They are the Bengali, Manipuri and many tribes of Tripura. The tribes in their religious practices are divided into Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. There is a small number of Baisnab under the fold of Hinduism. No Islamisation is found among the tribals of the state.

Though the Mughals of Bengal ruled at Udaipur for quite some times in 1618 during the reign of the emperor Jahangir at Delhi, Islam could not penetrate among the tribes. One of the reasons may be, as pointed out by a scholar that “frequent Muslim invasion against Tripura from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century created a bitter antipathy among the tribes towards the Mughal Pathan and their religion” (Bhowmik 2003). Another rational explanation may be noted here. Before the introduction of Islam in the medieval period, the tribes were introduced with Hinduism, Buddhism and Shakta vs. Vaishnavism. The animist tribes have already devoted themselves to the developed religion and culture. Unlike the low strata people of Hindu caste hierarchy which provided the fertile soil for conversion, the tribes had no problem of status i.e. untouched ability or any other grievance. The invader Muslims also did not enter into the Hill sector with any missionary zeal like the Christian Missionaries. “The

Mohamadan never troubled themselves about the hills but they assessed the plains to revenue and the East India Company followed their examples" (**District Gazetteer**: 1975). These may be reasons for why Islam could not break their faith. The people followed Jainism and Sikhism form a very negligible part of the population of Tripura Ref : (Table 3.1). The Jain from Rajasthan has increased during the last four decades because of their growing business in Tripura. While the Sikhs from Punjab have increased during last two decades only due to the oil exploration work undertaken by the ONGC in Tripura.

**Table 3.1**  
**Tripura - Population and Proportion by Religious Communities**  
**(1901, 1961, 1981, 2001)**

Year	Total Population	Hindu	Muslim	Buddhist	Christian	Jain	Sikh
1901	1,73,325	68.77	26.15	3.46	0.08	0	0
1961	11,42,005	76.00	20.14	2.95	0.88	0.02	0.0042
1981	20,53,058	89.34	6.75	2.67	1.21	0.01	0.013
2001	31,99,203	85.62	7.95	3.09	3.20	0.01	0.04

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 1901 to 2001

The Table no. 3.1 shows that in 1901, Muslims were 26.15 percent of the total population while Hindus were 68.77 percent. But the Census report of 1874-75 distinguishing between Hindu and Manipuri, shows that out of total 74,242 population of Tripura, Muslims were 14,224 while Hindus were only 4,339, the Manipuri Hindus were 7,045 the tribal population was 42,345, and others were 6,173 (**Debbarmen**; 1310 T.E.). It means Muslims were the larger than the Bengali Hindus at that time.

### **3.3. Historical Backdrop and Growth of Muslim Population :**

In Tripura Muslims are called Mosolmans. The earliest statistics on them is available in the census report of 1874 in the British period. But they are the inhabitants of Tripura (formerly Hill Tipperah) for several centuries. As a result, 'they were found in every part of the District Tipperah' (ruled by the British) as well as the Hill Tipperah called *Swadhin* Tripura—the Kingdom. The history of Tripura relates to three distinct periods: the ancient period as described in the *Rajmala* (the chronicles of the kings of

Tipperah) and the medieval as well as the modern period supported by the history of India as written by the Mohamadan and British historians as well as the historians of Tripura. The early history of Muslim settlement in Tripura may be inferred from the writings of some historians who followed the record of Rajmala. According to them, it was in 1279 A.D, prince Ratna-fa took the help of Gaur and his forces to conquer the kingdom of Tipperah where his brothers were reigning. After conquering, he brought a good number of Mohamadan families along with a good number of different caste Hindus and arranged them for permanent settlement in different parts of the land. Although from so early date as 1279 A.D, the Muslim rulers seem to have had hankering after the kingdom of Tipperah, the Rajas hold their ground bravely for upwards of three centuries (**Hunter**: 1874). It is said that ‘throughout the history, the ancient kingdom gained conquests and possession which carried its armies from the Sundarbans in the west to Burmah in the east and from Kamrup in the north to Burmah in the south’; the military prestige of this kingdom reached at height during the sixteenth century especially when the Hindu Rajahs of the greater Bengal had fallen in weak position due to the victory of the foreign (Muslim) rulers. But in the beginning of seventeenth century, the Mughals obtained their footings in the country. About 1620 A.D, the Mughal force of Emperor Jahangir defeated the king of Tipperah and occupied the capital Udaipur till they were forced to leave the land by the epidemic. The Mughals continued to get upper hands in the kingdom due to intrigue of the discontented royal members.

This short introduction of history makes one thing clear that Muslims are the inhabitants of Tripura for several centuries. Since the historical period, Muslims are found in most of the sub divisions and villages. All the districts of Tripura are inhabited by them e.g. the major sub divisions like Agartala Sadar, Bishalgarh and Sonamura of West district, Udaipur, Amarpur and Belonia of South district, Kailasahar, Dharmanagar, and Kamlapur of North district. A small number of Muslims are found in Khowai, Sabroom and Amarpur sub divisions of the west and south districts respectively.

**Table no. 3.2**  
**Growth of Muslim population in Tripura**  
**(1901-2001)**

Year	Total Population	Decadal Variation	Muslim Population	Decadal Variation	% of Total Population	% of Total Population of India
1901	173325	-	45323	-	26.15	-
1911	229613	32.48	65953	45.52	28.72	-
1921	304437	32.59	82288	24.77	27.03	-
1931	382450	25.63	103720	26.05	27.12	-
1941	513010	34.14	123570	19.14	24.09	13.34
<b>1951</b>	<b>639029</b>	<b>24.56</b>	<b>136950</b>	<b>10.83</b>	<b>21.43</b>	<b>9.91</b>
1961	1142005	78.71	230002	67.95	20.14	10.69
1971	1556342	36.28	103962	-54.80	6.68	11.21
1981	2053058	31.92	138529	33.25	6.75	11.35
1991	2757205	34.30	196495	41.84	7.13	12.12
2001	3199203	16.03	254442	29.49	7.95	-

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 1991 & 2001

The Table no. 3.2 shows that the total number of population declined 7 percent during 1921 to 1931 and again gone up 9 percent. This fluctuation population was contributed by the movement of Mohomadans i.e. the *Jiratia Praja* who were the subjects of the British in the plains of Tripura, but they had paddy lands in hill Tripura under the special arrangement of patta or ‘Adda cheque’ by the kings. (*Dutta Bhowmik:1996*).

The study on the population trend in Tripura (Table no. 3.2) points out the abrupt increase of population in Tripura during 1951-1961. The main reason was influx of displaced persons due to communal riot etc. Another interesting reason lies in the legacy of the motivated infiltration of a large number of Muslims to take away Tripura in favour of Pakistan. However the decline of Muslim population in 1961-1971 is affected by the ‘Push-Back’ operation policy of the government. The abrupt increase of population in the years of 1951 to 1961 exceeds the national average growth of population.

It is reported that in 1981- 91, the growth rate of Muslim population in seventeen states of India was higher than average for the Muslims, (i.e. 34.54%). Tripura is to be included with those states because in the said decades, the growth rate of Muslim

population of Tripura was 41.84 percent. This growth rate of the Muslims is in conformity with that of other north east states like Assam (Dey: 1998).

**Table no. 3.3**  
**Sub Division wise Muslim Population of Tripura in 1901**

Name of Sub-Division	Total Population	Hindu*	Muslim	Buddhist	Christian	Animist	Brahmma
1. Sadar	65615	45042	20434	2	136	0	1
2. Sonamura (incl. Udaipur)	39229	24640	10011	4250	1	327	-
3. Belonia	27343	20027	5565	1747	0	004	-
4. Kailasahar	20673	12733	5703	0	0	2237	-
5. Dharmanagar	10170	7102	3298	0	0	0	-
6. Khowai	10295	9048	542	0	0	105	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>173325</b>	<b>118592</b>	<b>45553</b>	<b>5999</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>2673</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Census Report, *Swadhin Tripura* (1901)

\* Hindu includes both Bengali Hindu and Tribes who professed Hinduism.

The Table no. 3.3 shows the subdivision wise Muslim population of Tripura in 1901. It shows that the Muslim populations of Tripura were divided into six sub divisions and they were the second largest religious majority. It is estimated that the Bengali Hindus were insignificant in number compared to the Muslims at that time.

**Table no. 3.4**  
**Sub Division wise Muslim Population in 1961**

District	Sub Division	Total Population	Muslim
West District	Sadar	366076	50306
	Sonamura	77969	48084
	Khowai	129948	9239
North District	Kamalpur	61677	4088
	Kailashahar	104126	15166
	Dharmanagar	127548	28718
South District	Belonia	84827	15665
	Udaipur	90074	45637
	Amarpur	56365	10139
	Sabroom	43397	2960
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>1142007</b>	<b>230002</b>

Source: Census of India (Tripura), 1961

Note: Buddhists were 33,716; Sikhs were 49

Christians were 5,262; Jain were 195

Among the sub divisions, Sadar holds the largest number of Muslims followed by Sonamura (west) and Kailasahar (north). This feature has been continued in 1961 as shown in the Table no 3.4 and onwards. The year 1961 is a significant Census year for the abrupt increase of population. The decadal variation among the Muslim population along with the total population was very high in every district.

**Table 3.5**  
**Muslim Population of Tripura (Rural / Urban)**  
**1991-2001**

State/ District	Population					
	1991			2001		
Tripura	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
	184,647	11,848	1,96,495	2,3 6,748	17,694	2,54,442
West	87,785	7,870	95,655	1,13,930	13,087	1,27,017
South	31,116	1,274	32,390	37,445	1,554	38,999
Dhalai	-	-	-	6,436	147	6,583
North	65,746	2,704	68,450	78,937	2,906	81,843

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 1991 & 2000

The Table no. 3.5 shows the population distributed into rural and urban. It reveals that huge population of the community lives in the village. The urban population though insignificant in number has an increasing tendency reflected in the last decades of 1991 to 2001. It has increased from 2.81 percent to 3.24 percent.

The Table no. 3.6 presents district wise distribution of urban Muslim population in Tripura. Every district has subdivisional towns and sub-towns. According to the Census : 1991, total Muslim Urban Population is 11,848 (66.42%) distributed into three districts viz. 7,870(22.84%) in West district, 2,704(10.75%) in the North district and 1,274 in South district.

The table 3.6 shows that the largest no. of urban population of West district is in Agartala town . Similarly among four towns of the South district, Uadipur Nagar Panchayat town has the largest urban population; and among four towns of north district, Kailasahar has the largest urban Muslim Population.

**Table no. 3.6**  
**District wise Muslim Urban Population in Tripura (1991)**

West District			North District			South District		
Town/Sub Towns	Popula-tion No.	%	Town/Sub Towns	Popula-tion No.	%	Town/ Sub Towns	Popul-a-tion No.	%
Agartala (MC)	3621	46.01	Dharmanagar	953	35.24	Udaipur (N.P)	967	75.90
Badharghat	231	2.94	Kailasahar (N.P)	1323	48.93	Amarpur	271	21.27
Pratapgarh	396	5.03	Kumarghat	365	13.50	Belonia	27	2.12
Barjala	192	2.44	Kamalpur	63	2.33	Sabroom	9	0.71
Singerbil	38	0.48	Total	2704	100.00	Total	1274	100.00
Jogendranagar	922	11.72						
Sonamura	1910	24.27						
Teliamura	456	5.79						
Khowai	104	1.32						
<b>Total</b>	<b>7870</b>	<b>100.00</b>						

Source: Census of India (Tripura part, Religion) 1991

**Table no.3.7**  
**Religious Communities of Tripura**  
**(At a glance, 2001)**

Tripura	Population	Propor-tion to total	Sex ratio	Sex ratio (0-6)	Proportion of child population (0-6)	Literacy	Female Literacy	Work Participation
Muslim	2,54,442	8.00	945	964	18.6	60.9	51.4	29.2
Hindu	27,39,310	85.6	949	965	13.0	75.3	67.3	36.5
Christian	1,02,489	3.2	941	975	15.7	67.9	57.3	38.7
Buddhist	98,922	3.1	956	988	17.9	49.2	37.4	43.0
Jain	477	0.0	916	1036	11.9	82.9	78.4	41.1
Sikh	1,182	0.0	101	710	4.5	98.4	89.5	86.6
Other religions	1,277	0.0	759	770	12.1	75.4	65.3	55.1

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 2001, a Compilation

The Table no. 3.7 shows some demographic features of the Religious Communities in Tripura in 2004. It shows that in sex ratio, female literacy and in work participation, Muslims are lagging behind that of the Hindus. (Census, 2001)

**Table no. 3.8**  
**Sex Ratio in Tripura (1901-2001)**

State/ District	YEAR										
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
India	972	964	955	950	945	946	941	930	935	927	933
Tripura	874	885	885	885	886	904	932	943	946	945	950
West	877	891	893	881	881	908	937	946	954	944	953
North	856	866	868	879	895	894	918	935	934	939	952
South	874	884	881	873	878	909	936	945	945	951	949
Dhalai	-	-	-	-	-	908	932	932	938	931	940

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 2001

Sex ratio is an important demographic indicator. It is defined as number of females per 1000 males. The Table no. 3.8 shows that the number of females per thousand males in India is failing consistently except the years 1951, 1981 and 2001. While in case of Tripura, it is increasing sharply after 1941. Up to 1961, the growth of female population in Tripura was consistent with the growth of all India level but after 1971, it exceeded that level. No Census report of India on the sex ratio among the Muslim of Tripura is available except the census 2001.

### **3.4. Muslim Inhabitants of Tripura :**

The Muslims of Tripura are living under three different kinds of administrative systems of the state, viz. i) Municipal and Nagar Panchayat administration, ii) Gram Panchayat administration, iii) Autonomous District Council administration.

