CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Status occupies a pivotal place in sociological literature. One of the important aspects of social structure of any social system is the fact that it’s members are differentiated and evaluated according to the social positions they occupy in the group and any of the subgroups to which they may belong. The institutionalization of such processes of differentiation and evaluation constructs an elaborate system that configures different status for the members of the group.

Social scientists have used the concept of status in the general sense of ordering of individuals. Davis observes that a person in a social situation with an identity already established, his identity refers to his status within the given social structure and establishes his rights and obligations with reference to others holding positions within the same structure (Davis, 1964:83). According to Ralph Linton (1936), status is a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals and every status carries with it a set of expected behaviour patterns, rights and obligations. A distinction between status and role is simplified by him when he says, “you occupy a status, but you play a role.” According to him status and role may be used interchangeably to refer to the rights and duties of a social position. Weber has used the term status in a gradational sense for groups that are evaluated as being superior or inferior; hence those having superior status have certain privileges and those having inferior status suffer from certain disabilities. A report commissioned by the Government of India on the status of women in India (1974) defined status as: “a position in a social system or sub-system which is distinguishable from and at the same time related to other positions through its designated rights and obligations... But as each status position in a particular structure can be viewed in terms of superiority and inferiority (i.e., in terms of power, privileges, advantages and disadvantages), the notion of status involves comparison and grading (Ministry of Education, 1974:6). Thus, status simply signifies an overall position of a person in a
society by virtue of which the person has certain rights and obligations and enjoys certain privileges.

There are certain determinants of status which are generally known as indicators of status. These include income, property, opportunities, education and training in skills that open up chances of employment, health levels, rights and privileges. In terms of every set of indices of status, relatively women have been found to be at a much lower status than their fellow men. The lower status of women is the result of social evaluation of their biological characteristics. These characteristics are entrenched in social beliefs and values and such value system promotes male as being more important socially, while women to be submissive. The stereotypes thus formed on these bases validate and justify that the roles defined for women are subordinated to those defined for men, the rights for women are fewer and less emancipating than those that men have and the obligations women have are more limiting than those of men. Therefore, woman is a social and not a biological category (Sassen, 2002:365). The social differentiation of men and women tends to indicate the specific role that women have to play and as such reduces their chances of having equal status with their male counterparts. The issues related to status of women are now being strongly discussed at national and international levels. In contemporary times there has been a growing trend among the social scientists to acquire and accumulate the knowledge about the status of women.

1.2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

The status of women has now become the locus of attention globally and a subject of perennial interest for social scientists because it’s not just human rights issue but a developmental issue as well. As it’s widely accepted that worldwide population of women is slightly higher than that of men (Powel, 1993; UN, 2000) and no meaningful development can be achieved if women who form a big percentage of human resource are not fully utilised. Veena Mazumdar rightly says that “the women’s question today is no longer an issue confined to the position of women within the family or their rights to equality with men in different aspects of social life. It’s part of the total far broader question regarding the direction of change of that process” (Mazumdar, 1985:6).
The concept ‘status of women’ eludes precise definition. Status of women can be perceived in different ways: Women’s status in society implies their status in social, economic and cultural areas and is determined by the human rights they enjoy. In particular, the status of women is defined as a conjunction of the position she occupies- as a worker, student, wife and mother at any point of time, the prestige attached to these positions as well as the consequential expected rights and duties. According to Veena Das, “the empirical indicators of the status of women have been taken to range from control over decisions, the spheres in which these are operative, to control over productive resources of a community, reflected in participation in the subsistence economy and to the alienation of women and their use as sex symbols for commercial purpose” (Das, 1976). Dixon (1978:6) defines status of women as “degree of women’s access to (and control over) material resources (including food, income, land and other forms of wealth) and to social resources (including knowledge, power and prestige) within the family, in the community and in the society in the large”. According to the report of the committee on the status of women in India (1974) “Status is realised through roles. Hence, the best way to access the status of women of any group or category or in any sub-system is to analyse the roles women are being called upon to play and the manner of their performance” (Ministry of Education 1974:7).

