Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the changing status of Jewish women of Israel from 1948 to 2000. At first it is essential to understand the meaning of the term *Status*. According to Winston Dictionary it means the social position or rank of a person. In simple sociological terms the social position that a person occupies in society is called *status*. As far as women's status is concerned, the main drawback related to women is that they are universally assumed to be the secondary sex. The concept *status of women* eludes precise definition and hence precise measurements. The definition related to women's status was firstly adopted by United Nations in 1975 when it declared (1975-85) as women's decade. In 1975 United Nations defined women status as “the extent to which women access to knowledge, economic resources, and political power as well as the autonomy they have in decision making and making personal choices at crucial points in their life cycles (United Nations, 1996: 209).

Status can be perceived in different ways, the extent of a woman’s access to social and material resources within family, community, and society (Ibid). In 1995 Beijing Platform for action also found that even if women citizens of several nations have got the political rights and also have the right to participate in the other spheres of life but the aim to provide women citizen to get the equal status is still far due to certain on-going traditions of societies even if they are developed (Ibid). The signatory of this convention agreed to open a body in their territory at official level that can make observation about the hurdles that come in the way of women citizen of that country in enhancing their status.

In Israel also the Authority for the Advancement of Women was established by law in 1998 only. This body is authorized to encourage, coordinate, promote and monitor the government and the local authorities' activities regarding women's status as a whole. The other duty of this institution is to promote legislation and to advise the government on the enforcement of laws promoting the status of women. It is also expected to initiate
research and to enhance public awareness through the media and education (www.mfa.gov.il/MFA).

The other point which is related to the changing status of woman is related to the assessment of the gender differences to the control on several assets of the society like knowledge, economic power, political power and ideological power. To find out the real picture of Jewish women in Israel it is essential to unearth their participation in all these spheres. It would also be discussed in the thesis as to what extent Jewish women’s status is different from the other women citizens of West Asian region.

Israel came into existence on 14th May 1948. It is a democratic country of West Asian region, which is known for having traditional societies and absence of democratic systems. The peculiar feature about Israel is that it is a nation-state of Jewish immigrants, or in other words homeland for all Jews who are residing anywhere in the world. They have a natural right to migrate to Israel because of Judaism as a common religion. The 1948 Declaration of Independence clearly stated, “The state of Israel is open to Jewish immigration and ingathering of Exiles”. The other distinguishing feature about this country is that it has hostile relations with its Arab neighbours due to Palestine problem Historically it was after the Balfour Declaration in 1917 that Jewish people got right to migrate to Palestine which was under British Mandate. Israel was established on that land due to the Nazi hostilities towards Jewish people during the Second World War. The other reason was the Zionist claim that this land is related to their ancestors who left it 2000 years ago). All these causes combined for the establishment of Israel on Palestine when British Colonizers left Palestine on 14 May 1948 (Eisenstadt 1969: 122). In other words, Israel is a state, which was founded after the Second World War when certain European powers left Asian and African nations. Earlier Jews were part of Palestinian nation that was under the British control and the land that was under their control was known as Yishuv at that time.

Even if Jewish people made their claim on Palestinian land as their land but it was holocaust hostilities during the 2nd World War that made their claim strong on it. On the other hand it was the strong leadership of Weizmen that compelled the British authorities
to provide Jewish people a state on that land (Palestinian land) that they left 2000 years ago. In this way Israel is an adolescent state that is just 50 years old. It is also a nation which has faced 3 wars in last 50 years. Due to security threat the nation has become extra conscious in intelligence and other matters related to security (Mendes & Reinharz 1980: 529). In fact nations behave like human beings. If a human being’s existence is in danger then s/he at first thinks about her/his survival. The same is true of the Jewish nation. When it came into existence Israel was having dearth of all those resources which are basic components of a nation namely; population, defined geographical borders, and established government.

Though Israel is having a pluralist society it declared itself a Jewish state after its establishment. The Israeli society is composed of Jews, who came to Israel due to waves of immigration (aliyot). These immigrations into Israel were part of Zionist ideology and movement. These immigrants were performing the Jewish traditional act of aliyyah (meaning “ascent”—a deep-rooted view that eventually the Jews would return to Zion, that is, the “promised land”. Thus Zionism “made the ancient concept a contemporary reality” (Ibid). These immigrations were started in the end of 19th century. These immigrations are still continuing to the Jewish land. The descriptions of these immigrations (aliyot) are given below in the tables.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zionist Aliyot to the land of Israel, 1882 –1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aliyyah 1882-1903</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second aliyyah 1904 –1914</td>
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<td>Third aliyyah 1919 –1923</td>
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<td>Fourth aliyyah 1924-1932</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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The table has given the description of those seven immigrations that have been identified by scholars- the first beginning in 1882 and the last ending by 14th May 1948. Jewish women were also the part of these immigrations but it is difficult to get the data related to that (Israel Today, 1995). In May 1948 the number of Jews in Israel was 6,50,000 that rose dramatically from 4 per cent of total population of Palestine in 1882 to 81 per cent in June 1948 ( Gibar, 1997: 11). As it is well known fact that Israeli independence was followed by “waves of immigrations” of Jews in Israel. The 1948 Declaration of Independence stated that “the state of Israel is open to Jewish immigrations and the ingathering of exile” (Arian 1989: 13).