Like all-India pattern they live in both towns and villages. In urban administration, they live under Agartala Municipality of Sadar sub division and the Nagar Panchayats of the sub-divisional towns like Bishalgarh, Sonamura, Udaipur, Amarpur Belonia, Dharmanagar, Kailasahar, and Kamalpur; among total fifteen sub-divisions, Muslims live in almost all sub-divisions except a few i.e. Longtharai Kanchanpur Ambassa

Gandachara. A sub division is divided into few Blocks which are under Panchayat administration. A good number of Muslim settlement is found in the majority blocks except few which are tribes dominated, e.g. Mohanpur, Jampuijala, Salema, Bagafa, Ambassa, Killa Karbuk, Satchand Rupaichari, Dasdah, Pacharthal, Jampui Hill, Manu, Chamanu, Teliamura, Tulasikar, Mungiakami, Khowai, Kalayanpur and Dambur Nagar. They also live in the A.D.C. villages dominated by the tribes.

Half of the Muslim population of the state lives in the west district where they are 127,017. They were lowest number in south district (38,999) before the birth of Dhalai district which has become separated from north district.. Dhali holds the least number of Muslim population i.e. 6,436 only (**Census:2001**). In the period of Muslim suzerainty over the local rulers, Muslims entered into Tripura from the western side and settled in Bishalgarh, Sonamura and a large part of Udaipur of south Tripura.. The route of invading Armies into the areas in different times, gave a scope for conversion to great extent, particularly among the lower strata of the Hindu society. All these account for the major numerical strength of Muslim population in the west district

**Sadar** sub-division, West district: Muslims are the inhabitants of Agartala Municipality. Agartala, the valley plains of west district is situated on the north bank of Haora River. The urban area of Agartala is bounded by Kunjaban in the north, Arundhutinagar in the south, an embankment in the east and Bangladesh border in the west. Under Agartala municipality, Muslims are concentrated in Bhati Abhoynagar (west), Ramnagar south (Goal Chakkar) adjacent to the Bangladesh border of Akhura), Shibnagar Masjid Patti, Jgahrimura, Kabiraj tilla (Bordowali), Sachindranagar colony, Paschim charipara, Paschim Nandannagar (near the G.B. Hospital) and the rear side of Indranagar. Under Panchayat administration, Muslims live in the following Gram Panchayats : Pashcim Noabari Durganagar, Kobra-Khamar, Bankimnagar, Joynagar of Jirania Block; Charipara.,Gajaria, Pandabpur, Jarulbachai, Indranagar, Nandannagar, Uttar Aralia, Uttar Jogendranagar, Kalikapur, Joypur, Baldakhal, Khayerpur, Champamura, Gabordi, Barjala, Madhya Bhuban of Dukli Block.

**Bishalgarh** sub-division, West district: Bishalgarh is situated at the bank of Burima River. In urban area, they live in Kaiyadepa, Noapara and Charilam; they live in the gram panchayats like Durganagar, Chandrangar, Karaimura, Valuachar, Ramchara, Dakshim Charilam, Purathal Rajnagar, Gokulnagar, Bishramganja, Purba Gakulnagar, North Charilam, Bishalgarh, Kasba, Routhkhali, Radhanagar, Ghaniamara, Ramcherra, Barjala, Krishnakishorenagar, Golagati, Pathiala, Gazaria, Arabindanagar, Raghunathpur.

**Sonamura** sub-division, West district: Sonamura is situated at the right bank of the Gumti River and very much adjacent to Comilla district of Bangladesh. Muslims are inhabitants of Sonamura Nagar Panchayat town; Muslim live in large number in many gram panchayats of three blocks of Sonamura sub division. These are Uttar Kalamchora, Kalshimura, Rahimpur, Kulbari, Boxonagar, Madhya Boxonagar, Anandanagar, Putia, Motinagar, Kamalanagar, Ashabari, Indira nagar, Mainama, Manikya Nagar in the Boxonagar block; Bardwal, Mohanbhog Durganagar, Bejimara, Aralia Chandanmura, Pachim Durlavnarayan, N.C. Nagar, Rangamati, Khadabari, Telkajla, Urmai, Khash Chowmohoni, Srinagar in the Melaghar block ; Muslim dominated gram panchayats in the Kathalia block are Kalikrishnanagar, Rabindranagar, Dhanpur, Sonapur, Bashpukur, Dakshin Paharpur, Uttar Paharpur, Sovapur, and Uttar Maheshpur.

North district of Tripura is bounded by two sister states like Assam and Mizoram on its east and west side respectively and by Bangladesh on its north and south. The three valleys of north district are three sub-divisions like Dharmanagar, Kailasahar and Kamalpur situated on the bank of Juri, Manu and Dhalai respectively. The Muslims of Dharmanagar and Kailasahar are Bengali while a number of Muslims in Kamalpur are Manipuri in the ethnic identity.

**Dharmanagar** sub-division, North district: Muslims reside in the Nagar Panchayat areas of Dharmanagar town like Nayapara and Durgapur (near the rail

station). The Kadamtala block of Dharmanagar is heavily populated by the Muslim population. The gram panchayats of this block are Tarakpur, Ranibari, Bishnupur, Baghan (53% Muslims), Kurti (90%), Kala-ganger paar (99%), Fulbari (80%) Churaibari, Ichailalcherra, Pratyakroy, Chandrapur, Bhagyapur, South Hurua, North Hurua, East Hurua, Saicherra, Laxminagar, and Govindapur.

**Kailasahar** sub-division, North district: Under Nagar Panchayat administration, Muslims are concentrated in a few Wards e.g. Town Kubjar, East Durgapur, Daulatpur, Uttar Cacharghat, Baulabasa which are adjacent to the Town masjids. The Gournagar block of Kailasahar sub division which is adjacent to Sylhet of Bangladesh and Cachar of Assam state, holds majority number of Muslim population of the north district. Majority gram panchayats are Muslim dominated. The gram panchayats are Yeazekhowra east and west (99%Muslims), Latipura, Khowrabil, Ichabpur Irani, Jubrajnagar, Tillabazar, Noorpur, Laksmipur, Srinathpur, Ranguti, Fullbari (80%), Gournagar, Samrurpar, Sarojini ; most of these are adjacent to border area. In other villages of Kailasahar, they live with the Hindu Bengalis and tribes. In some ADC villages situated at the east of Kailasahar like Irachara, Muslims are 35% under ADC Panchayat like Doorchara situated in the Unakoti Range of Kailasahar; there are three Muslim dominated villages like Deora Bangalee para, Kala cheera and Bagacheera. In the said ADC Panchayat they constitute 19.52 percent of the total population. They are also found at some tribal dominated villages like Chinibagan and Noonchara.

**Kamalpur** sub-division, North district: Kamalpur is situated at the extreme of north Tripura. There is a large number of Manipuri Muslims called Pangals. Only 15 percent Manipuri Muslims are found in the town area, Manikbhander under Kamalpur Nagar Panchayat. They are concentratedin some gram panchayats of Salema block viz. Manikbhander, Mohanpur, Bilashcherra, (about 70%), Halahali (50%), Aabhananga (30%), Moracherra, Kuchainala, Kalachari; They are also found in Santirbazer, Latiabil and Malaya adjacent to the border. There are 115 pangal household in Maloya.

**Udaipur** sub-division, South district: Udaipur is situated at the bank of the Gomuti and it holds the largest number of Muslim population of the south district. The names of few Muslim inhabited wards under the Nagar panchayat administration are: West bank of Jagannath Dighi and its adjacent locality named Chan-ban, West and South bank of Amar Sagar, Town Sonamura and the rear side of Rajarbag. In the Nagar Panchayat areas, they are very few in number, only 967 (census 1991).

But a large number of Muslims live in the gram panchayats of Matabari block. The gram panchayats are Khilpara, Maharani, Uttar Maharani, Dhajanagar, Purba Gakulpur, Salgara, Kunjaban, Uttar Chandrapur, Chandrapur village Panchayat, Dakshin Bagma, Halakhet, Barabhaiya, Potamati. In Kakraban block, the Muslim populated gram panchayats are: Kushamara, KAkraban Rani, Uttar Tulamura, Amtali, Garjanmura, Hadra, Harijala, Palatana, Shilghari, Jamjuri, and Purba Palatana.

**Belonia** sub-division, South district: Belonia is situated on the bank of two rivers, Muhari and Fenni. It covers a good number of Muslim populations. They are found scattered and very negligible in the Nagar Panchayat area of Belonia town. A number of Muslims live in few gram panchayats of Rajnagar and Hrishyamukh blocks, e.g. Ekinpur, Rajnagar, Rangamura and Devipur. The village Amzadnagar and Matai deserve to be mentioned.

**Amarpur** sub-division, South district: Amarpur is situated on the bank of the Gumti. It is mainly a tribal-based locality where Muslims are few in number. They are found in some areas of Amarpur Nagar Panchayat administration, viz, town RangKang, (only 15 Muslim families), Muslim colony, located at the periphery of Sankar pally. In the numerical strength, urban Muslims of Amarpur account for 271 only (census: 1991). They are concentrated in some gram panchayats of Amarpur block, e.g. Mailak, Rankang, Baspadua and Debbari. The villages are: Satchand, Krishnanagar Mailak (45 families), village Rankang, west Malbasa, Dalak, Devbari, Jherjheria, Eakchari, uttar Eakchari, Dlepachari, Lebacherra, Sarbang (Ompi), Paharpur and Taidu bazaar (where only 8-10 families)

**Sabroom** sub-division, South district: Sabroom, the remote subdivision of South district situated on the bank of Feni, covers only a negligible percentage of Muslim population. Majority inhabitants are Hindu Bengalis. The major portion of the minority community is constituted by some tribes of Tripura who are Buddhist in religious faith. Few Muslim households are found in Srinagar which is adjacent to the Bangladesh border and not far away from the town. A few families are found scattered in the town area. Muslim inhabitation is found only in two gram panchayats of Satchand block, namely, Krishnanagar and Subashnagar.

It is noted that out of fifteen subdivisions of Tripura, at present, Muslims live in nine sub divisions and fifteen blocks. Sonamura and Bishalgarh sub division of the west district, Kailasahar and Dharmanagar subdivision of the north district and Udaipur subdivision of south district deserve to be mentioned for Muslim population. Among 513 Gram panchayats of Tripura (2004), twelve gram panchayats in Gournagar block of north Tripura and several gram panchayats of three blocks of Melaghar, Boxonagar, Kathalia in west Tripura are dominated by the Muslims. In some gram Panchayats of south Tripura, Muslims are in the fifty percent ratio.

Like all India pattern, Muslims of Tripura are also in two kinds of habitation pattern i.e. rural and urban. They live both in town and village. The demographic accounts show that they concentrate themselves in distant villages, particularly in the border areas of the state boundary. This is noticed especially after the partition of India. The urban population among the Muslim is numerically insignificant. The number has increased from 11,848 (2.81%) to 17,694 (3.24%) to the total urban population of Tripura(Census:1991, 2001). Obviously the capital town Agartala holds the highest number of urban Muslim population. The urban Muslim population in the west district is 7,870 and Agartala holds 46.01 percent (Table 3.6). Majority Muslims live in the villages. They constitute 7.9 percent of total rural population (Census :1991). Like the Hindu Bengali, the density of Muslim population is highest

in the west district but unlike the Hindus, the second highest Muslim population is found in the north district.

### **3.5. Socio-Economic Profile of the Muslims of Tripura :**

#### **3.5.1. Society :**

The social structure of the Muslims of Tripura is constituted by three major categories i.e. Theological categories, Ethnic and regional components, Social and occupational groups.

##### **Theological Categories :**

Among three theological sects, Muslims of Tripura irrespective of ethnic and occupational identity, belong to the Sunni sect. They follow the *Hanafi* School of Islamic law (named after Hazrat Abu Hanafi). None is found belonging to other three schools of *Maliki*, *Safi* and *Hambali*. No Muslims of *Shia* sect and *Ismali* sect is found in Tripura. Most of the people are not aware of their theological identity. However, no untouchable Muslim (Bhangi) is found in Tripura.

**Ethnic and Regional components :** Though Muslims are not caste-divided society like Hindus, but there are about 246 Muslim groups in India. They are heterogeneous in character. They differ and vary in their position and status, custom and practice. In Tripura also, the Muslim society is segmented into certain social groups of varied background viz. place of origin, descent-identity, language and socio-cultural attributes. The ethnic and regional components of Muslim social groups are presented in the following discussion. On this basis of Ethnic and regional components, Muslims of Tripura are categorised into eight major social segments viz. a) Bengali Muslim. b) Bihar-e Muslim. c) Manipuri Muslim. d) Assamese Muslim. e) Banaladeshi Muslim. f) Lahore-e Muslim. g) Iran-e Muslim. h) Kuki-Muslim.

##### **a). The Bengali Muslims :**

In ethnic identity the Muslims of Tripura under investigation are mainly from the converted Muslims of undivided Bengal. After the partition of India, most of the Muslims of high social status left for Pakistan. In spite of it, the difference between

higher strata people of the community—the *Asraf* and the commoners or *Ajlafs* can not be overlooked. The *Asraf* of Tripura are those who were carrying the so called direct blood of foreign ancestors (e.g. Sayad, Khan etc.) or, converted from the higher caste Hindus “either persuaded by interest or compelled by violence to relinquish their ancient religion” (**Hunter**:1874). They think themselves distinct from the ‘*Ajlafs*’ who are originally converted from the down trodden Hindu castes. This distinction exists only in mind not highlighted always in marital and social relationship.

The present study reveals that, in Tripura there is very limited number of Muslim groups; only a microscopic minority belongs to the *Asraf* group. This little number of people of distinct social status has lost their identity in the present milieu of social life. According to **Singha** (1403 Bangabda) “the upper class Hindus and Muslims are about nil in Tripura”. He also assumed that ‘Muslim Zamindars of Tripura were converted from the Hindus and so they have been rewarded’. To mention some name of Muslim Zamindars may be relevant here:

- i) Aka Sadeq, the Zamindar of Balda Khal Parganas (located in Agartala, Khayerpur) and Paitkara Parganas (located in Bangladesh). These two Parganas were gift for him from Mir Habib, the Moghols in 1733. When his Zamindari had fallen down, the Paitkara Parganas was sold to ‘Prince’ *Dwarokanath Thakur* (grand-father of Rabindranath Thakur) of Calcutta. After the death of Dwarokanath Thakur, the Ghosal Raj-Family purchased this (**Singha**: 1403 Bangabda, p.221).
- ii) Nowab Abdul Gani Kha Bahadur, Zamindar of Sarail Parganas (at present in Bangladesh) and Baldakhal Parganas;
- iii) Sayed Basarat Ali Chowdhury, Zamindar of Hasnabad;
- iv) Isha Kha ruled over some extended portion of Baldah Khal and showed allegiance to the independent king of Tripura (Hill sector);
- v) Noor Ulla Khan, the ruler of ‘*Sarkar Udaipur*’—the integrated name of east and south of Sarail, Loagarh and Kailagarh(Kasba) over which the Tripura Kings lost their authority; it was named after him as Noor Nagar Parganas.