Despite considerable body of literature has emerged within Sociology and Anthropology that attempts to examine and compare the status of women cross nationally and cross culturally, the meaning of this concept has remained unclear and alternative definitions and terms have proliferated. Among the terms used are, “female autonomy” (Dyson and Moore, 1983), “patriarchy” (Cain et al, 1979), “rigidity of the sex stratification system” (Safilios-Rothschild, 1980), “women’s rights” (Dixon, 1975) and “men’s situational advantage” (Caldwell, 1981). All these terms focus on one of the three basic dimensions of inequality between men and women. Prestige, power and access to or control over resources. Although many who study the status of women acknowledge the multidimensional quality of status, much theory and research in the pertinent literature focuses on the economic dimension with less emphasis on the political and social dimension of status e.g. Blumberg (1984) argues that economic power has had a more significant impact on women’s status than political power or cultural ideology. Leacock (1978) recognises the
multidimensionality of women’s status but argues that (aspects of) the political dimension and social dimension of status are derived from (aspects of) the economic dimension of status. According to Cain et al (1979), women’s labour force participation or extra domestic participation in economic production enhances women’s domestic autonomy by giving them an independent source of income. The status of women is closely connected with their economic position which in turn depends upon rights, roles and opportunities for participation in economic activities.

Javillonar and her colleagues (1979:7-11) assert that four measurable quantities indicate the status of women in developing countries.

1) The extent to which there is early and universal female marriage.

2) The extent to which husbands have the arbitrary right to divorce wife

3) The extent to which marriages are arranged by the older generation and most important they say

4) The extent to which women participate in the labour force.

Thus the status of women can be seen to comprise the following aspects; control over economic production, role in household decision making particularly about their own life, extent of property rights, sexual autonomy, public esteem, public authority and paid employment (Chafetz, 1984; Giele, 1977; Randall, 1987; Sachs, 1976).

The problem of the status of women by and large relates to the equality between men and women (Agrawal, 1988:1). Women face subordination to men in all the societies and countries of the world and such inequality is more serious in the third world countries like India. Women in India have been denied equality of status and opportunities in the social and economic spheres which results in their low status. In Indian society the status of women has changed from time to time. In traditional India women had a distinctly inferior status that was based not on individual ability, skill and accomplishment but on inherited positions in the society. They were seen as only a member in a family or a group in the role of a daughter, wife or mother and largely denied the role as an individual with an identity, aspiration or right of their own (Gupta, 1988). They were denied the right to formal education and were also not
supposed to take up occupations outside their home. Although women from the lower castes and peasant groups worked on the fields, this fact did not however, alter their social status in the terms of their rights and duties (Uplanokar 1983:16). There are various factors responsible for the low status of Indian women. These constraints stem from illiteracy, traditional values and norms, dominant position of the male, superstitions, economic dependence of woman on man, social evils like dowry, polygeny, unaccountably of the husband to the wife etc.

After India became independent, the constitution of India conferred equal rights on women and men with the view to improve the status of women. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but empowers the state to take special measures for protecting and advancing their interests in all walks of life and making necessary legal provisions to this effect. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

(i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)

(ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i)).

(iii) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))

(iv) Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)

(v) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))

(iv) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
(v) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)

(viii) The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)

(ix) The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)

(x) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))

(xi) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))

(xii) Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))

(ix) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality(Article 243 T (3))

(x) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Besides, special committees and commissions on women have been set up from time to time resulting in policy changes and setting up of institutional structures for implementing programmes and schemes. A brief overview of these is as follows:
National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

Reservation for Women in Local Self-Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.


