The status of all women in a country cannot be expected to be the same. There may be disparities among different groups of women in respect of various socio-economic variables related to their status. There are also significant differences in women’s specific status across region, cast and class, communities and religions (Government of India, 2007:41). However, currently available literature on women reiterates that the status of Muslim women is somewhat inferior to that of other Indian women. Very little is known about the status of Muslim women in India. The scarcity of empirical data in this regard prompts to stereotyped judgement on the issue because it is linked to their religion. In this regard it is most important to talk briefly about legislative guiding principles of Islam on the status of women.

2.1 STATUS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

There has always been confusion about Muslim women’s status and rights. The confusion arises due to the significant differences about the status and rights of Muslim women in textual Islam, in Islamic history and tradition, and Islam in practice at present. The series of studies that have been published since 1970s on the social problems of Muslim women, begin with the premise that they are disadvantaged in particular ways because of their religious identity and gender and focus on issues related to Personal laws (Lateef, 1990, 1998; Hussain 1998; Kazi 1999; Hassan and Menon 2004). It has been rightly pointed out in Sachar Committee Report, “The obsessive focus on select cases of Muslim women passionately discussed in the media results in identifying the Muslim religion as the sole locus of gender injustice in the community. Consequently, the civil society and the State locate Muslim women’s deprivation not in terms of the ‘objective’ reality of societal discrimination and faulty development policies, but in the religious community space” (Government of India 2006: 12-13). However, there is nothing in the Islamic principles which lead to the low status of Muslim women rather Islam prescribes equality in the status of men and women. Some scholars argue that ‘true Islam’ means equality between the sexes and that Muslim women’s oppression is due to patriarchal misinterpretations of Islam (Brijbhusan, 1980; Banamusa, 1995; Kazi, 1999). Islam emphasizes both that women differ from men and that they are equal to men. In Quran and in the Hadith literature, there are various statements concerning women in particular which makes clear pronouncement in favour of equal rights for both sexes (Jawad, 1998: 20-21).
The Quranic version of woman’s rights is very much in tune with the modern philosophy of human rights. In the Quran of particular interest is the verse which says that man and woman have been created out of one single soul.

“O mankind! Verily we have created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other…”

(Quran, 49:13)

Following words depicted in the Quran give clear commandment that both men and women will be subjected to equal treatment for their deeds.

“We shall reward the steadfast according to their noblest deeds. Be thy men or women, those that embrace the faith and do what is right we shall surely grant a happy life: We shall reward them according to their noblest actions.”

(Quran, 16: 97)

It is evident from the above verses that woman is equal to man and both will be rewarded equally for their good deeds and no distinction whatsoever would be made between them. Thus, holy Quran has been fair to woman’s status. It confirms that role of woman is not less vital than man; she is equal to him in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for her deeds. The rights of woman are equal to that of man in all respects.

However, the equal rights to men and women and high status granted by Islam to woman prevailed during the early Islamic period (Engineer, 2005:207). Early Islamic history is replete with examples which tell us about the immense contribution of women to the Islamic community. They had important roles outside family life and were actively involved in all aspects of social life and communal affairs. Women were also engaged in the commerce, wars, religious debates and social work. In addition Muslim women were involved in the political issues of the time and their opinions in political affairs were highly respected. They were identified as active participants and fully involved partners in historical events (Yadav, 2003:303-30). As time passed
women in Islam were stripped of many of the roles they were allegedly assigned in the early Islamic eras. The feudal traditions were embedded into the Muslim culture and the teachings of Quran were interpreted by the Muslim law makers in such a way so as to suit the rulers and their culture. Thus, the status of women was reduced to a lower level (Khan, 1990:13).While Islam confers equal rights to men and women, the status of Muslim women must be considered in relation to the interjection between gender, family and community.

2.2 STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

Like other women, Muslim women too are not a monolithic community. There are women belonging to different sects, social groups, occupations, regional, lingui-cultural groups, educational levels, etc. Their lives are similarly at the intersection of gender, family and community within the dynamic context of Indian society, polity and economy. Thus, Muslim women in India tend to suffer not just the disabilities attached to the female status, but also to the Muslim community’s impoverished minority status in the country. Muslims form the largest minority community and the second largest religious group in India. They constitute about 14 per cent of the India’s total population according to the census 2001. However, the available literature on the condition of Muslims in India reveals that they are a backward minority. They are educationally most backward, economically poor and politically a powerless community in India. This fact of minority status of Muslims in India has been conclusively established in several reports and surveys of government and also by individual researchers.