The Muslims of Tripura are not only converted Muslims from Bengal but also from local Hindu Bengalis. During the time of Mohamadan supremacy in Tripura, owing to various reasons, large scale conversion took place among the people of Bishalgar, Sonamura and in other localities. Till the rule of Samser Gazi in Tripura (1748-58), a good number of Hindus being low caste in occupations settled in Udaipur sub division (e.g. Chanban, Khilpara etc.) were converted into Islam. In 1866, Mr. Brown wrote that ‘the bulk of Mohamadan were originally Hindus and the process of conversion still continues’ (**Hunter** :1874). According to the Report of the Political Agent in 1872, the Muslims were the largest number among the Bengalis.

It is said by some historians that the Bengali Muslims in a number were first introduced in Tripura during the period of King Ratna Fa, the first Manikya ruler who brought thousands of Bengalis, (both Hindu and Muslims) of different castes, occupations and professions from the Sultan of Bengal. In the later period, they also came in Tripura from its adjacent plain lands like Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong and Sylhet of eastern and southern Bengali. Once these plains were under the Kingdom of Tripura but frequently conquered by the Muslims in the medieval period, and later on by the British ruler of modern period till the Independence of India. Those plain lands were named ‘*Chakla Rosanabad*’ in the Muslim period and ‘District Tipperah’ in the British period. The poor occupational groups of the community came and settled in Tripura since the Muslim period. In the British period, some people of the peasantry class did not settle in Tripura permanently but remained in the status of *Jiratia* Muslims. There was always Kingsley patronage behind their settlement and participation in the economy of Tripura, as they have contributed to the increased revenue, specially in agricultural sector. The District Gazetteer records that agriculture, till Independence, contributed 60 percent of the state income. The Muslims cultivated the abundant waste land and subsequently settled in the interior of Tripura. The first census in 1874 by the British in Tripura shows that the Bengali Muslims outnumbered the Bengali Hindus (**Hunter** :1874, **Swadhin Tripura**, 1901).

The community is usually endogamous in character. They are influenced by the Hindu tradition and culture. Thus they have integrated themselves with the national framework of India by obtaining citizenship but simultaneously preserving their religious and cultural identity cultural identity. Since the monarchical rule, they have been enjoying the festivals e.g. *Ramjan Id*, *Bakra Id*, and *Maharram*. The days were declared holidays by the kings for the subjects. Unlike the varieties of Hindu Festival Mela, the Muslims enjoy only one Dargahs *Mela*. In the past, Dargahs mela was used to be held in some selected places like Thakurmura in Sonamura subdivision and Gazaria in Sadar subdivision usually in the month of December to January. At present this mela is held at Indranagar in Agartala and in other places of Tripura every year.

The Bengali persons of worth were patronized by the Kings in various ways. For example, after Durga puja, in the *Vijoy Darbar*, they were awarded title or Upadhi. In this connection, history recorded one name i.e. Maharam Ali Chowdhury who was awarded 'Khaje Kha Bahadur' in the year 1325 Tripura era. History has also recorded that like the Hindu prisoners, Muslim prisoners also were relieved by the king from the jail; many infirm persons were relieved from taxes e.g. tax on '*Adda*'. The *Kaziana kar* imposed on the Muslims was removed in 1350 Tripura Era (1940 A.D.) All these described above prove that the Bengali Muslims were happy in Tripura under the rule of Hindu kings. Even after Independence, they have been living peacefully with all the religious and ethnic groups.

The Bengali Muslims are settled in every district of Tripura. Even after the Partition, a number of villages of Tripura are dominated by them and they hold a good number of total populations of a few subdivisions. They are the largest minority group in the state. Though they are from peasantry background, they are found in most of the job pursuits. They are the indispensable part of the state politics. Women of the community were very traditional since a long time but recently they are coming forward in slow but steady steps. Muslims of Tripura are politically conscious since long before the Partition of India. They joined the political National Movements. Muslim women

of undivided Bengal participated in that movement. Jahanara Begum from Tripura (Commilla) was one of them. Three Muslim men from Agartala were in the Anusilan Samiti of Tripura Branch. A number of Muslims participated from many districts of plain Tripura. They have continued their participation in the present State –politics. Despite all these they are regarded socio-economically backward community of the state and now they are the largest beneficiaries of the Religious Minority Development Schemes.

**b). Behari Muslim :**

The Muslim coming from Bihar called *Bihare Muslim* constitutes a number of populations in Tripura. They have come for job pursuit from the backward villages and districts of Bihar, viz. Chhapra and Simna district. One section of these people is engaged in the monopoly business as bedding-maker, Dhunkar, and cotton-cutter. It is the male persons as the bread-earner of family usually come in a group with their son, brother, nephew or other close relatives as partner of business. The business is seasonal in nature, so they are to stay in Tripura for less than six months (October to February) of the year, the rest months (March to September, they stay in their country village with the family members – the wife and children whom they do not bring with them for financial reasons. As they work in a group (at least more than one), they leave for home in a rotator system meaning that when some one goes, other looks after the business; in this way, they keep their business chamber open for the year. For business purpose, they rent a house of narrow space and use the room as their bedroom also. They earn money and send that to the family through the banking system.

They prefer marketing centers of the towns and the surrounding for business purpose. In Tripura they are found in all districts and in all major towns or marketing centers. With the Bihari Hindus of same occupations, they are found concentrated in some pockets of Agartala town like Post office Chowmohani, Lake Chowmohani, Battala and Math Chowmohani; Lembuchara, Mohanpur, Kashipur, Champaknagar,

Chandrapur, Jirania are the sub – urbans of Agartala where they do their business. They are also found at Halahali of Kamalpur subdivision. Through they belong to the Hindi – speaking group, they can speak in Bengali, the dominant language of Tripura. They have good interaction with the Bihare Hindus of same occupation or other occupations like hawkers or labourers; thus they maintain socio- religious life; they used to go to the nearby masjids; there they get the chance of more social interaction with the Bengali Muslims. A little information is known about the way of life of another section of Muslims from Bihar. They are engaged in the occupation of day labourer in the brickfields and stone – breaker in the construction works. There are a good number of tea- garden labourers who are mainly Hindu in religious faith. The Hindi speaking people in Tripura were 12,804 in 1931, 18,451 in 1961 and 26005 in 1981. At present, there is no religious and linguistic break up of data on population; it can only be assessed that in Tripura the Muslims from Bihar are not very negligible in number.

Many Hindus from Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh have settled permanently in Tripura. It is reported during the study tour that many of the present generation of the Hindi-speaking people do not learn their mother tongue; they are accustomed with Bengali-speaking and Bengali social culture. Marital relation is also found between them. In comparison to other Hindi-speaking people, Muslims from Bihar seems to lead a solitary life in Tripura.

#### c). Manipuri Muslim :

Locally known as ‘Pangals’, the Manipuri Muslims belong to one of the minority ethnic groups of Tripura - the Manipuri community. A small number of Manipuri Muslims from Manipur are settled mainly in the subdivision of Kamalpur in the north district. They speak in Manipuri language and practice the Manipuri tradition and culture. Their original homeland was in Manipur and their mother tongue is Maithali –Manipuri; their religion is Islam and culture is mixed. In their ancestral origin, they believe that they are the offspring’s of Mughal father and Manipuri mother. It is noted

from the history of the northeast region that King Khagembra (1597—1652) made captive a thousand Sylhet-i Muslim mercenaries engaged by one of his step-brother to seize the throne. ‘They were settled in the valley by allotting land and allowing them to marry local women’(Ahmed:2002) Besides from time to time Muslim immigrants coming from adjacent Sylhet, Tripura and Assam added the population by their permanent settlement there. During the Lushai and Burmese invasion in 1824 A.D. many of them migrated to the north Tripura, Kamalpur. They seem to be segregated from their own linguistic and ethnic group which is dominated by Hindu religious tradition. They have practiced to speak in Bengali and KAKBARAK (Tripura language) to survive in the Bengali and tribes dominated society of Tripura. However they maintain their religious unity and cultural affinity with the Bengali Muslims. In dress, women wear Manipuri ‘*Paschra* and men wear ‘*Lungi*’ and ‘*Pajama*’. Manipuri Muslims are confined mainly in Kamalpur subdivision of north district. They are also found in some villages of Kailasahar sub division of north district, viz. Latiabill and Aabhanga The growth of Manipuri population is very poor. In 1901, they were only 405 in number and 3.15 percent of the total Manipuri population.

The people of the community are very poor in socio-economic condition and educational background. About ninety percent students of the community drop out at the junior basic level. Very recently, young girls and boys are able to get education up to Higher Secondary level. In this community, girls are usually married in early age i.e.16 years old and the difference of age between bride and bridegroom is high or double. The young men with qualification are founding in governmental jobs. Now they are becoming conscious and found in raising their demand to be included in the OBC group to secure the facility of backward classes in the society.

#### **d). Assamese Muslim :**

In the ethnic and regional component, there are more two small groups of Muslims viz. the Assamese Muslims and the Muslims originally coming from Lahore. Assamese Muslims constitute an insignificant number in the population of Tripura. In their

mother-tongue as well as in provincial identity, they are Assamese but they maintain double establishment both in Assam and Tripura. They are permanent residents of Assam but occasionally stay in Tripura in connection with marital relation, the kin groups and occupational bindings. They are habituated to speak fluently in Bengali. It is also found that some people, who are Bengali in ethnic identity but permanent resident of Assam, can speak fluently in Assamese language for residential purpose or job pursuits. They are mainly from Silchar, Cachar, and Karimganja. Some people from Assam come to Tripura every season as flying businessmen to sell mainly ‘Sital Pattie’ (made by cane). A number of Muslims residing in the border region of Tripura and Assam viz. Dharmanagar and Kailasahar, are more connected with Assamese people and Assam for different purposes like their health, education and earning. Being very much distant from the capital town, they are little dependant on Agartala. However, the number of Assamese speaking people in Tripura was – 467 in 1931, 123 in 1961 (**District Gazetteer: 1975**).

e). **Lahore-e Muslim (“Portal Majlish”)** :

- It is reported during the study tour in Udaipur and Khilpara village that some people of the locality claim that their forefathers came from Lahore and their mother tongue was Urdu. Though they have lost their original identity as a result of mixture of blood with the local inhabitants but still their title “Sardar” signifies their original identity. A number of Sardar families are found in Bishalgarh subdivision of West Tripura. At Khilpara village, the family of Ambar Ali Sardar is known as of this group. Their traditional occupation was craftsmanship. At the time of Kuki raid in the Kingsley period, they have lost this traditional occupation and taken the changed occupations e.g. cultivation etc. No more substantial information about them is available. Tripura District Gazetteer, 1975 has recorded the Urdu-speaking people in the fold of Hindustani language. The Census:1981 has recorded only 22 Urdu spoken persons in Tripura. Probably the Urdu speaking forefathers had assimilated themselves with the local people and culture. One ‘Chowdhury’ family at Chandrapur Mauza in Udaipur

is reported as a very old and high Muslim social group who emigrated from Lahore during the reign of Raja Ratna Manikya. They were regarded as '*partal majlish*'. SamsUddin Choudhury and Alabordy Choudhury are their present descendants who have now fallen into low economic status of the peasant class. Their physical built up is different from that of the local people. (Dutta:1972).

**f). Iran-e (Baghdadi) Muslims :**

A number of people settled in Uttar Chandrapur of Udaipur subdivision claim that their forefathers came from Iran or Baghdad in the medieval period. They use 'Kazi' as their first name and they are known in the locality as "Baghdadi -Kazi". Their physical characteristics were somewhat different from the local groups. This is recorded in a handbook written by a scholar, Brajendra Dutta (Dutta, 1972). He confirmed the statement by his investigation. They are lost in the present milieu. Still the people hold a status and position among the local Muslims owing to their ancestral foreign blood. This group of people is found all over Tripura but in limited number. The traditional occupation of the Kazi was abolished in Tripura in 1864. This group is differentiated from those who use Kazi as their last name and owe their origin in locally converted forefathers having no ethnic or occupational significance.

**g). Kuki-Muslim :**

Another small Muslim group insignificant in number is known as 'Kuki' Muslims and settled in Uttar Chandrapur under Udaipur sub division. The Kuki is one of the tribes of Tripura, characteristically different from other tribes. Originally the Kuki-Muslim is not converted but the descendant of Kuki (tribal) father and Bengali Muslim mother. They are often looked down upon by the local people in the society (Dutta, 1972). The family of Khirod Ali Sardar at Chandrapur *Mausa* and The family of Ali Mia in Sonamura are said of this Kuki-Muslim group.

**h). Bangladeshi Muslim :**

The immigrant Muslims come mainly from Bangladesh, the neighbour state of Tripura. They are called for as 'Bangladeshi' by the local people here. They come in search of job or in connection with trade and business. They are the citizens of Bangladesh but they stay in India for stipulated period, especially when they are out

of job in their own country. They belong to the lower economic strata of the community viz. the rickshaw puller, day labourer, vendors, and also some lower middle class businessmen who do some export import business of various commodities. The poor rickshaw puller and day labourers are often found in the rented house in different areas. They live for short time with or without family or among the relatives who are permanent resident of Tripura. Sometimes these people hold ration card, voter card etc and also obtains citizenship to avail different facilities. In this chance of interaction with the local Muslims, they indulge marital bindings also and if possible they settle permanently too.

### **Social and Occupational Groups in the Muslim Society**

In terms of social ranking and occupational background, Muslims of Tripura like other parts of India, are further divided into two broad categories, namely the *Sharif* and *Commoners*. In other words, they are regarded as *Khandani* and converted by origin. No social caste hierarchy is found among them but a notion of social differentiation existing on the basis of ancestral identity (either by ethnicity or occupation) cannot be denied.