In 1951, after two years of Israeli Independence about 6,84,000 immigrants had reached Israel from all over the world (Table 2). These Included Jews from Eastern Europe (particularly Romania and Poland) West Asia mainly (Iraq, Yemen, Turkey and Iran) and North Africa (Libya, Morocco and Egypt). After 1951 there was a sharp decrease in immigrations to Israel even if it continued but it continued to account for nearly 38 per cent to Israel’s population growth 1961-71, about 20 per cent in 1972-82, and about 6 per cent in 1983-89 (Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1996: 44). During 1952-64 a large wave of immigrants entered in Israel from North Africa. In 1967 two waves of immigrants came from Western Europe and United states that brought some 41,000 Jews in Israel. In 1970 about 1,40,000 Jews came to Israel from Soviet Union. In 1988-1991 about 22,200 Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israeli society. During 1990-1997 about 7,10,000 Jews entered in the Israeli society. Though the number of women is not discussed due to non availability of data yet the number of Jewish women was 53 per cent in the last wave that came from Russia (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1998: 67).
Table 1.2
Immigration to Israel from 1948-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948-51</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>304,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-51</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>25,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-51</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>45,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-51</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>93,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-1964</td>
<td>Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>4,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>2,40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>23,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>17,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>1,40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1991</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>22,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1997</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>7,10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table 1.2 shows that immigration to Jewish land has continued after the creation of Israeli state. Due to that immigration Israel has become the land of different cultures because people who immigrated to the Jewish state brought the culture of their native land also. Here one point has to be kept in mind that immigration is also the part of Israeli state policy.

Population Projection: On the eve of independence, Israel’s population was about 806,000 consisting of 650,000 (81 percent) Jews and 156,000 non-Jews (19 percent). In 1990s Israel population was 5.7 million. The Jewish population has certain subgroups. There is division among these Jews according to the degree of religious observance which is politico-sectarian rather than ethnic. These religious Jews constitute a numerical minority of 30 percent. The other divisions among Israeli Jews are Ashkenazim and Oriental. Ashkenazi Jews are those whose ancestors lived in Germany and eastern Europe. They also include immigrants to Israel from North and South America, Russian, South Africa and Australia. Oriental Jews are those whose ancestors lived in Spain, Portugal, and North Africa. This category also includes Near-eastern or Oriental Jews, people who descended from ancient Jewish communities in Islamic lands (The Middle East and North Africa, 1997). In fact in Israel the Jewish subgroups are identified not only by above mentioned ethnic origin but also by generation of these subgroups: first generation born in abroad, second generation born in Israel, and the third and subsequent
generations of Jews born in Israel whose parents were also Israeli born (Ibid). These various subpopulation sub grouping can be illustrated by 1980s estimates: total population 4.1 million; Jews 83 percent; non Jews (mostly Arabs) 17 percent; Jews born in Europe or America 23 per cent; Jews born in Afro-Asian countries 19 percent; Jews born in Israel or Sabras 58 per cent. By the end of 1994 Israeli population by religion was distributed as follows: Jews 81.7 percent, Muslims 14.28 percent Christians 2.87 percent, Druze and others by 1.68 percent. In 1990s, the intra- Jewish ethnicity continued to preserve more or less the same composition as in 1986 that is the Oriental making up about 60 percent of Israel’s Jewish population and the Ashkenazim about 40 per cent. Another significant development is the continuing growth of the Israeli-born who as early as in 1986 constituted more than half the Jewish population in Israel. (See, Arian: 21). They occupy a subordinate position in the Jewish community. The Ashkenazim, European Jews are the old-timers who founded the new Jewish society, and set up its Western or eastern-European social institutions in the newly established state. These institutions still have an upper hand in the Israeli society. Israeli social fabric consists of not only Jews but Arabs, Druzes and Christians are also its part (Ibid).

The one thing about Jewish women status is that women from Ashkenazi community and at present Russian Jewish community are far better than Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jewish women. The thesis per se not deals with the distinction of status among women of different Jewish communities but wherever data are available this distinction has been discussed. Jewish women played an important role in the Zionist movement, which was based on the gender equality principle to some extent. Simona Shorni pointed out that in principle, the Zionist project, like other nationalist projects, provided women with a compelling vision of compelling identity, with a community in which they could be members, and with incentives to become political actors. In reality, however, women did not have much say in determining the terms of their social and political inclusion; their participation in the Zionist project depended, to a great extent, on their willingness to comply with the gendered division labour and power within the movement. While men were expected to be the liberators and protectors of the Jewish people, women who were cast as symbols of the nations and the land, were viewed as vulnerable and in need of
protection and were assigned primary responsibility for the reproduction of the nation and transmission of its culture (Shorni, 2000: 2167).