A High Power Panel under the chairmanship of Dr. Gopal Singh was set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the early 1980s to enquire into the condition of religious minorities, Schedule Castes (SCs) and Schedule Tribes (STs). The committee’s findings revealed that Muslims and Neo-Buddhists were the most educationally backward communities at the national level (Government of India, 1983:3-4). It was found that their economic condition was worse than those of Schedule Castes (SCs) and Schedule Tribes (STs). They were deprived of the benefits of developmental schemes and were underrepresented in governmental services and decision making bodies (Zakaria, 1995:163-166). Even after the submission of the report of Dr. Gopal Singh’s Committee, there has been no significant improvement in
the socio-economic conditions of Muslims which is evident from the census 2001. An analysis of census 2001 reveals that Muslims are behind other religious communities in the areas of literacy, industrial promotion and economic pursuits. They lack technical and vocational education as well as training in the trades in demand.

In March 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh appointed a High level committee headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar to prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of Indian Muslims. The report highlighted the deplorable socio-economic plight of the Muslim community in India. It notes that the community exhibits “deficits and deprivation” in practically all dimensions of development. “In fact by and large, Muslims rank somewhat above SCs/STs but below Hindu OBCs, other Minorities and Hindu General (mostly upper castes) in almost all indicators considered” (Government of India 2006: 237). The poor representation of Muslims in the employment market was also highlighted. A significantly large proportion of, Muslim workers are engaged in the informal sector of the economy with little or no social security and their participation in the formal sector employment is significantly less than the national average. In no state does the representation of Muslims in the government departments match their population share. Muslims’ presence in the private sector was found to be even more dismal. The committee also found that the large proportion of community is with poor civic amenities and infrastructure facilities. On the whole Muslims face fairly high levels of poverty and their condition is only slightly better than that of SCs and STs (Government of India, 2006).

Many scholars have also pointed out the socio-economic backwardness of Muslims in India (Siddiqui, 1984; Mondal, 1985; Siddiqui, 1987 Ansari, 1992; Khalidi, 1995). Thus, Muslims’ backwardness results in a sense of discrimination. What is important is not the fact of discrimination against Muslims but the feeling of discrimination among them (Mathur, 1992). Imtiyaz Ahmed writes:

“But, of course, the important thing is not that there is discrimination against Muslims in the economic structure. What is important is that the Muslims have felt so insecure as to believe themselves to be targets of continuous economic discrimination. The fact of their belief has been crucial in their social adjustment in the country” (Ahmed, 1970:43).
It is this sense of discrimination which leads to minority identity and then the sense of insecurity is exacerbated by frequent communal riots. Communal tension or any untoward incident in any part of the country is enough to make Muslims fear for their safety and security (Government of India 2006). This minority identity leads to alienation and withdrawal from the educational and economic life which is far more in case of Muslim women. Thus, the minority status of Muslims is a fact which is recognised by all and the condition of Muslim women has been related to their minority identity (Mathur, 1992).

“Women in general are the torchbearers of community identity. So, when community identity is seen to be under siege, it naturally affects women in dramatic ways. Women, sometimes of their own volition, sometimes because of community pressure, adopt visible markers of community identity on their person and in their behaviour. Their lives, morality and movement in public spaces are under constant scrutiny and control. A gender-based fear of the ‘public’, experienced to some degree by all women, is magnified manifold in the case of Muslim women. The lines between the ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe species’ become rigid. The community and its women withdraw into the safety of familiar orthodoxies, reluctant to participate in the project of modernity, which threatens to blur community boundaries” (Government of India 2006: 13).

Presently, in the changing Indian society the Muslim women try hard to get rid of the burden of gender, family and community by way of getting themselves educated (Menon, 1981:25). The amalgam between minority identity and stereotyped judgement on the issues of Muslim women can be easily broken if they receive proper education and become conscious of their rights as well as their duties. Education is therefore, their dire and essential need.