On the basis of ethnic identity of social groups, the Sharif or Khandani Muslims are segmented into five distinct categories: *Sayyad, Sheikh, Mughal, Pathan, and Kazi*. In Tripura, the people belonging to the first and second categories are microscopic in number. According to the Rajmala, as said earlier there was no upper class Muslims in Tripura. However, Sayyad and Sheikh as first name, stand as first and second respectively in the order of social ranking. The people of this social groups claim their ancestral origin from Arab. They are mainly found in Kailasahar of north district. In Tripura there are a substantial number of Mughal and Pathan descendants being accorded third and fourth rank respectively. They are known as Mirza and Khan as their last names. They claim their ancestral origin from the Turkish and Afghan. Khans are everywhere in Tripura but Mirza are found less in number and concentrated in Udaipur of south district. The people using Kazi as the first name claim that their forefathers came from Iran or Baghdad. They are found all over Tripura, though a

**Table no. 3.9**  
**Muslim Social Groups in Tripura**

Sl. No.	Muslim Groups (Social and Occupational)	Social Status	Traditional Occupation	First and Last Name
1	Sayed	High	No specific occupation, Professional, Service holder, Business owner etc.	First name Sayed and sometimes last name Mir
2	Sheikh	High	No specific occupation, Professional, Service holder, Business owner etc.	First name Sheikh
3	Pathan	High	No specific occupation, Professional, Service holder, Business owner etc.	Last name Khan
4	Mughal	High	No specific occupation, Professional, Service holder, Business owner etc.	Last name Mirza
5	Poddar	Middle	Goldsmith	Last name Poddar
6	Sardar	Middle	Craftsman	First name Sardar
7	Bhuyia/ Majumder/ Chowdhury	Middle	No specific occupation, Professional, Service holder, Business owner etc.	Last name Bhuyia / Majumder / Chowdhury
8	Palowan	Middle	Boxer	Last name Palowan
9	Darzi	Middle	Tailor	Last name Darzi
10	Faqir	Middle	Religious mendicants	Last name Faqir / (Dewan)
11	Julaha	Middle	Weaver	Last name Momin / Answari
12	Khadim	Middle	Care-taker of religious places	Last name Khadim
13	Karati	Low	Wood maker	None
14	Karigarh	Low	Sweet maker	Last name Karigarh
15	Dafali	Low	Drum makers and beaters	None
16	Dhunia	Low	Cotton carder and bedding makers	Last name Mansuni / none

good number is concentrated in the village of Uttar Chandrapur in Udaipur. The function of this group was in the role of conciliator of social problems in the community. Thus they enjoyed a high status among other occupational groups. Some people are found belonging to the commoner group but using Kazi and Shaik as the last name.

There is another ethnic social group in the north Tripura, concentrated at Kamalpur subdivision. They are the Manipuri Muslim belonging to the Manipuri linguistic community and known as *Pangals*. They came from Manipur in the medieval period and speak in Manipuri language but believe in Islam. They claim that in ancestral origin, they belong to Mughal father and Manipuri mother. By this origin of foreign blood, they are not accorded any high rank of social status. Rather, being very poor and minority group, they demand O.B.C. status to secure various government facilities. Some of them, like many Muslims, use Kazi as their last names.

Hence, the people of five distinct social groups of foreign blood in the ancestral origin are regarded as Sharif or Khandani Muslims of Tripura and they are differentiated from the people of converted origin. They claim themselves more 'Islamic' or genuine Muslims than those of the locals in order of ethnic and cultural background. Generally the Sharif Muslims are found in some occupational groups like land owners, business owners, independent professionals, political activist, high officials, service holders, civic and religious leaders who are usually wealthier persons in the community. They are also found among other people of economically weak section and lost in the commoners.

Besides the different section of Sharif Muslims, there are larger sections of people who are known as Commoner Muslims belonging to the lower strata of the society. They never claim any noble ancestry. They are also segmented into various groups determined by their past occupational background. For example they are Poddar (Goldsmith), Khadim (Care -taker of religious places), Paloan (boxer or wrestler), Sardar (the craftsmen), Fakir, Karati (woodsman), Dhunia (bedding maker), Darzi (tailor), Dafali (Drum beater), Jola (weaver), Fisherman/boat-man, Qureshi (butcher), Karigorh (iron beater), Chasi (peasants) and Majur (day labourers). Khadim and

Paloan are few in number and concentrated in the village of Khilpara of Udaipur subdivision; Poddars are also few in numbers in some villages of Sonamura. Dhunias are mainly from Bihar.

In the princely days, Muslims were appointed as *Charibarder*, *Hukkaborder*, *Panka border*, *Peyada*, *Palki-bearer*, *mahoot* (elephant driver) in the royal family of Tripura. But these occupations have lost existence with the end of monarchy. Similarly many ancestral occupations do not continue for the present generations. The people are trying to adapt with the modern situation adopting modern occupations. The commoners, thus, constituting major portion of community, are found in the middle and lower rank jobs. The social groups found in Tripura on the basis of ethnic component and occupational characteristics are shown in the following Table no.3.9.

In between the Sharif and Commoners there is another category of social groups. The people of this group are known as Bhuiya, Talukdar, Majumder and Chowdhury as their last names. The forefathers of this group are supposed to be converted from higher castes of Hindu. Most of them were landlords in the past but at present, they are found mostly in middle rank jobs in all districts of Tripura. Before Independence, there was a Muslim social group who belong to the upper class in the status of Jaigirdari, Talukdari, and Mahaldari etc. The descendants of this class have been carrying their last name as Talukdar, Mahaldar, Chowdhury, Majumdar and Bhuyia. A major percentage of this class, after Independence, has come into legal and political profession, police service and administration. However, with the change of time, there is also change in their ancestral occupations. They are found in various kinds of jobs. Now, the high social groups of the society are no longer distinct from the other occupational groups.

### **3.5.2. Economic Pursuit :**

Once the cost of living in Tripura was low because of its low level prices, abundant forest product and cultivable land, its open communication and business with the neighbouring districts, and above all, small number of population which causes easy living of the inhabitants.

The Muslims migrated to Tripura from Eastern and Southern Bengal. The kings of Tripura often distributed lands free of cost among the subjects both Hindu and Muslim e.g. Hindu Brahmins, Muslim Pir and religious minded worthy persons of different communities. Some historical copper plates (**Roy Chowdhury**:1983) show that a number of Muslims were provided such free of cost lands as shown in the Table no. 3.10. They were given permission for cultivation of jungles and tilla lands; khajna (tax) was relieved for the unable farmers; Lakheraj or tax free land was given to the Muslims in different names viz. *Piran, Fakiran, Charagi, Aa-ema, Khasbas, Madatmas* (pious and wise personalities in Islam). Later, they were given rent-free land also by the de-facto ruler, Samser Gazi (1748 – 1760). The people came from the peasantry class and on the other hand, the historical factors helped them to be known as the cultivators' community. As Quoted from Brown, (Hunter 1874) “The *Mohammedans* are said to cling closer to the land than the Hindus; they do not follow any trade to supplement the produce of their field, neither do they fish, boat and build houses like the Hindus during the season when the labour in the field is not required”. Hunter added that in economic pursuit, they were found “as landholders, cultivators, tailors, messengers and boatmen”. Some favorable condition inspired the Mohammedans to be settled and attached more with lands. Thus agriculture became their dominant occupation which was also a major source of revenue of the land.

The Muslim subjects of Tripura enjoyed the right of *raiyat* under the Act of ‘*Praja Bhumi Adhikari Ain*’ (Law of landlord and tenant), 1886 A.D. (i.e. 1296 T.E.) (**Roy Chowdhury** : 1998). By the Act, a raiyat desirous of taking *patta* for jungle land cleared by him was granted land, free of rent, for three years and when the land under patta is clear, the raiyat would acquire a right of possession over the land. Besides, during the period of frequent Muslim invasion, a semi feudal class also emerged among the Muslims e.g. Bhuiya, Talukdar, Majumdar, Chowdhury who owned a huge land or taluk. The Muslims like other subjects of Tripura also enjoyed the right of permanent taluk by the Act of ‘*Rajarswa Sambondhiya Niyomabali*’ called *Kayemi Taluk* in 1880 AD (1290 TE). They were also under raiyat or *Korfa* system. Many of them worked under the Raiyats as *Barga Chasi* (share cropper) and agricultural

laborers. The contribution of the Muslim cultivators is not properly evaluated in the absence of land settlement record on religious break.

Although there is less social mobility in the agricultural economy, the Muslims underwent diverse occupations for livelihood. In the Princely period, they were appointed as *Charibardar*, *Hukkabardar*, *Pankhabardar*, *Binondia Peyada* ('a special

**Table no 3.10  
Land Alloted to Musalmans Free of cost by the Kings**

Name of the persons who were allotted lands	Name of the Kings
1. Kazi Moomin	
2. Kazi Monsur	
3. Kazi Hussain	
4. Kaziali Ehara	Kalyan Manikya
5. Jan Muhammad	
6. Khandakar Abdul Gani	
7. Sukur Muhammad	Govinda Manikya
8. Kazi Hussain	
9. Ekdil Kazi	
10. Ibrahim Kha	
11. Sri Rashid Kha	
12. Olamad Kha	
13. Sri Hismadi Munshi	
14. Durlav olad Badu	
15. Sri Momroz Khan	
16. Sri Tahit Md. Sakin	
17. Sri Chand Gaz Sakhim Joly	

Source : Tripura District Gazetteer, 1975.

type of police who carried the kings order, used to guard the Royal House and had to go to the deep hills and could arrest persons wanted by the king'), *Paloan* (Wrestler in the royal court) and *Palki-bearer* in the royal family. They were also recruited as soldiers in the army as Senapati or Subedar (chief of the soldiers), Captain e.g. the

Pathan Regiment of Amar Manikya and Rajdhar Manikya; Farid Ahmad Chowdhury was Captain under the last king Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya. These occupations came to an end with the end of the princely rule.

Muslims were efficient goldsmith, craftsmen and tailors. There were a number of goldsmiths in the Sonamura subdivision. Imam Box was the name of such a skilled goldsmith. The skilled craftsmen were mostly found in Udaipur. They worked crafts by the elephant teeth available in Tripura. The forefathers of Hasan Ali Sardar were such eminent craftsmen in Udaipur. The present generations have lost this efficiency of trades. During the period of historical *Kooki raid* (**Roy Chowdhury** : 1998) and disturbances, this occupational group was highly affected as the Kuki aggressors took away all their tools and machineries. The occupation of '*Mahoot*' or elephant driving was a monopoly occupation for the Muslims. Similarly coachman of horse-cart and cow-cart were mostly Muslims. The people appointed as *Hasti-Kheda* (who were engaged in catching elephants from the forest) were exclusively Muslims. At that time, Muslims were, as Hunter observed, found negligible in industry, trade and administrations. There is a record of some Afghan trader but no such record was there for any Bengali trader in Tripura. However after the partition of India, there is an overall situational change, especially change in their economic pursuit.

In the meantime, the discontinued *Kayemi Taluk* system and abolition of Jaigirdir system created an economic dislocation which affected all classes of land owners and cultivators in Tripura as in all India (**District Gazetteer** : 1975). The wealthy land owners or the middle class section emerged originally from the local rulers, Zamindars and Fauzders in the conquered plain portions of Tripura appointed by the Bengal and Delhi rulers before the end of Muslim rule, left for Pakistan. As the District Gazetteer records, 6,828 families comprising 35073 persons came to Tripura on exchange of properties with the Indian Muslims. It means that about 6,828 Muslims propertied families went for Pakistan. Hence, the remaining few took effort to be qualified for new jobs and professions in a very slow process. In the decade of sixty, there was a significant shift of population from agriculture to industry. A number of new small

scale and cottage industries were developed in that time, viz. the industry of tea, handicraft and handloom etc. People got training at governmental cost and thus an artisan class has been developed in Tripura. But with no wonder, Muslim men and women were rarely found in this arena of occupation in an organized manner. As a result of this legacy, till today, Muslims are lowest in number (1.58 percent) among all other religious communities (**Census 2001**). Only some domestic artisans, both men and women, are found in the unorganized sector of rural economy. The people of 60's in Tripura were classified into some groups of economic standard:

- a) members of princely family, b) a small class of very well-to-do businessmen,
- c) highly paid government officials, d) government officers of not more than Rs.800 salary per month, e) middle class businessmen, lawyers, owners of house and lands etc, f) clerk and teacher, g) some occupational and professional classes and h) Owner cultivators, landless tillers and agricultural labourers. (**District Gazetteer : 1975**)

Undoubtedly, the Muslims were in the lower part of this economic ladder. However, they are now found in different trades as owners of rice mill, garage or workshop, grocery, fishery, trade of cattle, etc. They do the job of mechanical, electrical works, mason work, coloring, cycle repairing, driving of different types of vehicles. In short, a major portion of the community is primarily self-employed. Mullah and Maulavi, as the religious representatives of the community called *Houjur*, work as conciliator of different social problems of the society. But this occupation is not hereditary. The members of these families are engaged in different jobs or modern occupations.

In white collar job, they were 'Munshi', 'Muktar' (Lawyer/advocate), 'Collector', contractor, political party worker, minister, MP, Imam and Maulana, journalist, writer, teacher, artist for Royal Court, deed writer or Nakal Nabish/ Serastadar, Member of Privy Council. At present, they are in a substantial number, recruited in the Police and Force department. It is observed that not only in Tripura, but in the region of northeast, the highest representation of Muslims is in the state police force. (**District Gazetteer, 1975**) They are in different office jobs also. They are not rare as doctor, magistrate,

director, chairman, secretary, T.C.S., BDO, school and college teacher, minister etc. But women are found rare in these occupations. It is reported that, a woman advocate has started practicing in the court.

It deserves to be mentioned that the largest number of day labourers among the Muslims is obviously a recent phenomenon. The historical record of the want of daily wage labour till sixties reveals that Muslims were not frequently found as daily wage labourers at that time. But after the pressure on the cultivable land (there is only 24% cultivable land, **Census:1971**) in Tripura owing to some historical legacy, Muslims are now forced to shift from their traditional occupations.