On the other hand, the Jewish settlement in Palestine increased rapidly over the years of Zionist immigration, beginning in 1882. Large waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, primarily from Eastern and Central Europe as mentioned above. The immigrants who arrived in Palestine during mid 1920s and mid 1930s doubled the already existing Jewish community. Women were an integral part of all these immigrations. Most of the single women were affiliated with labour Zionist movements. These women also suffered from the agony of holocaust during the Second World War. During the Second World War these women made their networks and helped each other. These women were part of Hagunah the secret army force during the Yishuv (name of those areas where Jewish people settled during British mandate). Jewish women played an integral part in the economy of Yishuv. They also fought with their male counterparts during the War of Independence in 1948 (Baumel 1998). After the establishment of the Israel these women played a significant role in the economy of state. Israeli women constitute at least half of the population of Israel today. In 1980s Jewish women were about 50 percent of Israel’s Jewish population. In 1995 due to mass immigration from the former USSR Jewish women were 50.5 percent. In Israel the pace of population age is slower than other Western Industrialized countries. Women aged 65+ are about 13.3 percent of all Jewish women and men 10.62 percent of all Jewish men during the end of 20th century (Ibid). Jewish women have played an active role in the foundation of Jewish state. Women are an important organ of the state machinery to save the culture and they tell about their culture to their off springs because women are the prime instrument for the socialization of their generations. The Jewish tradition saved by Jewish women during the era of “no state” means when the Jewish people were living in different countries after the demolition of second temple in 73 CE (Hirsch 1999: 56). This procedure is still going on.

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1 Holocaust was undoubtedly the worst tragedy in the history of the Jewish people. Six millions Jews of all age, starta and affiliation were murdered in the holocaust. The hundreds of thousands who escaped whether by hiding
Societies are complex mixture of traditional and modern ways of thinking and acting. All cultures, once they have been exposed to the forces of modernization, form a continuum from traditional to modern. No society can be regarded as entirely traditional or modern one (Gary 1986: 397). The other fact about societies is that it always has some elite classes that dominate the other classes. This Marxian proposition is true till today even if this theory is not accepted by the world. The above proposition is true in Israeli context also to some extent. Israeli society is a society of many contradictions. It is an industrialized society in which 90 percent of the population lives in urban areas and at the same time a traditional one with regard to the structure and centrality of family life. Immigrants coming from patriarchal cultures and underdeveloped economies of West Asia and North Africa double the population of this society. Israel has a multi-ethnic society as mentioned earlier and Ashkenazi Jewish women are holding more fruits of social tree (education, jobs, and political front) than their sisters of Mizrahi, Russian, Ethiopian origin.

The peculiar feature about Israeli society is that here humanitarian ideology coexist with religious ideology, institutionalized in a dual legal system that assigns powers to both secular and clerical judicial authority. Religious authority assigns different set of rights and obligation to women and men. Secular law is based on the principle of equality for men and women, with the goal treating them as similarly as possible. Religious law imposes a different legal status on men and women.

**Jewish Women in Economic Sphere**

Women always took part in the economic activities of the state but it was John Mill who at first talked to provide the recognition of their labour as paid labour. But it is after the 2nd World War only when women took part in the productive labour due to the shortage of male labour force in Western countries. After the end of the War most of these nations wanted them to go back on their home front but it was the courage of American and other European women who fought back for these rights. The ratio of women’s participation in the economic structure varies from nation to nation. In developed countries their participation rate is greater than the developing countries. When talking about the West
Asian region this is a myth that women are not participating in the economies. Israel betrays this myth due to its democratic set up in that region (Kramarae & Spender 2000: 205).

The thesis throws light on the Jewish women’s participation in the Israeli economy. Israel always compares its economy with developed nations. Its per captia income is at par with European nation. Compared to most Western democracies, Israel is a highly centralized state regulated economy, where ownership of economic resources is divided between the government, the Histadrut (Israeli labour union federation), and the private (capitalist) sectors. From the early Prestate period until the elections of 1977, the labor party dominated both the government and Histadrut. The party’s control over access to economic opportunity and jobs was an important political resource, which it used to establish its power.

The percentage of women in Israeli Economy is ever increasing. In 1985 the percentage of women in labour force was 34 percent and it was 42 percent in 1998. The increase of women participation in labour force increased by 1 percent annually. Jewish women participation in work force is higher than overall women participation (means Arab, Druze and Christian women also participate in labour market). It was 50.5 percent in 1995 (Azamon & Izraeli 1993: 12).

Mostly Jewish women are segregated in feminine kind of jobs like nurses, teachers and clerical work. Women’s presence in industrial branch of economy in 1998 was only 5.6 percent while that of males is 83.8. The number of women in clerical work is 30 percent (a figure that has remained unchanged since 1980) and for men it is only 10.5 percent. In service sector more than 20 percent of employed women are agents, sales workers or service worker compared to 14.4 percent of men. In academic profession the proportion of women and men is almost same (12.5 percent for women and 11 percent men), but when talking about the highest seat of academic profession it is find that only 5 percent women are professors although women constitute 40 percent of the non-tenured faculty members. In technical branch of economy 19.5 percent women are working, as associate
professionals and technicians and 9.4 percent men are present in the same field (Bryson 1999: 177-88).

The number of women as professionals is not available while it is 10 percent of their male counterparts. In the highest branch of economy (Administration Managers) the proportion is 8.7 for men and 3.5 for women. Israel is an industrial country, and 83.8 percent workers of this sector are male and only 5.6 percent are women. At present in agriculture branch of economy the percentage of men is 2.9 and for women it is 0.6 percent (Eishkofe 2002: www.nammat.org/magazine/myth.htm).