2.3 EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

There is a considerable gap in the field of education between various religious communities and Muslims are worst off among all religious groups in India. Muslims are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality education; their deprivation increases manifold as the level of education rises. In some instances the relative share for Muslims is lower than even the SC’s (Government of
India, 2006). The fact of educational backwardness of the Muslims in India has been conclusively established in several reports and surveys. The Gopal Singh report and the Programme of Action under the New Educational Policy of 1986, reports of Sachar Committee and the Rangnath Mishra Commission clearly show that the Muslim minority is educationally most backward segment of the nation.

The literacy rate among Muslims according to census 2001 was 59.1 per cent which is far below the national average of 65.1 per cent. Dropout rate among them is the highest at the level of Primary, Middle and Higher Secondary compared to all the socio-religious communities (SRC’s). As many as 25 per cent Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 have either never attended school or have dropped out. Only 17 per cent Muslims above the age of 17 years have completed matriculation as compared to 26 per cent for all socio-religious communities. The gap between Muslims and other socio-religious communities increases as the level of education increases. According to Sachar Committee report the gap between education of Muslims and advantaged sections has widened since independence because Muslims have not been able to respond to the challenge of improving their educational status. Although the educational attainments of Muslims have improved over the years but it has been at a more gradual pace than other socio-religious communities (Government of India, 2006). It is to be noted that the literacy rates are much higher amongst other minorities, Jains lead, followed by Christians, Sikhs and even Buddhists.

After the findings of Sachar Committee and Rangnath Mishra Commission, now the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), a central government body, has reconfirmed the deplorable educational conditions of the Muslims in the country. The NSSO which is attached to the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, in its report titled “Education in India, 2007-08: Participation and Expenditure”, says that of hundred Muslims in the education system, just ten are enrolled in the High School and above. Similar ratio for SC’s is 11, ST’s 12 and OBC’s is 14. The report further says that Muslims’ ratio in higher education is lower than even ST’s, who are considered most backward. Various Sociological studies (Siddiqui, 1984; Sharma, 1987; Kareem, 1988; Siddiqui, 2004) and different thinkers (Ahmad, 1981; Sarkar, 1983; Ahmad, 1987; Saxena, 1989; Jayaram, 1990; Ansari, 1992; Hasan, 1993; Khaldi, 1995) on the other hand have also pointed out the
educational backwardness of Muslims in India and have highlighted various causes of their backwardness which include low perceived returns from education, poor access to schools, school based factors; issues relating to Madrassa education etc.

This gap in education becomes much more in case of Muslim women who are educationally backward both in comparison to women of other religious communities as well as Muslim men. The educational backwardness of Muslim women is not only due to disabilities attached to the female status, but also due to the educational backwardness of Muslim community in the country. In 2001, literacy rate of Muslim women was 50.1 per cent compared to 53.7 per cent for all communities. 30.5 per cent of literate Muslim females attain primary level, 14.2 per cent have middle level education, 9.5 per cent are Matric/Secondary pass, 3.9 per cent have higher secondary education and only 2.4 per cent are Graduates and above. In contrast, 27.9 per cent of literate Muslim males attain primary level, 15.8 per cent have middle level education, 12.0 per cent are Matric/Secondary pass, 5.0 per cent have higher secondary education and only 4.4 per cent are Graduates and above (Census of India 2001).

According to the report of Sachar Committee due to poverty children are forced to drop out after the first few classes which is particularly true for Muslim girls. One of the most interesting piece of information gathered by the committee was that there was a strong desire and enthusiasm for education among Muslim women and girls. The popular perception that religious conservatism among Muslim is a major factor for not accessing education is incorrect. The recognition of their educational backwardness is quite acute amongst a large section of Indian Muslims and they wish to rectify it urgently (Government of India 2006:15). The report says “…While the education system appears to have given upon Muslim girls, the girls themselves have not given up on education”. It is generally been held that the problem of Muslim educational deprivation is associated with the conservative attitude of Muslim parents. However, they are not averse to modern education. They prefer affordable government school education for their children and do not necessarily send their children to Madrasas. Some of them even prefer the medium of instruction to be English while others like Urdu medium. However, the access to government schools for Muslim children is limited (Government of India 2006: 19, 20, 85). Thus, the perception that Muslim women’s educational backwardness can be ascribed to certain
intrinsic and immutable features of Islam which is widely prevalent is incorrect. Islam prescribes equal rights to both men and women and right to education is no exception to it.