Work participation rate by religious communities (**Census:2001**) to total population for all religion is 36.25 percent. The Muslims have recorded 29.20 percent, the lowest among all. It is not wonder that for the districts also, the lowest participation rate is in the Muslim community. They are sometimes better than Christians and Buddhists in Dhalai and North district. In case of Muslim females, it is obviously lowest in the state (11.22%) as well as districts. The work participation of men and women in both west and north is lower than that of south. This characteristic is also supported by the present study. It is reported that the latest figure of employment situation as indicated in 2001, there is an acute male-female disparity in the opportunities available. The data given in the Table no. 3.11 reveals the disparity.

At the state level, Muslim cultivators (CL) are in second position (30.30%). But as agricultural laborers (AL), Muslims are highest in number (27.71%) among all religious communities. In the H.H.I., Muslims are only 1.58 percent while all religious communities are 3.04 percent. Lastly in the category of other occupations (which includes all those workers who do not fall under three distinct categories above) also, Muslims are low in participation in south and west district. Recently Indian economic structure is showing a shift towards non-agricultural sector, which includes workers in tertiary sector such as service, manufacturing, trade and commerce and allied activities. In the non-agricultural sectors, Muslims of Tripura are lagging behind. This characteristic is also reflected in the present study on Tripura.

### **3.5.3. Literacy and Education**

The history about the state of Education in Tripura is known only from the quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The administrative report of 1874-75 says that very little attention was paid by the ruling houses of Tripura to the improvement of education of its subject's. Till 1874-75 there were only 2 schools for 103 pupils, established first during the reign of Birchandra Manikya (1869-96). In 1879, there were 25 schools for 700 pupils divided among the sons of royal family (30), Tipperah (52), Manipuri (232) and Bengalis of both Hindu and Muslim (388). It is also reported that there were 57 girls out of 700; 3 of them were Tipperahs and 54 girls from Manipuri community (**District Gazetteer : 1975**). The report shows that the Manipuri were very conscious and active to get their children educated. According to the report, "Mosalman followed their trail" (**Hunter, 1874**). It means that Muslims were conscious about the education of the children (though only for male child); it is easy to infer that majority of 388 Bengali pupils were Mosalman children as per the ratio of population. Hunter reported that Mosolmans were 14,222 in number i.e. double in numerical strength than the Manipuri 7045 and triple than that of the Bengali Hindus 4339. It indicates that the Mosolmans were not very backward in the early stage of educational scenario in Tripura. But no Muslim girl was sent to school like her counter part in the Manipuri community. It means their reserve ness for girls' education due to pardah custom prevailing in the community. This, obviously, in the later period accounts for one of the causes of educational backwardness of the women-folk in the community as a whole. No information is available whether the girls were sent to muktab and madrasa for religious education but the boys are sent to the muktab as the report of the history. Before their formal education in the 'Vernacular Pathsala', the Muslims of Tripura were already introduced with Madrasa education since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or during the rule of the de-facto ruler Samser Gazi (1748-60). It was Samser Gazi, the first ruler who established a madrasa for the education of the poor children at Udaipur, the royal seat of Tripura. However, when the formal education was started

**Table no. 3.11**  
**Work Distribution among the Muslim Workers of Tripura (Male / Female)**

STATE / DISTRICT	CATEGORY	ALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY	MUSLIMS PERSONS	MUSLIM MALE	MUSLIM FEMALE
Tripura	Total	100.00	100.00	46.21	11.22
	CL	27.01	30.30		
	AL	23.81	27.71		
	HHI	3.04	1.58		
	Others	46.12	40.38		
West	CL	20.04	34.36	45.48	9.89
	AL	20.43	30.24		
	HHI	3.53	1.49		
	Others	56.01	33.91		
South	CL	33.67	29.44	48.72	22.02
	AL	28.94	38.66		
	HHI	1.85	0.89		
	Others	33.55	31.01		
Dhalai	CL	33.20	36.60	52.82	18.44
	AL	31.09	22.56		
	HHI	2.54	3.28		
	Others	33.18	37.56		
North	CL	27.62	23.56	45.60	7.54
	AL	15.98	17.23		
	HHI	4.54	2.00		
	Others	51.86	57.21		

Source: Census of India (Tripura) 2001, Statement 10, (an extraction).

Note: All Religious Communities = (six major communities including religion note stated), CL-Cultivation .AL-Agricultural Labourer. H.H.I.-Household Industry. other-other workers.

by the initiative of the Manikya rulers, the Muslim boys came forward to have education. One of the government publications recorded (*Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla*, 1976). a list of names of the Muslim students who obtained scholarship.

They are: Sri Ali Ahmed, Usuf Ali, Badar Uddin, Fazal Ali and Sayad Ali. So, there was clearly an urge among the community people for acquiring general education with other community people in the vernacular *Pathsala* of Tripura.

Through many ups and downs in the state of education of Tripura, it was only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – during the reign of Radhakishor Mmanikya (1896 to 1909), the history of Formal education took a definite shape. A new primary school, a new high school, a girls school, a ‘Tol’ for sanskrit pandits and a technical school for training a craftsmanship in iron, bronze and handicrafts; there was also training for “fitter” and handloom. The vernacular pathsala was in the mean time, developed as a govt. school in 1878 and named as Umakanta Academy in 1904. To diffuse education, some branches of Umakanta Academy were established in Kailasahar and Belonia.

Like all India pattern, the tradition of denouncing western education by a section of Muslim leaders came in Tripura perhaps during the forties and this attitude was reflected in their forming of some associations oriented to Islamic faith viz. *Rajyak Jamayat Ulema* (est in 1942). It has been running a big residential madrasa named *Darul-ul-um or Rangamati Madrasa*, adjacent to Sonamura town area. The Jamat-et-ulema Hind was established in 1949 to generate unity among the Muslims and persist on the religious rituals. It is reported that the Munshi and Maulavi from the British Bengal used to come in Tripura to teach the people Islamic education, Arabic and Persian language (**Dutta : 1974**).

These religious associations and institutions have a considerable influence on the people of the state, specially the rural Tripura. The poor parents send their children to the muktab while they remain reluctant in sending them to the formal schools which requires some minimum expenses. So to meet the demands of the people there are many muktab and madrasa in Tripura. Some madrasa are recognized and financed by the government. According to the District Gazetteer ‘there are some special institutions like muktab and madrasa at different places of territory imparting religious instructions and teaching Arabic to Muslim boys and girls, and most of these institutions

receive monthly maintenance grants from the Education Directorate' (**District Gazetteer, 1975**). At present all these are under the Wakf Board. The Muslims of Kailasahar and Dharmanagar (north) as well as Sonamura (west) seem to be more pious in religious education. A number of boys are sent for Senior Madrasa in the Cachar district e.g. Karimganja and Hailakhandi in Assam but no girls for such purposes.

Recently there is only one Girls' madrasa in Tripura namely Ayesha Girl's Madrasa (Pry.) at Kulubari, Sonamura. Muslim children are sent simultaneously to the Anganwadi and Balwari centers. They are taking general education both in village and town. But very few of them are able to across the Madhyamik and Uchha Madhyamik level. Only a few of the successful boys and girls can avail higher level of education.

At present, the percentage of literacy among the Muslim is 60.9. Their female literacy is 51.4 percent which is lower than that of all other religious communities except the Buddhist (**Census of 2001**). The case of drop out starts from the end of Primary level, middle level and onwards. The first category of drop out (pry) occurs in mostly rural areas and the second and third category of drop out occurs usually among the students of town areas. The gap between male-female literacy gap was 20.93 percent in 1991. The Drop out rate in Primary level for Girls was 56.14 percent and it has increased in 83.61 percent in the Secondary level in 1988—1989. In 1998—99, the drop out rate of Girls is 79.45 percent (**Tripura University : 2000**). Muslim girl students tend to decrease in number at maximum in the middle or senior level of education when they reach at marriageable age as per norms of the community. Even those girls who have successfully passed the H.S. level are not allowed to study further and usually get married at this age. As there is no statistical data it can only be estimated from observation and experience that in the secondary stage, the number of Muslim girls will be below than one hundred among 2085 girl students of Tripura Secondary Board of Examination in 1999. The Female literacy rate among the Muslims

of Tripura, (for 2001 available), is given below in the Table no. 3.12. It serves a comparative approach with the literacy rate among the Hindus—both male and female.

**Table no. 3.12**  
**Literacy rate among the Muslims of Tripura, 2001**

State/District	Hindu			Muslim		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Tripura	75.26	82.81	67.28	60.86	69.73	51.43
West	78.76	85.96	71.20	59.07	67.55	49.95
South	72.18	80.89	62.90	57.86	67.66	47.54
Dhalai	62.59	71.48	53.03	67.54	77.89	55.83
North	75.99	82.28	69.35	64.56	73.49	55.26

The gap between Muslim boys and girls in the secondary level is not very wide in Tripura. The general social environment of Tripura is favorable to literacy and education for the children of common people. But it is not so easy for the Muslim poor girls, specially residing in the interior Tripura where distance of schools is great hurdle to them. However with the change of situation girls are now provided enough scope for availing formal education in their own villages and sub-divisions. There are a number of girls school, at least one for each sub-divisions and co-ed higher secondary school and also a number of colleges in Tripura. Muslims students both boys and girls can avail financial assistances from the Wakf Board on the merit basis. In spite of all the facilities very few of them are able to utilize these owing to socio-economic backwardness of the community.

### **3.5.4. Political Awareness and Participation**

The Muslims of Tripura have proved themselves as politically conscious since many years before the merging of Tripura with Independent India. Though they belong to the peasantry background, the upper section of the community involving themselves into the politics and administration of Tripura has proved that they are political activists also. Since the princely period they involved themselves in the decision making functions of the state. They were members of the Privy Council of Maharaja Bikram

Kishore Manikya; they were Collector and Chief Manager of *Chakla Rosanabad* Zamindary (estate); they were Minister, Colonel and Captain of the Army under Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya. They have been working as Judge, Magistrate and Lawyers. After Independence, they are found as members of Tripura Territorial Council (T.T.C.), Deputy Speaker of the Legislature, Cabinet minister, Member of Parliament (Rajya-Sabha), Chairperson of the Board, Secretary from Panchayat level to District level, Director, S.D.O, B.D.O. T.C.S. officer. They are member-workers of major political parties (e.g. Congress, C.P.I. and C.P.I. (M) and others). They have become Minister, Speaker, M.P., M.L.A., Gram Pradhan, Upa-pradhan, Samiti-Member in the block level, Zilla Parishad Member in the district level, members of party comities, and Cadre workers in the grass root village level, district and divisional level. But no Muslim woman is found in all the dignified posts of politics and administration of Tripura.

In the struggle of Freedom Movement of India, participation of the Muslims is yet to be properly evaluated. Kamal Uddin Ahmad in his book named '*Swadhin Purba Bangla*' (p.80), told that 'the Bengal Revolutionaries had a mental agony about their failure to attract the Muslim Youths in the revolutionary party . However, Muslims of Tripura took part in the national politics. In the '*Anusilan Samiti*' of Tripura Branch, Muslim males were three in numbers. In other branches of undivided Bengal, they were in a number (**quoted in Bhatta 1396 E.E.**). In the revolutionary party of undivided Bengal, they were total 26 and Muslim women were 17 among them i.e. 65.38 percent. They were accused by the British Government in different cases along with others Some Asfaq Ulla Kha was one of the *Sahid* out of 59. He was accused for Kakori Conspiracy Case. There is dearth of more information about them. As far as it is available, the Muslims participated in Swadeshi movement which took place in Tripura after the Khilafat movement (1921), and Gandhiji's call for Non-cooperation movement. 'The people of Dharmanagar and Kailashahar joined in the movement against the British Raj. The impact of Khilafat movement and Non Cooperation movement affected the tea garden labourers and railway employees of the Assam Bengal' (**Dasgupta : 1998**). The participants for collecting the subscription of the

movement had to receive the ‘eviction order’ from the Tripura King. The people protested and joined in Strike against the tyranny of British Govt. against the coolies (labourers) of Chandpur (East Bengal) and they boycotted bazaar in protest against the collection of food supplied for the British employees from the Moogra Bazaar of Agartala (adjacent to the border area). A *Dharma Sabha* was established in Kailashahar under the leadership of Satish Chandra Chowdhury and Abdul Mujahir Majumder to boycott the judiciary. The Sabha was supposed to conciliate the civil suits as an alternate to the judiciary. However, the activities of the Sabha were stopped forcibly by the order of the government. The people participated in the political movement associating themselves with the *Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad*, *Dharmanagar Hitasadhini Samiti*, etc. Thus it can be assumed that there is a good number of Muslims who constituted a large part of total population in Dharmanagar and Kailashahar, has been moved by the events of Khilafat and Non Cooperation movement in All India level.

After the First World War, princely Tripura was a shelter as well as centre for training of the revolutionary workers. The royal family as well as the employees had a tacit support to help them. During the thirty or early forties Bengal political leaders like Dharoni Goswami of the Communist party and others came in Tripura to organize the youth groups. This was the age of political awareness and patriotic feelings which touched almost all the people of this colonial country. Muslims were not exception. There is no record that whether they joined with Chattra Sangha (1927) and Bhatri Sangha (1928) and Matri Sangha for women. The history recorded that they were united under the “*Rajya Janamangal Samiti*” (formed in 1938) and the Congress committee (1940) which turned as the State Congress in 1949. Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad was formed in 1939 and led by Dr. Abul Rahaman from Sonamura and it merged with Tripura State Congress in 1949, *Tripura Rajya Muslim Praja Majlish* was established in 1945. At the later period, Muslim leaders were found in the congress party as well as in the undivided communist party (C.P.I.)

At the pre-Independence period, they were united under some welfare organizations to organize the community people e.g. Rajyik Jamaet Ulema-1942, Anjuman Islamia, 1945. All these things go in favour of their political awareness and

activities. Though there is dearth of information but a deep observation throughout this contemporary history of Tripura says that the Muslims were not far from national consciousness and national struggle of India. The notable persons of the community were the outcome of that age which continued up to the decade of sixty. Even the common people belonging to the peasantry class who had little time to take active part, were aware of the politics going on around the state. This is reflected in the communal harmony of Tripura between the Hindus and Muslims. There was no record of communal riot when it was a burning issue for the undivided Bengal. Dharmanagar *Hitasadhani Samiti* was established by Maqbul Bhuiya and Kala Chand Chowdhury in 1940 apprehending as well as resisting any such incident. The Samiti certainly served a positive role to resist the factors against Hindu-Muslim unity.