The most ironical fact about women labour force is that they are still getting relatively less economical rewards for their labour not only in private sector but also in public sector, and this continues ever after the review of 1954 Equal Pay Act in 1996. In 1996, per hour wage was 36 shekels for a man and 25 for a woman. The monthly income for a male was 5,987 and 3,608 for a woman. In Israel women comprise 70 percent of those jobs in which they earn less than the average minimal wage. This discrimination matters because there are several sectors, which are controlled by government directly or indirectly, including the armed forces, teachers, employees of municipal authorities and workers of government corporations, and the wage policy of government directly affected 4,30,000 workers in 1981. It is estimated that Private sector in Israeli economy accounts for about 40 percent; Histadrut (Labour Union) 20 percent and the 40 percent is controlled by the Government (Swirski 1998: 45).

An important characteristic about Jewish women economic participation is to find out how the ethnic differences of Israeli society made their impact on the labor-force. To assess their economic status it is essential to make out whether women are able to meet with the changing demand of labour market. To do so it is essential to make a bird eye-view on the Israeli government policies that it has arranged the special training programmes for women to meet the changing demand of the labour market or not (Jacboson 1994).
To measure the success of the state in the lives of its women citizen it is essential to find out whether adopted tools enable to bring some changes in the attitude of those employers who prefer flexible feature of job contract, their preference for unencumbered employees, less interest in women employees’ promotion or training. Not only this but sometimes women are likely candidates for a reserve army of labour. The position women have entered which subject them to possibility of unemployment due to technological change, to the contraction of the industry through the movement of the capital elsewhere, and to the need of the capital for surplus labour in order to keep wages low. This is true in the Israeli context also especially in the case of production workers in the textile industry (See, Azmon & Izraeli 1993: 45). The other important characteristic to assess gender equality is to find out whether the women are part of trade unions and decision-making bodies at higher level as well as local level or not.

This chapter would also deal with those causes that provide Jewish women chance to be part of labour market on large scale. In 1998 Jewish women’s participation in the labour market was nearly 42 percent. As mentioned above the Jewish women participation in labor market has increased in the last 5 decades. The significant aspect of the study is to find out whether the increase of women’s share in employment is matched by an equivalent increase in their share of earning. In other words it is essential to find out whether there is any qualitative change in labour market when dealing with gender roles in it. There are several reasons that make a woman to be a part of productive labour force as a large number of families in Jewish social strata feel the need of second income. Jewish women who are educated want to do something to get self-satisfaction. All the above-mentioned factors related to Jewish women’s participation in the labour market will be discussed in detail in the second chapter.

**Status of Jewish Women in Political Sphere**

Third chapter of the thesis is about political status of Jewish women in Israel. It deals with those changes that have come in last 5 decades in this sphere regarding their participation in the political system of the Israel. It is proposed to weigh the political status variables like voting rights, women representation in the legislative, executive and
judicial branch of political system not only on national level but at local level also. Israeli state provided the right of universal suffrage to its citizens after its foundation without doing any discrimination in the name of gender or religion. In fact Israeli women were not first among the West Asian women who achieved political rights after the formation of Israeli state even if Israel adopted the Westernized democratic model (Afshar 1987:200). It was Syrian women who got political rights before Israeli women when the former was under French rule and after that it was Mustfa Kamal Pasha’s Turkey where women got these rights.

Political rights are the first pre-requisite of any democratic system. The important aspect of the study is to examine whether in democratic system the state adopts some strict measures to improve the existing structures of the society. Whereas Jewish women are active in protest politics and social movements, the number of women in elected positions or in representative bodies of government at all levels is extremely small. On the national level, the proportion of women in the 12th Knesset, (Israeli Parliament) 1988-1992 reached an all time low of 5.8 percent from a peak of 9.2 percent in 1949-1951. Jewish women’s participation in the voting is satisfactory, it’s close to their male counterparts. Thus in 1994 it was 85 percent for both sexes in Jewish case (Chazan 1997).

Jewish women’s participation in local politics is quite limited. Only four women have served as mayors of municipalities since the foundation of the state. In the 1975 Reform Bill the local government designated the position of Mayor as the only directly elected political office, which became the cause of their lesser participation in local politics. Their presence in local councils has multiplied to some extent. In 1950 their percentage was 4.2 by 1978 5.5 and by 1993 11. In 1993 a legislation was also proposed to make it mandatory that every local council include a member of the women’s council or an advisor to the Mayor on the “status of women” which will be funded jointly by the local authority and the Ministry of the Interior.

Political parties are significant instrument of a democratic political system. Most Jewish women are members of political parties, but their numbers tend not to be reflected in party leadership or on party list for elected office. Since the mid-90s both the major
parties (Labor and Likud) as well some of the smaller ones have developed internal guidelines for increasing women’s participation. The Labor Party has adopted a clause which requires that women fill at least 30 percent of all leadership positions and in the Likud similarly the party gives at least 20 percent of all seats to women. The left of center Mereatz adopted the highest standard currently in place requiring 40 percent seats to be given to women. On the other hand a survey in 1992, moreover 44.3 women polled stated they neither supported nor were active in political parties. Small number of women holds high ranking position in Israeli political parties (Ibid). The names of these women’s are Zehava Galon the General Secretary of Mreetz (Israel Democratic Party) Tamar Gozhansky, one of the leading members of Chadash (Democratic Party for Peace and Equality), Limor Livant Likud and Shulamit Aloni who founded the Citizen’s Right Party (Ibid).