2.4 EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

In Islam there is no priority for men over woman to acquire education. Both are equally encouraged to acquire it. Islam attaches immense importance to the acquisition and extension of knowledge. Fundamentally Islam has always considered learning at least a useful accessory to become a good Muslim, and as necessary condition which helps to develop their faculties (Singh, 2003: 194). It encourages its followers to enlighten themselves with the knowledge of their religion as well as other branches of knowledge and emphasizes every believer to be well educated. Islam holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and Quran is full of verses which praise learned people (Yadav, 2003: 297-298). The Quran says: They are losers who besottedly have slain their children by keeping them in ignorance (Baveja, 1981:7). Islam has always considered and advocated education of its followers as one of its most preferred and favoured activities. The Prophet Muhammad always emphasized the importance of knowledge to his followers and encouraged them to seek it. He was the forerunner in this regard, in declaring that seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman. Importance of education is aptly described by Prophet Muhammad in the following words- “You should acquire knowledge even if you have to go to China for learning”.

However, the high status and equal treatment granted to woman by the Islam which prevailed during early Islamic period did not last long. The status of Muslim woman deteriorated and they were denied of their rights. The worst deprivation of all was the denial of their right to receive education. They gradually got pushed aside from the pursuit of education and reached to a point where they were declared as educationally most backward. Their education was constrained by inherited social customs. It was believed that the basic awareness of religious knowledge was sufficient for woman and they were confined to their houses. Muslim woman were denied to any access to modern education and their education was viewed as a threat to the traditional customs. Thus, feudal traditions were added to Islam which completely subjugated Muslim women and placed them under many fetters of
customs and artificial traditions not sanctioned by Islam (Yadav, 2003: 304-306). As Asghar Ali Engineer puts it-

“But except for initial period of few decades Muslim woman never enjoyed equality in the Islamic world. Soon, for various reasons, more and more restrictions were imposed on them. Though there was absolutely no place for monarchy in Islam, the institution of monarchy developed in the Muslim world within thirty years of death of Prophet and all feudal customs and traditions associated with monarchy came to be adopted by Muslim monarchs (though continued to be called Caliphs for religious reasons) including severe restrictions on Muslim woman. In other words all feudal practices were imposed on woman in the Muslim world which continues till today” (Engineer, 2005: 207).

Thus, the educational backwardness and lack of modern attitudes and values among Muslim woman is the result of the pressures of feudal society, religious orthodoxy and social prejudices and not due to Islamic principles. If we look at the Islamic principles with regard to woman and its present applicability we find that the rights given to woman in Islam are not actually observed in practice. There is a wide disparity between the status of woman in Islam and her actual condition in the Muslim society. Thus, illiteracy of Muslim woman became a widespread phenomenon. This situation continued up to recent times until efforts were made to improve female education.

2.5 EDUCATION AND CHANGING STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

There is a dearth of studies on Muslim women based on primary data both in quality as well as in quantity. Haniff (1983) remarks, “Even though there has been a great rise in the study of women in India, the Muslim women have been grossly neglected in this process.” Few available studies on Muslim women are reviewed below.

Kidwai (1976) on the basis of a content analysis of religious scriptures, historical accounts and other relevant materials presented a comparative analysis of the role and status of women in different religious communities. As regards the role
and status of Muslim women he has drawn a conclusion that the condition of Muslim women is not universally uniform, but a trend of decline in their status is found everywhere.

Roy (1979) analyzed the status of Muslim women in north-India. The study mainly centres around two cities of Delhi and Lucknow believed to having Islamic background. In total 300 families of Sayyad, Shaikh, Mughal and Pathans belonging to the middle income group were investigated. The study reveals that every educated woman though not employed seemed to achieve certain degree of economic independence. Education among women has led to a great degree of self-assurance because of economic independence that follows concomitantly if not invariably. In view of the fact that Muslim educated males tend to prefer educated females as their spouses, it was found that there has been a spontaneous increase in literacy among north Indian Muslim families. This phenomenon in turn has led to an increase in the age of marriage of Muslim girls. After studying and analysing the facts gathered the author concludes that education has played very significant role in raising the status of Muslim women.