The position of Muslim women of Tripura in the national or state politics is consistent with their low social participation and poor social consciousness. In the decade of thirty, some women of other communities (i.e. Bengali Hindu and tribal women) were united for national cause or issue under some organizations of national spirit like *Matri-sangha*. The Tribal women in Tripura fought against unjust collection of Levy on paddy (*Titun*), they were called the base member of Ganatantrik Naree Samiti. An association of Tribal women was formed in 1948. The members joined in the movements for responsible govt. in Tripura against Dewani system, for rehabilitation of the refugees, Jumia rehabilitation, communal harmony and economic rights of the vulnerable section of the society. But the Muslim women in Tripura have no such record in history. In the post Independence period, Muslim women have surely exercised their right of adult suffrage by casting their votes in favour or against some party. And they might be influenced by the male members of family or neighbors whom they think as more concerned in politics. This feature is also common among the women of other communities. A few women in Tripura, Bengali or Tribal, have come into direct politics. Those few counted on finger tips have promoted themselves rarely from lower to higher level of political leader.

At present, Muslim women, in a number, take part in political meeting and processions. Many of them are members of *Naree Samiti* – the women wing of C.P.I. (M) as well as the women wing of the Congress party. In the organizational structure of the communist party, about 200 hundred (estimated) Muslim women are members of the branch comities and local comities but very few are in the upper level of Divisional and State comities. It is reported that there are two Muslim men in the State committee and two women in Divisional committee. Only after the introduction of Three Tier Panchayat Raj System in Tripura 1993-94, on the basis of 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of the constitution, the political scenario has been changed to a great extent in the grass root level of society. The rule of 33 percent reservation of seats for women is a great opportunity for those who were traditionally denied the status of political actor. Muslim women have come to avail the chance of exercising the power of public responsibility. In urban administration, the position of Muslim women as well as men is still deplorable. In Agartala municipality, there is only one Muslim man who is a nominated councilor. After 124 years of the age of Agartala Municipality, there are six female councilors including the Vice Chair person, but no female representative from the Muslim community. In the Nagar Panchayats also Muslim representation is very insignificant. Low ratio of Muslim urban population may be a reason behind this.

Though there is no available data, it can be assumed that the Muslims in the minority status are mostly supporters of the ruling party. Most of them shifted their allegiance from the Congress party to C.P.I. (M) mainly due to “push back operation policy” of the central govt. in the decade of sixty. At that time, Nripen Chakraborty, the leader of the Communist party of Tripura gave them the assurance of their settlement in Tripura. As a result, after seventies, stability is noticed in Muslim population. In some Muslim dominated villages of Tripura they are the principal base of support for the party in power. There are a large number of Congress supporters, leaders and workers among the Muslims of Tripura. Besides these two major parties Muslims are found very rare in other parties: No information about the support of Muslim league in Tripura is available.

The Table 3.13 shows that representation of women in general is very poor in the Assembly Election of Tripura. Muslim women are found nil since 1952.

### **3.5.5. Muslims as Victim of Ethno-politics in Tripura:**

After the Mandai massacre of 1980 in Tripura the ethno-political disturbances have been going on till date with some remarkable incidents. In such an incident of 1994-1995, four hundred Muslim families were rooted out from four ADC villages. In 1999, another great incident happened at Raiabari in Udaipur district. During the field work, a few cases were recorded by the method of interview with the suffered persons and the cases are presented in The summary of the cases show that the so

**Table -3.13**  
**Women Representation in**  
**State Legislative Assembly (Tripura)**  
**(1952—2003)**

Year	Legislative Assembly	Number of Seats	Number of elected women	Percentage to the total
1952	Electoral College	30	1	3.3
1952	Tripura Regional Council	30	-	-
1962	Tripura Regional Council	30	1	3.3
1967	State Legislature	30	-	-
1972	State Legislature	60	2	3.3
1977	State Legislature	60	1	1.6
1983	State Legislature	60	3	5.00
1988	State Legislature	60	2	3.2
1993	State Legislature	60	3	5.00
1998	State Legislature	60	2	3.2
2003	State Legislature	60	1	1.6

Source: State Election Department, Agartala

called extremist group wearing the uniform of Assam Rifles tortured the Muslim peasants in the locality in various ways e.g. they used to become the compulsory guest for the households; they took away the domestic animals; forced them to pay monthly subscription of Rs.200 to 500; kidnapped the youths and forced them to join with the extremist group and to be their agents of information; tortured the male persons in cruel manner and raped the women; threatened them not to take the wounded persons in hospital. The motive of all these tortures is to root out the peasants who have a large quantity of lands and to occupy their land property etc. Ultimately, the purpose became successful in the middle of 1999 year at Raiabari. In the occurrences of random torture in one night, the people were bound to leave Raiabari and their homestead. They took shelter in urban as well as rural areas in all over Tripura. The peasants now become refugee or migrants in their own state. It is reported that the people did not get help or cooperation from the tribal chiefs, neighbors and the police Camp for various reasons. For a short time they were sheltered in the Refugee Camps by the government. In the massacre of 1980, Hindu Bengalis were the main target, so the Muslim Bengalis were partially escaped then. However since the eighties, both Bengali Hindu and Muslim have been fighting a lot to survive in this land of Tripura. The refugee- families have taken shelter at Shilagathi, Amtali, Garjanmura, Shalgara, Gokulpur, Chhatarria, Nidaya, Khilpara, Jagannath Dighi etc.

### **3.6. Muslim Religious Places and Welfare Organizations in Tripura.**

Like any other religious community, Muslims of Tripura also maintain their religious identity establishing religious places, education centers, Wakf Board and Welfare Organization. Since the medieval period, Muslims are the inhabitants of Tripura. So there are a lot of masjids, Dargahs, Idgah, Kabarstan and Muktab / madrasa. A Wakf Board was established in 1979 by the state government to see the interest of the largest minority community in Tripura.. The government also took initiative for a Students Hostel for the Muslim boys in 1979, a Rest house for minorities in 1994, Tripura Minorities Co-operative Development Corporation Ltd (Agartala) in 1997 and the Scheduled Caste, OBC and Minority Welfare Dept. in 1999. Besides,

the government helps the voluntary organizations for welfare activities among the Muslims. The organizations of such non-governmental efforts are found in Tripura long before Independence and these deserve to be mentioned.

### **3.6.1. Mosque:**

The place of Mosques or masjids is the most important religious place for the Muslims of the world. As the present govt. notification in 2005, Tripura has 303 recognized mosque scattered in all the districts, subdivisions, towns and villages. There are 393 masjids in total at present (in 2005). So the names of rest 90 masjids are placed for registration. Mosque is a place where all the Muslim groups, irrespective of ethnic and regional complex, educational and economic status, interact with each other through a common bond of Islamic brotherhood (Umma). They participate together in the ‘Juma’ masjids for the week end namaz (i.e. Friday) and observe the Islamic occasion at different times of the year. Every masjid has its own committee to control the religious behaviour of the people. Sometimes, the elder councils act in this role. Some are very old masjids and some are of recent origin. Some old masjids are abandoned for prayer. One of such historical masjids is Mughal Masjid at Udaipur built up at the Mughal period when they overruled the Tripura kingdom. This is situated on the north bank of Gomuti in Udaipur division of south district. The construction was not complete i.e. the roof was yet to be complete. The name of some existing old and new masjids are attached in the Appendix No. 3.I

The Table no 3.14 presents the total number of masjids of Tripura (393) distributed in 14 subdivisions. The highest number is found in Sonamura followed by Dharmanagar and Kailasahar. The number of masjids is poor in number in the Sadar subdivision in comparison to the proportion of population. The highest number of Madrasa is found in Sonamura sub division i.e. 75 out of 193 (38.86%). Kailasahar has 31 i.e. 16.06 percent and Agartala Sadar sub division has 22 i.e. 11.40 percent.

**Table no. 3.14**  
**Number of Mosque and Madrasa in Tripura (Sub-Division wise)**

Name of Sub-Division	Mosque	Madrasa
1. Sadar	38*	22
2. Bishalgarh	*	17
3. Sonamura	127	75
4. Udaipur	69	10
5. Longtharai Velley	01	03
6. Gandacherra	01	00
7. Khowai	01	00
8. Sabroom	02	00
9. Belonia	12	04
10. Kamalpur	17	01
11. Kanchanpur	01	01
12. Amarpur	08	04
13. Kailasahar	51	31
14. Dharmanagar	65	27
Total	393	193

Source: Extract from the list of Mosques/Madrasas supplied from  
 Wakf Board of Tripura, 2004

\*Here the masjids of Sadar include that of Bishalgarh.

### **3.6.2. Idgah:**

It is also an important religion place for the Muslim. As Govt. Notification, there are twenty seven (27) Idgahs all over Tripura at present in 2005. Idgah is generally attached with the masjid. It is an open space for collective prayer in the week end or in the occasional observance. The names of four registered and popular Idgahs deserve to be mentioned: i). Purathal Bazar Idgah, Bishalgarh, West district. ii). Debbari Idgah, Amarpur, South district. iii). Amtilla Bazar Idgah, Dharmanagar, North district. iv). Shibnagar Masjid Idgah, Agartala Sadar, West district.

### **3.6.3. Dargah**

Dargah or Pir- Khana (the abode of Pir) is another important religious place for the Muslims. Pir-khana is the abode of pir – the sacred place to the Muslims. Belief in Pir-ism is an important aspect of their socio-religious life. There are 27 Dargahs in

Tripura. Some Dargahs being very old are abandoned or near to abandoned viz. Badar Mokam, Bibber Dargah and Gazi-r Dargah. Badar Mokam is located in the outskirt of Udaipur town.

‘Badar Sahib-er Takia’ is in Matai, Belonia. It is said that Pir Badar Aulia took rest on his journey to different places of Tripura. Both Muslims and Hindus pay their homage to this place. It is learnt from history that Badar Alam Jahidi entered into Chattagram (East Bengal) along with three to four hundred followers for the purpose of propagating Islam. He defeated the Arakans and Mugs. From this historical record it can be assumed that it is Badar Alam Jahidi known as Badar Aulia entered into Belonia,(Matai), very adjacent to Chittagong and then towards Udaipur. But the exact time and the date is not available. Pir Badar Aulia is very well-known in Chittagong and Sylhet. It is said that two Hindu residents of Khilpara mauza, namely Ataram and Budhiram being charmed by the Pir Badar Aulia converted into Islam and appointed themselves as Khadim (care-taker) of this Dargah of Badar Mokam. Bibir Dargah is located in Kalyanpur of Khowai sub division (Dutta; 1976). The Mosalman ‘kamlas’ (labourers) of Forest Department used to come here to lit the light –*Cherag*. Nothing more is known about this. Gazi-r Dargah is located in a *tilla* of Udaipur, on the bank of Bijoy Sagar adjacent to Dhanya Sagar and Amar Sagar. Probably it was founded by Samser Gazi who was once the De-facto ruler of Tripura. Name of some Dargahs are mentioned below.

- i). Mekhlipara Dargah, Khayaerpur, Agartala, West district, ii). Joypur Dargah sharif, South Ramnagar, Agartala, West district, iii). Gazaria Dargah, Bishalgarh, West district. iv). Batarashi Dargah, Dharmanagar, North district. v). Fullbari Dargah, Kailasahar, North district. vi). Rangamati Dargah, Sonamura, West district. vii). Badar sahib-er bare, Udaipur, South district. viii). Gazi sahib-er Dargah.

### **3.6.4. Kabarstan (Burial Ground)**

Muslims have their private as well as public buried grounds. Due to the pressure of population the number of this is decreasing as the ground has been usurping by the people for various purposes. It is an issue of headache for the Muslim community

especially in the town area. There are 345 graveyards. But only 200 of them are recognized by the Government.

### **3.6.5. Muktab / Madrasa**

Islam recommends for the culture of world knowledge. Muktab and Madrasa are as old as the Islamic civilization to impart knowledge among the believers through some institutional process. As the Govt. Notification of 2001, there are 127 muktab and madrasa ; nineteen of them are aided by the central government as they have adopted the modernization scheme of the central Human Resource Dept.1996 ; forty of these madrasa are aided by the state government through the grants- in- aid programme. In 2005, the office record of the Wakf board has a list of 193 muktab and madrasa including the proposed names for government recognition (shown in Table no.3.15). Usually muktab--the base level of madrasa education are attached with masjids and organized or led by the local masjids committees which are supposed to bear all financial responsibilities under private management.

Muslim boys and girls of tender age i.e. six to twelve, are sent to these muktab to learn some Islamic lesson e.g. to read out the Quran (selected parts) and the practice of namaz and all the techniques of ritual participation before and after prayer. The course of madrasa education in Tripura is of two levels e.g. primary or junior basic and senior basic level. There are six senior madrasa and all these are for boys only. All the madrasa of Tripura are either primary or senior in standard of education except only one private madrasa of secondary level at Rangamatia, Sonamura. There is no uniform course of study and no Madrasa Board to maintain a uniform standard of madrasa education in Tripura.

There are three kinds of madrasa, namely Government madrasa, Non-Government madrasa and Govt. aided madrasa. The Govt. madrasa are fully under the control of Education Directorate of the State Govt. and Modernization scheme of the Central government The  *in Sonamura and Sonamura*

Islamic Madrasa at N. C. Nagar are such examples. Name of some existing Madrasa, old and new, are included in the Appendix no.... The Table no 3.15 presents the name of the all Senior Madrasa in Tripura. The students of these institutions learn all general subjects prescribed for any other government schools and in addition to these they learn more subjects of Islamic orientation. The teachers are qualified and paid a salary as per rule of the govt. One teacher is paid by the central government. The students of these institutions are eligible to get admitted to any general school. These are mainly residential along with some day scholars.