In fact the number of women’s representation in Israeli political system is higher than any other West Asian country but it is considerably lower than other developed countries. It is true Jewish women were part of economy before the establishment of the Israeli state and their socio-economic status is quite better than women citizens of other West Asian countries, but their representation in political realm is still less despite the above mentioned fact (i.e., their exposition in the economy from the very beginning). There are several reasons for the under-representation of women in the political parties such as their absence in the political activities from their student life, coalition government formation in the Israeli context and preference to retired army generals for whom politics is second career that is not common for Israeli women (Bryson 1997: 179).

Judiciary is also an important instrument of governance in a democratic country. Though Israel is having democratic form of government it has adopted the hierarchical structure of Judiciary, which was popular there during the British mandate period. These are civil courts and religious courts; in addition there are special courts of military, labour, traffic and juvenile matters. The percentage of women in Judiciary is satisfactory in civil courts. In 1996 all the different ‘magistrate courts’ and ‘district courts’ combined, had 146 female judges and 229 male judges, that means 40 percent of civil judiciary in Israel is composed of women. Thus the women representation in lower level judiciary is
satisfactory. There are 10-12 Justices in the Supreme Court of Israel that is the highest appellate court. It was decided in 1990s that at least one woman will be appointed as Justice in this court (CEDAW/C/ISR2-3, 2001: 34).

Religious Courts have the highest status in Israeli society and all matters related to marriage and divorce come under these. Women are totally absent from Religious Bodies. The Jewish millet is divided into two separate communities. There is Supreme Rabbinical Council composed of 12 rabbis but headed by two chief rabbis, one each from the Sephradic and Ashkanzi communities. The Chief rabbinate supervises eight regional rabbinical courts with 65 religious judges (dayanim) and a rabbinical court headed by two chief rabbis. This court has been charged with interpreting Jewish law, which has binding legal and administrative force. Decisions of Chief Rabbinate are legally bind on entire Jewish population. These decisions are applied notably, on the matters of personal status, immigration and citizenship. Jewish women are absent from these institutions on the basis of halacha (Jewish religious law) which does not allow a woman to sit in these courts (Meri Report Israel 1998: 89).

In fact it is a universal phenomenon that women representation in the traditional politics is limited but they make their presence felt in the politics via women’s organizations, which are important institutions in the democratic system. There are 90 NGOs in Israel, which are working for women’s benefit, Nammat is a partisan women organization and related to Labor party. It champions the cause of rights for women in Israel. The Israel Women’s Network (IWN) is an advocacy group for women’s rights; it is a unique non-partisan coalition of women who are united in their determination to improve the status of women in Israel. Women International Zionist Organization (WIZO) is a non-party voluntary organization. It is also recognized by the United Nations (UN) as a NGO of ECOSOC and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). It aims to advance the status of women, defend their rights and achieve full gender equality in all fields. During the first Intifada in 1987 several women movements came into existence namely; Women in Black, The Peace Quilt Movement, Four Mothers Groups and Women for Women Political Prisoner. These Women Movements demonstrated against the Israeli policy of occupation of Judea and Samaria (West Bank and Gaza City) (Dowty 2002).
The state is also a signatory of “Convention of All Forms of Discriminations against Women” (CEDAW) in 1979. The state also signed the 1995 Beijing Declaration related to women rights. The declaration states “we are convinced that women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society including participation in decision making process and access to power are fundamental for achievement of equality, development and peace.” This short description is about the Jewish women representation in the mainstream politics and those causes that are basis of gender-differences in the political system of Israel. The details of the political status of Jewish women would be discussed in third chapter of the thesis.

Jewish Women in Socio-Cultural Sphere

The crucial aspect about women changing status is related with their socio-cultural status or with those mental paradigms that are part of on-going culture. In fact in the feminist theory the radical feminism talks about that the on-going culture of any society is the basis of gender-differences in that society. It argues that state propagates those institutions that are part of that culture like family, religion etc. The thesis is not particularly stuck with the radical feminism but sociological theories also to deal with the impact of culture on gender parity in a society.