The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights of women such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959); the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

However, despite these provisions at the level of reality, the promise of equality and dignity remains an unfinished agenda. Little is known about these provisions by women in this country because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition. Thus, masses of women still remain restricted by the vicious circle of family
expectations, gender role discrimination, social stereotypes and stigma which consequently results in their lower status. Neera Desai traced the changes in the position of women that took place in different periods of history. She observed that the status of Indian women is low. They have to face tremendous pressure from the dying Indian traditions. This is the reason that in spite of indigenous rule Indian women have not achieved complete freedom and enjoyed high status in the society (Desai, 1977). Presently, in the changing Indian society women try hard to get rid of the burden of gender and family by way of getting themselves educated.

**1.3 EDUCATION AND THE CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA**

Education is the main factor resulting in social change. Modern education in India has played a key role in the process of changing the status and social mobility. It not only adapts an individual to existing or emerging social situation but also has a creative role in the sense that it has the potential of liberating minds from the shackles of the established culture. According to Banks (1969:207) education smoothens the path of innovation by breaking down traditional attitudes and so lessening the resistance to change. It helps to wean the developing societies away from the old and towards the new, it inspires belief in progress, in efficiency, in achievement and in rationality. It also helps people to become aware of their social and legal rights and become active participants in the process of economic development and social change. Dube holds that “education broadens the mental horizons of people and enables them to evaluate social and cultural traditions and to reset new goals. It suggests alternatives to tradition and indicates the ways through which these can be achieved.” According to him the efficacy of education as an instrument of social change depends on its orientation and content as well as those who impart and receive it (Dube 1976:105). Ottaway, (1962) holds that “in democratic society education can prepare for change in society and that is the part of its creative function”. Education is the most powerful factor in bringing about change in society and lack of education hinders the process of social change. The growing demand for education as an agent of economic and social mobility is exacerbated in developing countries by the key role accorded to education in social change. As the social change unfolds there are three major educational narratives in relation to the nation according to Haavelsrud: providing the leadership and skills to maintain the essential order in a changing
society (reacting, reinforcing role); fostering values attitudes and skills that will change the current order (reforming) and moulding individuals who will embrace and direct change towards a more just and participatory society (transcending) (Haavelsrud, 1981). Various sociological studies have also shown that education is a powerful factor in bringing about change in society (Hodgkin 1957; Anderson 1966; Shills 1966; Bhatnagar 1954; Lipset 1960; Cormack 1961; Saxena 1975).

Thus, it can be concluded that education is one of the best and most accessible mechanisms to achieve upward social mobility. It is identified as a vital source of raising consciousness to fight against all sorts of discrimination, inequalities and oppression in human relation. The educational system of a nation is the key to its prosperity and welfare and that no investment is likely to yield greater returns than investment in human resources of which the most important is education. It is the foundation on which the edifice of a nation is erected. However, it has been observed that there are differences in the inputs and outcomes of education and that the differences seem to negatively and persistently affect certain populations, mostly the rural, the poor, the minorities and the women. Among these women are the most affected due to gender division of labour that makes them needed at home for domestic duties. The widespread social belief that domestic tasks pertain to women, makes them particularly vulnerable under fragile economic conditions. The social investigations carried out go to show that backwardness of female education is in general closely associated with social, economic and cultural deprivation.

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of women’s education. (Kapadia, 1966; Kammeyer and Ginn, 1988; Jejeebhoy, 1995; Sen, 1997; Srivastava, 2005). They hold that education raises the women’s status by enhancing their capabilities, economic independence and also their ability to rely on themselves. It brings them out of the confines of the domestic sphere and puts them into contact with the outside modern world. They conclude that investment in women’s education brings individual, psychic and social benefits, including increased productivity and also better chances for more educated women’s children.

Various studies on the other hand have also pointed out the role of education in the amelioration of women’s status. These studies reveal that education led not only to the economic independence of women but also gave them self-confidence, and a
sense of dignity. These studies concluded that education of women has brought about radical changes in their conjugal role of performance, decision making and behaviour patterns (Ross 1961; Geinzberg et al 1966; Hate 1969; Kapoor 1970 and 1986; Murickan 1975; Leonard 1976; Desai, 1977; Mehta 1979; Ramanamma 1979; Khan and Ayesha 1982; Agrawal, 1986; Dutta 1987; Indira devi 1987; Jain 1988;). The current consensus in development economics gives priority to women’s education as an investment with a high payoff. Growth-oriented development economists advocate investment in women’s education because it adds to human capital which is an input into a productive process and enhancing human capital increases the commodities that a society is able to produce. Prominent development economists, Lawrence Summers and T.Paul Schultz have used the empirical findings to argue that developing countries should invest heavily in women’s education (Schultz, 1993).