The non-government madrasas are free from governmental rules and regulations. They may be residential or non residential. They do follow their own course of study and do not take any financial aid from government. *Rangamatia-Darul-Ulam Madrasa* in Sonamura is a best example of this. It is a big and residential madrasa financed partially by the Head office at Deoban in Uttar Pradesh. It follows the course of study as instructed from the head office. This madrasa committee also runs a morning session

**Table no. 3.15**  
**Senior Madrasa in Tripura**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Tillabazar Islamic Senior Madrasa, Kailasahar, North Tripura.                |
| 2. Kurti Senior Madrasa, Dharmanagar, North Tripura.                            |
| 3. Kalanagar Par Islamia Senior Madrasa, Dharmanagar, North Tripura.            |
| 4. Fulbari Senior Madrasa, Dharmanagar, North Tripura.                          |
| 5. Sonapur Ahmadiya Islamic Govt. aided Senior Madrasa, Sonamura, West Tripura. |
| 6. Daodarani Siddiqui Senior Madrasa, Sonamura, West Tripura.                   |

of muktab where the children (including girl children) come to learn. Although the students of the private madrasa learn general subjects in addition to Quran, Hadish, Feka and languages like Arabic, Farsi and Urdu, they do not get admission in general schools or colleges as equivalent in standard. The boys are sent to Assam and West Bengal for higher study and when they come back, they come with dignity holding certificate of Title and Mufti but not considered eligible for the general school and

thus they become detached or segregated from the larger great society. A list of few madrasa in Tripura, district and subdivision wise is given in the Appendix number.

Most of the madrasa of Tripura, in recent times are under Grants-in-aid Programme of the state government. For example, Sonapur Islamic Govt. aided Senior Madrasa, Sonamura, is such a recognized institution. The govt. aided muktab and madrasa have one or more teachers for general subjects, in addition to one 'Hujur' or the Islamic teacher. The salary of only one teacher is granted by the state government. These are also under the modernization scheme of the Govt. of India.

Although madrasa education in Tripura is very old (since the eighteen century), there is not developed a basic and uniform curriculum; there is no high madrasa and no uniform standard for teachers and students in all over Tripura. Before 1983, there was no system of recognized madrasa. The traditional Islamic teaching through the muktab and madrasa was not satisfactory for long days and still it has not reached up to that level of satisfaction to cope with the demands of modern situation. Still now, these private institutions are criticized as being unable to perform the role of mobilizing the masses for eradication of ignorance. The teachers are also not sufficiently enlightened in Islamic knowledge. They have no proficiency in Arabic language and this foreign language is also a bar for acquiring knowledge in Islamic literature on the part of the students. They learn only some Arabic alphabets, Islamic rituals and how to read out the Quran. Most of the poor Muslim students of the private madrasa in rural areas do not get the chance to be acquainted with the general subjects of formal education and they stop their career in such a state that they are neither educated nor illiterate. Most of the guardians of the Muslim girls even stop their education in the muktab or nursery level. So it can be assumed that in Islamic education also, a large number of Muslims of Tripura are not Properly qualified. The educated section and conscious people of the community are insisting on the establishment of a Madrasa Board for the state, a recognized syllabus of study and government rules and regulations to be applicable all over Tripura.

The funds collected from the local sources i.e. contribution as Jakat and the donations from other places are not regular and also insufficient for betterment of madrasa education. In 1997-98, the proposal for two Girls' Madrasa, namely, Ayesha Madrasa (Pry) at Kulubari of Sonamura sub-division and Begum Asmatun Nessa (Pry) Madrasa at Laxmibil of Bishalgarh sub-division were placed for recognition of the state government. So, this step deserves to be mentioned as a very bold step for girls' education in the Muslim community.

### **3.6.6. Wakf Board, Agartala**

The Wakf Board of Tripura was established in 1979. It is a governmental agency for the welfare of the Muslims in Tripura. Muslim religious places are under the care, verification and supervision of the Wakf Board. It has multi various welfare functions in Tripura as follows:

- i) Financial assistance to the poor patients Rs. 100/- to 500/-.
- ii) Students' Stipend to the promising students who obtain 60% marks per subject in the lower classes and 45% marks in upper classes. The students of govt. and non-government Schools from class II to class VIII are eligible for the stipend. Before 2000, it was extended from primary to P.G. level.
- iii) Providing self-employment scope to the educated unemployed young and women.  
For example:
  - a) Some occupational Training as Computer training both for boys and girls; it runs a Computer Academy since 1999. In every year sixty students of all communities pass out from this academy.
  - b) Training in A.C. and Refrigerator repairing (for boys only).
  - c) Training in Tailoring, Food processing and Mushroom (only for girls).
  - d) Distribution of Rickshaw (providing a major percentage of value), Pushcart among the poor men as the means of livelihood and Tailoring machine among the women.

- iv) Providing Grants to the rural people for repairing and constructing of dwelling Houses of the poor in the rural areas and constructing the marketing Stalls on the Wakf land and distributing these stalls among the Muslim beneficiaries of both urban and rural areas.
- v) Supervision of a Rest House (for the minorities) namely, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Pantha Nibash in Agartala.
- vi) Grants for Cultural functions to preserve the cultural tradition of the Muslim community.
- vii) There is a *Haz* committee under the control of the Wakf Board.

The Wakf Board of Tripura has some branch committees in all the sub-divisions of Tripura to reach helps to the poorest people in the village but the administrative network is still poor to serve the purpose. It is experienced from the study tour that many people in the distant villages that can not come frequently in Agartala, have a lot of grievances against the distributing works of the Board.

### **3.6.7. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Pantha Nibash**

It is a govt. Rest House for the minorities in Tripura. It was established in 1994, providing forty seats for men and women. The people belonging to the majority community also can avail the advantage. However, the Muslims are the largest beneficiaries of this rest house. Mainly the people of remote rural areas come to Agartala for various purposes like medical treatment and other official and legal works. It provides a great facility for the poor Muslim women to rest in a secured place with a reasonable amount of rent.

### **3.6.8. Nazrul Chatrabash**

For the welfare of the Muslim students, a men's hostel was established in Agartala in 1979. The college and University students of *mufforsal* areas can avail the facility of this government hostel providing sixty seats. Before 1979, the Muslim students of remote villages had to face the difficulties to find out rented houses in the Hindu

localities. The Muslim residents as rent owner are not very common. Hence Nazrul Chatrabash has solved this problem of the Muslim male students to a great extent. There is no such Girls Hostel for Muslim Girls.

### **3.6.9. Tripura Minorities Co-operative Development Corporation Ltd. :**

The Government intervention for the welfare of the minority communities has been continued by the establishment of this Corporation Ltd. in Agartala, 1997. Its main objective is to provide economic support to the unemployed youths belonging to minority community. The Corporation is run by a Board of Directors under the leadership of a Chairman. The Muslims, being the largest minority of the state, avail the chance to be benefited more by this. It has two principal functions: i) Sanction of Loan for all kinds of trade and business to the young men and women; after the duration of five years, the loan is to be refunded by installments. ii) Sanction of Educational loan for technical or professional education by installment system.

### **3.6.10. Tripura Other Backward Classes Co-operative Development Corporation Ltd. :**

It is also established in recent time for the welfare of the Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Classes in the state. The Directorate for Welfare of Religious Minorities is a part of this Development Corporation. It is only for welfare activities among all religious minorities.

### **3.6.11. Muslim Welfare Organizations :**

Since before the partition of India, the political awareness among the Muslims of Tripura has inspired them to form organizations or associations with the purpose of preserving their own religious, cultural and socio-political interest and also peace and harmony in the larger society of the state. Very little is known about the works of the voluntary organizations in the past. As according to the information is available in history, some voluntary organizations were formed by the Muslims which proved their identity consciousness as well as activity of the community people. These are as follows:

1. *Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad*, formerly *Bhatri Sangha* was established in 1936 to 1938. It was a pro-Congress association worked and moved against a) the eviction order of five hundred Muslim families at Ramnagar in 1938 and b) the Ghasuri tax imposed on the people of Tripura by the king, with a representation of four thousand people of Sonamura led by Dr. Abul Rahman along with Rudranath Bhattacharya from Dharmanagar. The Parishad worked in the villages for the awareness of society by establishing Night School etc.

2. *Rajyik Jamaet Ulema* was established in 1942. Head office is in Deoban, U.P. This organization has been running a big residential Madrasa "Darul-U-lum" in Sonamura, Rangamatia. The Madrasa is residential for both teachers and students. Since 1982 the source of income is from the subscription and donation of locality as well as out side Tripura As per the rules of the association (constitution), it does not come under Modernization Scheme of the Govt. Hence, it is not entitled to get any governmental help. By imparting Islamic education, the association takes initiative to reform the society from bad customs and culture which are un- Islamic. By the help of social service, it tries to serve the widows and the helpless people victim by natural calamities or communal riots.

3. *Anjuman Islamia*, established in 1945, had an objective to obtain the rights and facilities for the Muslim community. Abdul Barik alias Gadu Mia founded this organization, Anjuman Islamia in Agartala. It established its branches in all Muslim majority areas of Tripura. One of such branches in Comilla (British Tripura) welcomed the Maharaja of Tripura, Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya in his visit to Comilla. Maharaja contributed financial help to some similar welfare organizations, viz. Saha Suja Masjid, Khadimal Islam in Comilla. The aims and objectives of Anjuman Islamia are to improve the integrity of character in every sphere of life among the Muslims. The organization established the 'Kamalia Madarasa' in the village of Kazipur and Birendranagar in Sadar sub division. A weekly newspaper, *Nabajagaran* was published under the editorship of Gulam Navi, Agartala.

4. *Tripura Rajya Muslim Praja Majlish* was a socio-religious organization established in 1945. It was formed with the objective of creating impact upon the Muslim farmers. The notable persons of Agartala like Arman Ali Munshi and Farid Mia of Udaipur were among the founder members. Some Sirajul Islam was its secretary. They published a weekly magazine “Saptahik. It worked as a rival organization of Anjuman Islamia among the Muslim farmers.

5. *Jamaet Ulema Hind* was established in 1949. It worked as a branch-organization of Delhi Jamaet Ulema Hind. The Secretary was an advocate, Ahmad Hussain of Bishalgar. The objective was to create unity among the Muslims of Tripura persisting on the Islamic rituals. The organization was dead on 1962.

6. *Dharmanagar Hita Sadhini Samity* was founded in the 1940s to serve for the unity of Hindu and Muslims. Makbul Bhuiya and Kalachandra Chowdhury were two founders. It worked to reduce the Hindu Muslim tension during the pre- Independence and post Independence period.

### **3.6.12. Voluntary Organizations :**

Some voluntary organizations of recent origin are working for the development of the Muslims. For example, Ramnagar Muslim Kalyan Samiti, Agartala (1980s); National Educational Society, Arundhutinagar (1995), Agartala ; Human Development Society (1994), Agartala ; Minority Development organization, South Ramnagar (1995), Agartala; Pushparaj Club at Babubazar, Kailasahar (1970) and others. The Minority Development Organization, South Ramnagar, Agartala, is working on the following schemes:

- The job oriented schemes like Computer training center, Calligraphy centre.
- Some welfare projects: Home for Muslim Distressed women named Melaghar Chhayanir Briddha Ashram, which has accommodation of 125 women.
- ‘Sarba Siksha’ Activities at Purba Chandigar, Melaghar and Sonamura Aid Aware Campaign in eighteen brick fields.

**Pushparaj Club** at Babubazar, Kailasahar in North Tripura, is involved in different welfare activities for the locality i.e. Yazekhowra village and other areas. Their activities concentrate on Health, Environment, Social Service and related developmental activities. It has earned good name and fame by its multi-various social service activities.

**Tablqi Jamaet** is a different kind of Muslim organization. Tablqi Jamaet of Tripura is a part of the cross country organization originated at Mawat in Delhi, as a counter organization to resist the “Suddhi” movement of Arya Samaj in the twenties of the last century (i.e. 1922). Tablqi Jamaet started to resist the conversion of the Muslims into Hindu religion. Similarly it wanted to resist the western civilization. The philosophical idea of this movement was the spiritual freedom from the world which is a prison like (Dutta). The way to freedom is to be devoted to the Islamic rituals and there should be no deviation from the Islamic culture of life for obtaining spiritual and mental peace. Some young educated men of Tripura often go to the Gujrat or U.P. to take training in these ideas and activities. A team of three or four men visit the Muslim houses in a regular course of two days in a month and discuss with the men about the Islamic way of life. This is not a conventional organization but a group of team for works. There are no port folio holders like president, secretary, etc. It is found everywhere in Tripura. The workers try to influence the people for the pursuance of the Islamic way of life.

### **3.7. Noted Muslim Personalities of Tripura**

The Royal family members of Tripura were known as the lover of virtues and they patronized the art, literature, religion and science in India. They were secular in their attitude to their subjects or *praja*— both Hindu and Muslim. They did not differentiate among the people of different faith. As a result of this, a number of Muslim personalities emerged at that time. They were able to come into the lime light of the society with their virtues & activities in different spheres of administration, law and judiciary, politics and literary works. The post Independence Administration of Tripura has carried this tradition. Few names of notable Muslims can be cited here.

1. Munshi Abdul Aziz, Agartala, member of Raj-Sabha (privy council) of Maharaja Birendra Kisore Manikya (1909 A.D. to 1923 A.D)
2. Maulivi Mukhir Majumdar, Kailasahar, member of Privy Council of Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya. (1909 A.D. to 1923 A.D)
3. Habibur Rahaman Chowdhury, Collector; appointed as the chief manager of Chakla-Rosonabad i.e. the *zamindari* of Tripura kingdom during the British Rule.
4. Maulavi Tajuddin Ahamad Chowdhury, Minister of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kisore Manikya (1923 to 1947) .
5. Farid Ahmad Chowdhury (Udaipur), Karnel of Tripura Regiment under Maharaja Bir Bikram Kisore Manikya (1923 to 1947).
6. Mir Abdu Hafez , *Subedar* , promoted to the rank of Captain in the year 1306 of Tripura Era..
7. Daulat Ahmad Majumder (Sonamura), born in 1864, was Muktar (lawyer); he was poet, writer editor of Bengali magazine named *Samiksha*. His great contribution is his book namely “A grammar of Kokborok” language of the Tribes of Tripura
8. Monohar Sheik, poet and author of ‘Gazinama ( a biography of Samser Gazi who ruled Tripura for years) and ‘Champak Vijoy’
9. Adim Boxo Kha, Sitar- Badak in the Raj Sabha of the kings of Tripura.
10. Chhuti Kha, Sarangi-Badak in the Raj-Sabha.
11. Raja Kamruddin Kha, Sarangi-Badak in the Raj-Sabha.
12. Munshi Ismail was a lawyer in Khowai Subdivision (1909—1911) (Datta, 1976)
13. Kaisar Md. Chowdhury, Law practioner. The first Khowai Division Office was started from his Chamber (Datta, 1976).
14. Alam Karigar , an artist of royal court . His thirteen Art pictures on ‘Krisna Leela’ are found in the old puthis or documents of Tripura. (Rajmala, 1303 BE).
15. Adim Boxo Khan, Sitar Musician in the Royal Court
16. Alam Fakir was also a state artist. A bright piece of colorful illustration of the manuscript of ‘Padakalpataru’ is an example of his art. (Rajmala, 1303 BE).