The variables which have been used to measure the improved socio-cultural status of women are their place in a particular religion, how the environmental changes make impact on the social status, measures adopted by the state to change the old tradition in the society and their over all success. Israel is a multi-cultural society and the status of women is affected by the composed diversity of different communities like Jewish, Arabs, Christian and Druze. This Jewish population is having sub-ethnic differences also. Since the establishment of the state Ashkenazi Jews are having strong position in the society and also having control on certain structural institutions of the society. Due to this Israel has established the secular image in the international arena. In Israel Ashkenazi women have comparatively better status among the Jewish women who are migrated from the Asian and Arab countries (Mizrahi Jews).
Judaism demands more than the acceptance of the theocentricism. It demands that believers demonstrate this acceptance by daily religious role of the conduct for their daily life. Historically Judaism viewed itself as a way of life and not simply as a religion. Judaism demands the common belief of its believers; the communal nature of Judaism is demonstrated by the fact that many prayers require a quorum of 10 men (minyan) to become valid. Judaism exempted women from several religious duties, as from minyan. Jewish traditions yet accords respect for both sexes; it clearly defines and delegates the public sphere to women. The influence of this tradition is still valid and it spreads beyond the religiosity of observant community to general society. Women are exempted from mitzvoth (613 commandments of Jewish religion). According to torah a woman is the property of her husband after marriage and to please her husband and to take care of the children is the first duty of a woman. This is the prime cause of their exemption of these duties. Traditionally women are not allowed to read Torah (Berkovitch 1997). This shows Judaism is a patriarchal religion like Islam.

Women do not have right to pray together with a man in the synagogue; there should be a partition (mehtiza) in between men and women in the prayer hall of Orthodox communities. At present in Israel the Orthodox community uses a wooden wall with the holes to separate their prayer hall and secular community uses a curtain to separate their prayer hall yet at present several revival forms of Judaism are against this tradition. Orthodox Jews are against the women’s participation in public places. Girl child does not get an equal status in Jewish religion as in Hinduism and Islam. This proverb proves this point “a girl child is the symbol of many boys”. The birth of a male child is always significant occasion of celebration and whenever there is the birth of a male child it has to be said “a new soldier has come” (Jackson 1997: 633).

According to the religion girls have not any share in their father’s property and after marriage also their property is related to their husband. After the creation of the Israel, the state government enacted the succession law in 1965 which provides that a spouse shall inherit from a person who dies intestate, and if there are children they shall receive half the inheritance, equally divided among sons and daughters but what is the ground reality is difficult to predict due to the non availability of the data.
The indicator of social equality of women also includes equality in divorce in family law and whether women have right to civil marriage or not. It also deals with abortion right that provides them liberty to make control on their body. In Israel Jewish women do not have a right to civil marriage and recently when Ehud Barak government brought the civil marriage bill in the Knesset it could not be passed due to opposition of Religious parties who were against this idea before the existence of the Jewish state. In Israel if a person while studying torah marries then it is the duty of the girl’s father to arrange a house for him, and later it is the duty of his wife to earn and take care of her husband not to disturb him in his religious study. This practice was popular at a large scale in the country during the decade of 1960 and right now it exists at a minor scale. In 1959 Multiple Marriage Amendment to the Penal Law forbids bigamy in the state but still Yemeni and Moroccan Jews have more than one wife (See, Women in Israel 1994: 11).

Jewish women do not have right to ask for divorce because Jewish religion does not provide this right to them. Marriages and divorce come under the jurisdiction of religious courts and in these courts women have no right to sit as judges and there are no women lawyers in these courts. This is happening despite the fact that Israel is a democratic state. On the other hand Iran which is known as a theocratic state during the Khatmi era, passed a law according to which women have right to sit in the Family Courts and they are also working as the lawyers in these courts (Afshar 1993: 234). In the Jewish tradition marriage is a contract that is called kituba. After marriage a woman becomes the property of her husband, tied to him till the end of her life. If a man dies or disappears and there is no evidence that he has died, the wife becomes agunah or “anchored”- a forsaken wife, and she cannot remarry because she is still her husband’s property. According to Israeli Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) there are 16,000 agunah (Jewish women who are seeking for divorce) in Israel while according to the government record this number is only 800 (Ibid).

Family is the primary unit of the society and the institution of transmission of the culture. This institution is the great importance in the Jewish culture. During the era of “no state” Jewish people saved their tradition via this institution. After the establishment of Israel family also occupies great importance in the Israeli society. In a Jewish family women
are projected as mothers. The well being of the family members traditionally has been the responsibility of wives and mothers.

Jewish demography has also become the cause to propagate mother’s role in the society. Israel is the state that is having a small population (only 6 million). The country is surrounded by hostile neighbors and has had 5 wars with Arab neighbours and also carries an unsolved problem, i.e., Palestinian problem. These hostile circumstances make their impact on the women citizens of that state; because during hostilities women and children are a soft target of the enemy, which in turn make them more dependants on their male-counterparts. Yet the purpose of this study is to find out even if in a democratic country government adopts several laws to enhance status of any discriminated “group” (women as group) of society, how do on-going traditions and rituals make their impact on that group especially when the existence of that nation is based on religion and facing security threat also.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the economic position of Jewish women in Israel, including their educational and occupational profiles.
2. To find out the causes for relatively lower economic status of Jewish women in Israel.
3. To investigate the representation of Jewish women in the political Institutions of Israel.
4. To find out the role of Jewish women in the realm of Israeli civil society.
5. To assess the socio-cultural status of Israeli Jewish women.
6. To evaluate the role of the Jewish state in relation to the status of Jewish women.
7. To assess the overall progress of Jewish women regarding gender equality in all walks of life.

Survey of Literature

Israeli and other scholars have done a lot of work on the Jewish women of Israel. These works deal with their role and status in pre-state and after the birth of the Jewish state.
These studies throw light on the presence of Jewish women in the labour market, political institution of the state and their status in Jewish religion and how after the foundation of the Jewish state, it adopted several measures to change the status of Jewish women.