Brijbhushan (1980) undertook a descriptive anthropological study to present a realistic picture of status of Muslim women and the data was collected through interviews with women in and around Delhi representing all religions of the country and belonging to all levels of society. The study reveals changes in all important aspects of women’s life in Muslim society like marriage, purdah, polygamy, adoption of family planning measures etc. However, the author concludes that Muslims are lagging far behind in educational pursuit. According to her, various factors are responsible for the low response of education among Muslims like, the lack of curiosity, lack of means to acquire education, lack of interest on the part of parents in the education of their children and the lack of conviction that education can provide a better future for everyone.

Menon (1981) in her study of Muslim women in Kerala tried to find out the role of education in upgrading the social position of Muslim women. For this purpose 450 women and 150 men were selected on the basis of simple random method from four districts of Kerala. The respondents represented both rural and urban settings of the four districts and were having comparatively higher educational background. She observed that the lack of meaningful role for educated women in the community and
the practice of seclusion were the two main reasons for the low level of education among women. However, the author concludes that in spite of tradition bound social structure of Muslim community; higher education has been able to contribute significantly in the amelioration of the lot of Muslim women. The higher the education of the respondents, the more modern were their attitudes and behaviour and higher was their status in the society.

Jain (1986) assessed the degree of modernization among Muslims in Jaipur. For the study four wards were selected which had Muslim population of ten thousand or more and three per cent households were taken from each of the four wards. The total number of cases to be studied from each ward was based on random sampling but the head of the family household was selected as the respondent from each ward and women head from each household was also been contacted in order to analyse the position of women in the society.

The study reveals that in the sphere of education, employment, household authority and in the family economy women were at the lower rungs of the social status. However, some changes have occurred as a result of exposure to education. She tried to find out whether the process of modernization in India has brought a change in the status of Muslim women. The trends show that Muslim women are favourably disposed towards economic independence. It was observed that 66.7 per cent women were of the opinion that employment of women is good in present day situation. This particular opinion gradually increased in frequency in the young age category respondents. The author found that educated and working women showed a high degree of political consciousness, freedom in maintaining independent bank accounts and confidence in their domestic dealings. She noted that only education of Muslim women can be instrumental in ameliorating their economic and socio-political condition.

Ashrafi (1992) in her study of urban Muslim women of the Patna municipal areas in Bihar examines the important aspects of determining the status of Muslim women i.e, marriage, family, education, purdah and family planning. The author concludes that it is a fallacy to assume that Muslim society is conservative in nature and argues that the changes are taking place in the life style, role, status and position of Muslim women in their families as well as in society.
Azim (1997) in her study of Muslim women in Mangalore city, Karnataka seeks to observe degree and direction of changes that have taken place in the role and status of Muslim women and the factors associated with the causation of such changes. The study focuses on the role of education, employment, modernization and overseas migration in bringing about changes in the position of Muslim women. It reveals that education has been one of the most potent instruments of change in the role and status of Muslim women.

Shafi (2002) in her study of Muslim married working women in Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir state reveals that change has taken place in the status-role set of working women consequently she has attained greater decision making power in the family. Some of the roles which are exclusively the domain of the male members of the family are now being shared with the housewife. The author concludes that in spite of traditional roles and statuses gainful employment constitutes an important source to raise the socio-economic status of women in the family.

Hasan and Menon (2004) in an attempt to study Muslim women in India carried out a survey in 40 districts spread across 12 States of the country with large Muslim population. A purposive sampling of the Muslim community was done and the universe of the study constituted Muslim and Hindu female population (aged 18+ years). A total of 9541 households were interviewed and within each area 80 per cent of the sample constituted Muslims and 20 percent Hindu households. The proportion of urban-rural households selected was 60:40. The data confirms the disadvantaged educational status of Muslim women. It was found that roughly 60 per cent of Muslim women reported themselves to be illiterate while the school enrolment rate for Muslim girls was 40-66 per cent. The proportion of illiterate Muslim women was substantially higher for the rural north than it was for the rest of India where more than 85 per cent women in the rural North reported themselves to be illiterate. The proportion of Muslim women in higher education was only 3.56 per cent, lower even than that of the SCs, which was 4.25 per cent.