17. Sri Abdul Khalem, *Nakal Navish* in occupation (13.10.39) (Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla, 1976).
18. Sri Suraj Mia, constable, appointed as judge of special Fausdari court (23.12.41)(Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla, 1976).
19. Olliwalla,Udaipur, acted as Hakim (Judge). Later, he became secretary of Tripura Legislative assembly and Chairman of the Tripura Public Service Commission
20. Sayyad S.M.Ali , Kailashar, worked as Justice of the Guwahati High Court Branch. He was a frequent contributor to the local News papers e.g Dainik Sambad.
21. Arman Ali Munshi, Agartala, renowned lawyer (1950 to 1960)
22. Sultan Ahmad, District Magistrate in Agartala Court (in the sixties).
23. Kamal Uddin, Taher Khan (Agartala), Abdul Karim Munshi,, Nuruddin Munshi (Kailashahar) were well-known professional in the years of sixties. .
24. Gulam Rabbani, eminent teacher of Umakanta Academy, Agartala.
25. Sirajul Islam, Head *Maulavi*, Umakanta Acadamy. .
26. Dr Siraj Ahmad, Agartala. Professor of Tripura University, author of literary books, editor of literary magazine
27. Kala Mia, Melaghar, Sonamura, Congress worker, Member of T.T.C., left for Pakistan.
28. Nurul Huda ,B.A & B.L, acted as Director of New Motor Transport Service.
29. Firoz Uddin Chowdhury, S.D.O in Agartala Sadar.
30. Mukta Mia, a popular D.S.P, Agartala.
31. Anwar Ali, Kailashahar, S.D.O in Public works Department.
32. Badsah Mia, Freedom Fighter (East Bengal) and first M.P from Tripura.
33. Arman Ali Munshi, a member of Lok-Sabha (in 1960s); one of the founders of Tripura Rajya Moslem Praja Majlish

34. Arshad Ali, Speaker of the State Assembly.
35. Monsoor Ali (Sonamura), Minister of Tripura.
36. Aftab Uddin, an elected member in the Anchalik Parishad, 1952.
37. Wazid Ali (Dharmanagar), Congress worker, Member of Tripura Territorial Council (T.T.C) in 1956. Later he acted as M.L.A.
38. Aftab Uddin, an elected member in the Anchalik Parishad, 1952.
39. *Maulana Abdul Latif* (Kailasahar), Congress worker; Cabinet Minister of the State before 1978. Later, he worked as M.P from Tripura.
40. Arshad Chowdhury, Udaipur. Member of T.T.C. and acted as Deputy Speaker.
41. Atikul Islam, party member of C.P.I., left for Pakistan in sixties.
42. Para Mia, worker of C.P.I. Later joined in Muslim League and left for Pakistan in sixties.
43. Bariq Mia or Gadu Mia, Agartala. Well-known contractor; worked in favour of Muslim League and Pakistan; he left India. The famous mosque named after him, at Shibragar, near college road, is his contribution.
44. Jabbar Bhuiya (C.P.I.) and Sundar Ali were two political activists in 1960s.
45. Araber Rahaman, C.P.M. (I), Forest Minister of Tripura (1978 to 1988).
46. Faizur Rahaman (Dharmanagar), Minister of Tripura; he has been elected three electoral terms since 1993.
47. Sahid Chowdhury (Sonamura), M.L.A. since 1993; Chairman of Tripura Small Industry Corporation, Chairman of Minority Development Corporation; Vice Chairman of Haz Committee; Vice Chairman of Wakf Board; Active and first initiator for Nazrul Chhatrabash—a students Hostel for Muslim boys in Tripura and Rest house for the Minorities in Tripura, etc.
48. Billal Mia (Sonamura), Ex. Minister of last Congress Ministry (1978 to 1988); at present he is an M.L.A. and active socio-political worker.
49. Maidar Ali (Udaipur), Awarded *Rastapati Puraskar*, Retired. Head Master; Active social worker; Associated with a lot of socio-political organizations; Acting as a secretary of Wakf Committee in Udaipur up to 2003.

50. Tuku Mia (Bishalgarh), Retired Teacher, Congress party member and socio-political activist.
51. Jafar Sadeq (1971 to 1990, Bishalgarh), was a poet.
52. Farukul Islam, Secretary, Wakf Board since 1980s.

Besides, a number of persons are found now as officer, lawyer, teacher, engineer and doctor e.g. .Rafiqul Islam, Agartala, retired D.S.P. (son of Munshi Abdul Aziz Munshi); Badaruzam Chowdhury, retired teacher, nominated chairman of Kailasahar Nagar Panchayat; Kutub Ali (Kailasahar), T.C.S., Deputy Director, Minority Welfare Department, Kailasahar; Md. Basir Ali (Khowai), S.D.M; Muslim Uddin (Sonamura), T.C.S and working as B.D.O; Ayat Ali (Amarpur), T.C.S ; Tayab Ali Khan, Engineer, and many others. Many names are in the dark. The wealthy Muslims of Tripura in the early fifties, contributed land, labour to the establishment of schools in Tripura, e.g. Karaimura H.S school, 1952, established on the land contributed by Rahaman Ali Hazi, and Abdul Jabbar Mahaldar, Ahamad Hussain, Chand Mia, A.M.Samsul Alam ; Jolaibari Class XII school was established in 1951 on the contribution of Md. Afroz Chowdhury; .Chand Mia Sardar, Rahim ‘Master’,Hussain Ali Sardar, Janab Ali Sardar, Raham Ali Hazi, Billal Hussain, Unuch ‘Kabi’, Chayad Ali (Graduate in 1933), Habibur Rahaman , Lokman and others (Bishalgarh) (Alim; 2002). Muslim woman is not found in this list. A few women are coming forward in the field of politics, law and administration.

## **Findings**

Tripura has occupied her place in the Indian history since the medieval period. It has become integral part of Indian Union Territory since our Independence. A demographic and socio-economic profile of the Muslim inhabitants of Tripura presented in this chapter in the background of an ancient kingdom and its journey from a kingdom to a democratic state.

In its geological identity, once risen from the sea-bed and taken a tiny shape from the vast soil of the river of Bramhaputra, Tripura lies within the Assam-Arakan geological zone. The political boundary has gone through various changes during the ancient and medieval period. Geographically, Tripura lying between Bengal and Assam is in a unique position in the north—east India. Tripura consists of two parts—Hill in the east adjacent to Mizoram and Plains in the west adjacent to Bangladesh. The very backwardness of its communication is the legacy of the Partition of India contributing a land-locked state Tripura. After a history of ups and downs, the population of Tripura, at present contributes about 8 percent of the total population.

The people of the State consist of different ethnic and religious plurality since the long history. The two major ethnic groups are the Tribal and Bengali; the six major religious groups are Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Sikh. Muslims are the largest religious minority contributing about 8.00 percent population of the all religious communities. They are now 2, 54,442 population in Tripura (**Census:** 2001). Majority Inhabitants live in nine sub divisions out of fifteen and they are in fifteen blocks out of twenty three. The large majority lives in the village. They dominate more than 20 Gram Panchayats (of west and north) among 513 gram Panchayats of Tripura. The total urban Muslim population in Tripura is 17,694 (i.e.3.24%). It has increased from the last decades. Among four districts, largest number of Muslim population is highest in the west followed by north and south. This is a historical trend reflected since the census of 1874. It continues in the succeeding years also.

Table no.3.3 and 3.4 shows the sub division wise Muslim population in 1901 and 1961 and it is estimated that Muslim Bengalis were larger in number than the Bengali Hindus during 1901 to 1931.

The social structure of the Muslim constituted by different ethnic and regional groups, the occupational groups and theological groups has been presented in the light of the history with the post Independence scenario. It is found that there are eight ethno-regional Muslim groups viz. Bengali, Bihar-e (Hindusthani), Manipuri, Assamese, Immigrants from Bangladesh, Lahore-e from Lahore, Iran-e from Baghdad and seventeen kinds of social-occupational groups in Tripura. They have their social rank and status in the society. Interesting to note that men are known by the different social group identities but there is no such identity for women. However it is observed that the conscious women use the group identity before or after their name i.e Sayeda, Khanam, Khadim, Palwan and so on. In addition, it is noted that 'Mia' as last name is used with a sense of respect though it is not equivalent to high social groups in Tripura. It may be due to the fact that their forefathers were wealthy farmers and enjoyed a position in the society. Theologically all these groups belong to Sunni sect and Hanafi school of Islamic faith.

In economic pursuit, Muslims coming from agrarian background are mainly cultivators by occupation and they have contributed a lot to the cleaning of the jungles of Tripura and introducing plain cultivation replacing the Jum cultivation of the primitive people. Besides they were found *Charibardar*, *Hukkabardar*, *Pankhabardar*, *Benondia Peyada* (a special type of police), Paloan (boxer) of the royal court, coach man, boat man, *Mahoot* (elephant driver) and so on ; in the medieval period they also joined in the army and police department. They were good craftsman, goldsmith, tailor, weaver etc. In the changing situation they have lost many of their expertise knowledge and occupations.

During the frequent attack of the Kingdom, few *Zamindars* and land lords emerged among the Muslim, especially in the west Tripura which was the entrance-

door of the Bengal rulers. After Partition, many people left in this land joined in various modern occupations. Under the situation of crisis in the agricultural resources, Muslim women also have come forward in the Work Participation. Both Muslim men and women are lagging behind than the other religious communities. Their participation is worst in the Household Industry as far the data suggest.

Though the Kingdom was attacked many times by the Muslim rulers of Bengal and Delhi, Muslim subjects were never discriminated by the Kings of Tripura. The historical documents like the copper plates speak the truth. As the Brahmins were gifted land by the kings, so the persons elevated in Islamic faith were patronized by the kings. The common people, even the British subjects residing in the plain Tripura were provided land during the rein of Kalyan Manikya, Govindo Manikya and others. During the time of field works, the aged Muslims of Tripura told that their fore fathers were very happy in the Princely rule of Tripura.

At present situation when they are to face the competition in job market, they are to feel the need for formal education. But Muslims of Tripura were not behind in accepting the formal education at its beginning in Tripura during the rule of Radha Kishor Manikya (1896 to 1906). The *Rajgi Tripurar Sarkari Bangla* recorded a list of Muslim boys who obtained scholarship for education. Before this Formal and English education, since the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century (during the rule of Samser Gazi), the people were introduced with the traditional religious education by institutional manner. With the Sanskrit Tols, Arabic Madrasa also existed. They are very much conscious to maintain their religious identity. A large number of mosques and madrasa in the state prove their efforts. Every year a number of boys are sent to other states to get madrasa education in higher level. But the notable thing is that the community as a whole was reserved about the female education. Only a few exceptional persons and their families allowed the girls to be educated. While the other girls in Manipuri and Hindu communities including the girls of royal family had taken the advantage of modern education. Due to the past legacy, Muslim women are neither advanced in

religious education nor in formal education. No girls' Madrasa has been established so long. This attitude towards women indicates the existence of pardah custom. They are still backward in comparison to their sisters of other communities. The data on literacy among the Muslim women shows that about 50 percent women are still illiterate. Though there is no data on their drop out, it is assumed that it starts in increasing number at the end of primary level and continued in the succeeding levels. Though a number of girls remain in the status of 'Never Enrolled', but this is decreasing among the present generation girls than the aged women. They are now getting education in college and University denying the large scale drop out in Higher education. Though there is non-availability of data on the Muslims, it is observed that drop out begins at the end of the primary level and it continues in the middle, secondary, and higher levels. Even in the Vocational / Technical colleges, they are to drop out due to financial and other reasons. Rural –urban disparity is not significant.

The Muslims of Tripura are politically conscious since the Princely rule. They are found in administrative responsibilities as well as involved in political activities. The List of Muslim Personalities speaks the truth. They, (especially from Dharmanagar and Kailasahar) responded to the Khilafat Movement in India in 1921 and the Swadeshi Movement along with other people of Tripura. In the *Anusilan Samiti* of Tripura Branch, there are three Muslims. In other branches of plain Tripura under the British rule, a substantial number of Muslims joined in the Anusilan Samiti and the Revolutionary party; though there is no record that whether they joined in *Chatra Sangha*, and *Bhatri Sangha* during the twenties but in the thirties, they took active part in the formation of *Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad* at Sonamura and joined in Tripura State Congress during the forties. Muslims also joined in the undivided communist party of Tripura branch. Since the pre-Independence days, they established some welfare organizations for the development of the community people as well as communal harmony in Tripura. The notable persons of the community are the outcome of the time signifying the secular approach of the rulers. In the anti- British Movement,

Muslim women of undivided Bengal in the plain Tripura joined in the Revolutionary party while they have no record in the politics of Tripura. They remained far away from the social-movements in Tripura and thus lagged behind their sisters of other communities eg. Bengali Hindu and tribal women. After Independence, they have enjoyed the right of adult suffrage but not involved themselves in direct politics. Only the introduction of three-tier Panchayat system has given them the scope and guarantee to be successful in the participation they are not only elected as members but selected as head of the offices in the village level. But they are still backward in urban administration of Tripura. In the list of more than 52 notable persons of the community, there is no woman indicating the backwardness of the community. But one can acquire inspiration from the success of women in all India during the pre Independence and post Independence period. There is a number of such women since the history of Muslim rule in India.