There are studies which deal with economic status of Jewish women of namely; (Azmon and Izraeli, eds, 1993). This work throws light on different aspects of Jewish women’s economic status. It contains the data about Jewish women’s participation in the field of education. It provides description about Jewish women participation in different sectors of Israeli economy such as Academics, Finance and trade. (Jennifer Curtin, ed, 1999) Jennifer Curtin work is having description about Jewish women’s participation in trade unions. It contains detail of Jewish women participation in the trade union before the foundation of Israeli state. It deals with their participation in trade union till 1980s. (Naomi Chazan, 1997), Prof Chazan work deals with recent information about Jewish women participation in different sectors of Israeli economy. In fact it is quantitative data of last decade. (Valerie Bryson, Political Studies, 1997), this work contains details not only about Jewish women’s participation in labour market but also discusses those welfare measures that are adopted by Israeli state for its female labour force. (Galia Golan, Women Studies International Forum, 1997), Galia Golan article contains details about Jewish women’s participation in Israeli military. It also deals with that discrimination that Jewish women face in military. In fact they are segregated in clerical, teaching posts in the defense that are feminine fields.

The political status of women in the Israeli society is discussed in the following studies namely (Arian Asher, 1989), This work contains minor details about Jewish women’s representation in Israeli Knesset. It also provides details about Golda Meir’s prime minister ship. (Tamar Mayor, ed, 1994), This work is little bit distinguished from above mentioned works because it contains details about those movements that Israeli Jewish women have started to show their participation in Israeli Palestinian peace process. The names of these movements are Women in Black, Women for Women Political Prisoner and Peace Quilt. (Barbara Swirski, ed, 1996) The work contains details of Jewish women’s struggle for political participation in Yishu period. It also provides data about their representation in Israeli local as well as national politics till 1980s.
There is also some work regarding the socio-cultural status of Jewish women namely; (Uri Ram, 1995) contains the details that were adopted by Israeli academia. It was 1990s when Israeli academia provided space to feminist sociology. The book provides details about Jewish feminism. (Helman Sara and Tamar Rapoport, British Journal of Sociology, 1997). This article provides details about that resistance that they have faced when they started to participate in peace movements. Golda Meir: A Land of Our Own (An Oral AB, 1973). This word deals with the details of Golda Meir’s life and how this lady entered in Israeli political realm. This work also throws light on her political struggle and how this lady got the prime minister ship in 1970s.

There are studies which deal with the overall status of women in Israeli society namely; Israeli Social Structure and Change, (Michael, S. Chertoff, ed, 1975). This book contains little details about Jewish women social life in Israeli state and how there was a difference between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi women life at that time (Rachel Biale, 1984). Women and Jewish Law, This book is having details about Jewish women’s position in marriage and divorce in the Jewish state. It tells about the importance of rabbinical court if a Jewish woman wants to get divorce. It deals with those technicalities that come in the way of a Jewish woman if she wants to file suit in District courts in Israel. (Chiger Moshe, 1985). Husband and Wife in Israeli Law is having details about Jewish women inferior position in Jewish law (Halacha) since the very beginning and at present. (Barbara Swirski and Marlyin, P. Safir, 1991). Calling the Equality Bluff: Women in Israel is the store house of those articles that deal not only with their economic and political participation but also with those differences that make women position inferior in a society. It throws light that how a male baby is significant in Jewish community. (Sociology of Religion, 1996) “Women and Religious Change in Israel: Rebellion or Revolution”. This article contains details about those social movements that came into existence due to Israeli Jewish women at political and social realm such as “Women in Black” a political movement and “Women of Wall” a social movement. This article also tells how these women movements faced opposition in Israeli social fabric. (Barbara Swirski, ed 1996). Calling the Equality Bluff, which is the best work related to study of Jewish women in Israel. This book presents the true picture of Jewish feminism in Israel.
It also talks about existing ethnic and class difference in Jewish society and impact of Jewish feminism on the women of different ethnic origin. However, all these studies discuss Jewish women status in one way or another but there is absence of such work that deals with changing status of Jewish women in last 50 years. The aim of this study is to fill that knowledge gap.

To sum up, there is hardly any comprehensive work done on the changing status of Jewish women. The aim of present study is to fill the knowledge gap that exists in India about the myths of gender equality in Jewish society.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories that deal with gender studies or the changing status of women universally namely modernization or development theory, dependency or neo-marxism and feminism. Another important approach related to gender studies and women’s studies is the Institutional framework adopted by the United Nations to enhance women status all over the world. It has co-related women’s rights. The thesis is based on the eclectic approach that includes feminist theory that has been backed by United Nations institutional framework. In reality United Nations is that body in International arena that deals with the women’s rights since the establishment of the Organization. The other significant aspect of the thesis would be to find out the success and failure of the Israeli state implementation of those measures that were adopted by it while signing the Beijing Declaration of Women’s Rights.

The modernization theories seek to measure the status of women in the terms of a modern industrial society. According to these theories industrialization, urbanization, education and technological advancement help to transform a society from traditional to modern.