Though women’s status has changed a lot, yet they continue to keep a low social profile. Thus, increasing attention must be given to their education if they are to be emancipated and their status to be improved. Since independence, education of women has been high on the national agenda. Special Commissions and Committees were set up from time to time to assess the progress of women’s education and propose suitable interventions to promote their participation in education. These are:


The above Committees and Commissions though differ in their focus, all of them agree on the basic issues like improvement of girls’ enrolment in schools, female literacy rate and women empowerment through education. Education of women has also been repeatedly highlighted in the International Conferences on
women, population and social development and by policy researchers as one of the most crucial priorities to women’s advancement.

High priority has been accorded to the education of women in Five Year Plans. During these Plans greater thrust was laid on UEE (Universalisation of Elementary Education) and UPE (Universalisation of Primary Education). In order to achieve it the government of India launched the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (Srivastava, 2005:125-129). Based on the Fourth Educational Survey the Sixth Plan emphasized that achieving elementary education was a major problem not due to non-availability of schools but socio-economic reasons in rural areas. The Sixth Plan stated the programme of UEE (Universalisation of Elementary Education) would be specially directed towards high enrolment and retention of girls in schools. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), stressed on enrolment and retention of girls at the elementary stage specially belonging to rural areas, the Schedule Castes/Schedule Tribes and other weaker sections. The key issue which characterized the Seventh Plan was the economic independence of women and this was followed by the evolution of beneficiary oriented programmes for their development. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97), tried to ensure that the benefits of development do not bypass women and it implemented special programmes for women to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women in education, health and employment. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) and the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), took up empowering women as agents of socio-economic change and development as a major commitment. Education was considered to be most important factor leading to their empowerment (Das and Sagar, 2007:52). The 11th Plan (2007-2012) will focus on bridging gender disparities in educational access, focusing specifically on Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, Tribal and Muslim communities through allocation of greater resources and more context-specific programming, including a sub-plan on Muslim girls’ education.

Various policies and programmes have also been initiated by the central government for education of women. A brief overview of these policies is given below.

- Abolition of tuition fees in all government schools at least up to the upper primary level.
Incentives like free textbooks, uniforms, stationary, school bags etc for these students.

The 86th Constitutional Amendment published in Gazette on 13 December 2002 provides for free and compulsory elementary education as a Fundamental Right, for all children aged 6-14 years.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), includes back-to-school camps for out-of-school girls; free textbooks for girls, SC/ST students; special coaching and remedial classes for girls, SC/ST children, and a congenial learning environment; teachers’ sensitization programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities; recruitment of 50 per cent female teachers; and special focus for innovative projects related to girls’ education, SC/ST children.

The EGS & AIE (Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education) provides a special thrust to education of children in school-less habitations and out-of-school children, through flexible strategies including bridge courses, residential camps, remedial coaching, drop-in centres etc.

The Mid-day Meal scheme (National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education), launched in 1995, covers nearly 12 crore children in over 8 lakh primary schools. This scheme is serving a dual purpose – raising the nutritional level of children, and enhancing school admission and retention levels. Each child is provided cooked mid-day meal with minimum 300 calories and 8-12 gm of protein content. The Mid-day Meal is a successful incentive programme. It covers all students, including SCs/STs, minorities of primary classes in all schools in the country.

NPEGEL (National Program for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level) is an important component of SSA, providing additional support for girls’ education in educationally backward blocks through girl-friendly schools, uniforms, stationery etc, for elementary education of disadvantaged girls.

The Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalaya (KGBV) scheme, launched in 2004, aims to set up 750 residential schools at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to SC, ST, OBC and minorities, in educationally backward blocks.
As a result of these interventions there has been a continuous rise in rate of literacy among women which can be ascertained on the basis of statistics available on women education. However, the gender disparity can be noticed in regard to male-female literacy rates. 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 to 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. Muslims constitute India’s largest minority community and this minority identity leads to their alienation and withdrawal from the socio-economic life. Besides due to communal violence that India has repeatedly witnessed and had always Muslims at the receiving end, a sense of insecurity persists among them. With this picture of marginalization of Muslims in India, it is predictable certainty that the corresponding status for Muslim women is further skewed towards the bottom.

Contrary to this, Muslims constitute the majority community in the state of Jammu and Kashmir with 66.97 per cent of total population while Hindus constitute the largest minority community with 29.63 per cent of total population according to census 2001. Other religious minorities are Sikhs (2.04 per cent) and Buddhist (1.12 per cent). Christians, Jains and others are negligible. Since Muslims constitute majority community in the State and there is no threat to their identity and no major cases of communal violence have been reported in the state therefore, it will be interesting to explore the status of Muslim Women in this province. Further the Muslim women lag far behind in education and the key to their improvement lies in education. That is why the present study therefore, attempts to examine whether education plays any significant role in raising the social status of Muslim women in Kashmir with special reference to Sringar district. It has attempted to provide data and information base on their changing status for generating better understanding of the present situation. The study has analysed and interpreted data on all relevant indicators of status of Muslim women in district Srinagar. Since very little is known about the status of Muslim women in Kashmir and no detailed study is available about their education and changing status, the work outlined therefore, seeks to address a significant gap in the literature on Muslim women in Kashmir.
The present study attempts to trace the effect of education on Muslim women in Srinagar district and it will be a descriptive work in this regard as descriptive research is mainly done when a researcher wants to describe the characteristics or behaviours of a particular population in a systematic and accurate fashion. It is also called statistical research as it involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection. The bottom line in doing descriptive research is getting accurate measurements from a sample. Non-probability judgement sampling has been used for the purpose. The data collected through semi-structured interview schedule has been quantified and analysed using percentage analysis. To supplement quantitative data some case studies have also been conducted to ascertain the genuineness of the findings. They have helped increase our understanding of issues, both general and specific. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To delineate the socio-economic profile of Muslim women of Srinagar district belonging to different educational strata.
- To assess attitudinal change among them with regard to education, employment, marriage, adoption of small family norm and status in the family.
- To study the impact of education on the perception of Muslim women on their rights and status.
- To find out the extent of empowerment they have achieved with regard to decision making relating to marriage and education of themselves and their children.
- To make recommendations based on this study to promote the status of Muslim women in Kashmir.

1.5 CHAPTERIZATION

The present study is organised in nine chapters. First chapter presents an introduction to the study. At the outset status has been defined followed by a brief
account of status of women in India and the role of education in the amelioration of
women’s status in India. Second chapter reviews the status of women in Islam, education
of women in Islam and the status of Muslim women in India. Third chapter presents a
demographic profile and history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Fourth chapter
portrays the development of education in Kashmir with special reference to Muslim
women and their educational backwardness. Fifth chapter presents the historical and
demographic profile of the study area (Srinagar), followed by the methodology and
objectives of the study. The next three chapters present the analytical part of the study
and express the real status of Muslim women in Kashmir found from the survey.
Amongst these Chapter six portrays the educational position of the respondents, their
parents and husbands, their objective of education, attitude towards co-education and
other related factors. Chapter seven examines age at marriage of the respondents, their
consultation before fixing marriage, size of family, the degree of autonomy enjoyed
by them in social and economic activities in their families, domestic violence etc..
Chapter eight examines the economic background of the respondents and related
factors like attitude towards economic independence, control over their earnings,
possession of saving accounts and their share in parental property etc. Chapter nine
presents the case studies and their interpretation. Finally the present study closes with
the conclusion at the end.