The overwhelming majority of women reported themselves as not working. The average work participation rate for Muslim women was 14 per cent, which was lower than for Hindus (18 per cent), SCs (37 per cent), and other backward Classes (22 per cent). Few Muslim women were employed in the formal sector. The survey
also found that Muslim women had very little awareness of government schemes, and like many of their Hindu sisters, had little power of decision-making in their homes. The survey presents a glaring picture of inequalities—social, economic and political that consistently define and circumscribe women’s lives in general and Muslim women’s in particular.

Yet another study by Hasan and Menon (2005), look at the conditions of Muslim women’s education in five cities in India: Delhi, Agra, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Calicut (Kozhikode). The authors reveal, Muslim girls’ school enrolment rates continue to be low: 40.6 per cent as compared to 63.2 per cent in the case of ‘upper’ caste Hindus. In rural north India it was only 13.5 per cent, in urban north India 23.1 per cent and in rural and urban south India, above 70 per cent, which is above the all-India average of all girls. Only 16.1 per cent of Muslim girls from, poor families attend schools, while 70 per cent of Muslim girls from economically better-off families do so, thus clearly suggesting that low levels of education of Muslim girls owes not to religion but to poverty. 98 per cent of Muslim girls were studying in government or private schools and only 2 per cent in Madrasas, the majority being from poor families. The average number of years that Muslim girls study was found a dismal 2.7 years, as compared to 3.8 years in the case of Hindu girls. The number of years that Muslim girls study in north India is half that of her south Indian counterpart. The study observed that there is a noticeable increase in demand for formal education from Muslim parents. Although Muslims were accepting co-educational institutions, there was a definite preference for single sex government schools for girls.

Zarina Bhatti (1976) in her article examined the status of Indian Muslim Women in the context of modern ideals of equality and social justice. According to her opinion, education is a main source to improve the status of Muslim women to make them aware of the modern values and to enable them to realise their potentialities for nation-building activities and for the construction of the just and peaceful social order.

Shahida Lateef (1983) in her article assessed the ascribed and achieved status of Muslim women in the light of historical facts and the generally held belief that Muslim community were unable to cope with modernization in India. The author
concludes while the ascribed status of Muslim women today is somewhat inferior to that of other Indian women, due to absence of arbitration councils or other enforcement agencies, her achieved status varies a great deal with the economic status of the family and the strata to which she belongs.

Rokaiya Begum (1998), in her empirical study of Muslim women’s education in two villages of rural West Bengal finds education among them as woefully low. Many of the women in the Study villages were officially described as ‘literate’ but in actual they know only how to write their names. Some of them had been to primary school, but very few had gone to secondary school and beyond. The study revealed that Muslim villagers generally perceived that modern education for girls is not an economic asset, since they believed that the proper place for women is the home. The factors which hinder the achievement of education among Muslim women included lack of awareness, conservatism, and absence of functional necessities for formal education. The author suggests twofold measures viz, improvement of socio-economic condition and creation of suitable opportunities for those who acquire education as absolutely necessary for the cause of educational development among Muslim women.

Seema Parveen (2003) conducted a field survey on the educational development among Muslim women in Lucknow districts covering a sample of 364 households. The low age group women were found to be more educated especially in higher education as compared to middle and upper age groups of respondents. The author concludes that the awareness towards the importance of education was high among the respondents and they were of the opinion that education was the only means that could enhance their social status.

Sabiha Hussain (1998) seeks to examine the popular stereotype of the Muslim women in India through empirical data drawn from a study of intergenerational mobility and social change among Muslim women of Darbhanga town of Bihar state. For the study family was taken as the unit and 100 married women in the age group of 30 years and above were selected through purposive sampling for interview. The study revealed a positive trend of mobility and change in different aspects of the lives of Muslim women which has positively affected their status and expanded their role. Such change was found to be absent in the previous generation.
Tabassum F. Sheik (1997) in her article examined in depth the position of Indian Muslim women in their family and society. After a brief historical survey, she analyses three major areas of Muslim women's social life: the practice of purdah, the level of religious and secular education and their impact on social life and the various prescriptions and peculiarities regarding married life. She concluded that in spite of the several drawbacks and restraints, the position of Muslim women is changing for the better.

The studies reviewed above clearly indicate the educational backwardness of Muslim women and the role of education in developing the attitudes and values that are in tune with the process of economic development and modernization.