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2 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights included women rights as human right in 1948. It was 1975 when this International body adopted special measures to enhance women’s status and declared 1975 as the year of women. It declared (1976-1985) as the decade of women. In 1985, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Nairobi, Kenya. In 1995, United Nations once again held a World Conference in Beijing, China and adopted Beijing + 5 programme to enhance women status in the all those countries which signed Beijing Covenant. The number of countries that signed the agreement was 185, Israel was one among them.
Political democracy, pluralist institutions, and market economy are the basic tools of modernization. Within institutional frameworks a human being gets chance to improve her/his position. In this process women too get affected. The position of women would also be transformed. This theory is criticized because some sociologists called it “organized modernity”. The institutions of organized modernity were formed as a crisis to the capitalism at the end of the 19th century, with industrialization, urbanization and “social question”. At the same time such participation was channeled and indeed, organized in such a way that viability of the social order was not put in to the question. By and large they are projected as gender neutral. Unfortunately in most third world countries theories of modernization and development have failed, because the changes that took place in these countries were described by the intelligentsia “an imposed social change” which was not suitable to their environment. The other critique of this theory was recognized during the Nairobi Conference (1988) of the United Nations. This gender based critique of development theory shows how women’s oppression could only be understood contextually, by taking into account women’s and men’s position within specific countries, cultures and economies (Scott 1995: 67).

The other theory is the Dependency theory. Dependency theory criticizes the modernization theory because it is related to capitalist mode of production and colonialism. The theory carries the same belief that was propounded by its propounder that capitalist modes of production are exploitative of women. The profounder of this theory Marx and Engel take a normative stance on the exclusion of women from public life, focusing on the character of their labour. Women’s oppression becomes associated with the emergence of private property. Private property, essential to the liberal conception of individual freedoms, illustrates for Marx a central contradiction of capitalism that is, the private control of socially produced goods. The experience of work is not placed in a network of social relationships. Engel is having the same views about women labour. He also associated that division between public and private (domestic chores) with the emergence of private property. Because of this division household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service, the wife became head servant excluded for all participation in social production
Dependency theory is also having flaws because at first it wants to transform the capitalist mode of production due to which women issues become secondary.

When dealing with development theory it is having three approaches namely; Women in Development (WID) Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD). The focus of Women in Development was how to equalize employment and educational opportunities for women within existing development programmes. This approach ignores the impact of historical and cultural factors on women's life. It focused on women's role in production as well as reproduction. Here production refers to making goods and services that have economic value. Reproduction not only means producing children but also involves daily tasks of the household such as cooking, cleaning, and care of children and the elderly, which have no economic value when performed within the family. Women and Development approach came into existence in 1970s and focused on productive not reproductive sectors. Gender and Development approach came into existence in the 1980. This approach of development theory saw oppression of women in the family significantly related to development. In family there is a fundamental recognition of the social construction of gender relations in productive and reproductive roles, and this has been seen as the basis of oppression. This aspect of GAD is to some extent near to radical feminism. Development theory is criticized because its primary aim is to develop skills of women citizen and to recognize women's work in the public domain (Ghosh 2000).

Feminism is an intellectual perspective as well as a social movement. By Feminism here, is meant a broad concern with women's issue and an awareness of their oppression at work, in the home and in the society, as well as action aimed at improving their lives and changing situation. This model will present the clear picture of this theory that is adopted from the Uri Ram The Changing Agenda of Israeli Society (1995).
Table 1.3

Different Perspectives of Feminist Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Marxist</th>
<th>Multicultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frame of problem</td>
<td>Status discrimination</td>
<td>Gender subordination</td>
<td>Class inequality</td>
<td>Race, ethnicity and Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of problem</td>
<td>Traditionalism</td>
<td>Patriarchy</td>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>Subordination of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy for change</td>
<td>Politico-legal ratification</td>
<td>Alternative of social form</td>
<td>Socioeconomic transformation</td>
<td>Formation of alliances to solve social problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of objective</td>
<td>Equal opportunity</td>
<td>Empowerment of women</td>
<td>Socioeconomic equality</td>
<td>Adoption of multiple shifting dimensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Uri Ram “The Changing Agenda of Israeli Society”, 1995. Last column of this table is my own addition

As described in the above model, to liberal feminism the structure of the problem is status discrimination and the cause of the problem is traditionalism in any society. Liberal feminism also considered women’s secondary status as a result of cultural perceptions a biased vocational education, a biased attitude of employers and so on. Liberal feminist believes in the socio-economic equality that they want to bring via socio-economic transformation. To them socio-economic inequality exists because of sexual division of labour, rather than social or legal discrimination. They focus on the mechanisms of exploitation that link the predicament of women to the general mode of exploitation of the labour force. Liberal feminism believes that equal opportunity via politico-legal ratification can bring change in a society. If talking about the family it has been associated with conventional approach, supporting divorce but not challenging the ideal of family life (Carter 2000).

Marxist feminism believes that the root-cause of the problem is class- inequality that came into existence due to capitalism. There are two major subtypes of Marxist feminism and they differ in style and approach. One deals strictly with the political economy of
women, the other with broader issues of social history of women. One basic difference in Marxists and Liberals is that the former focuses on the work situations of lower class women, while the latter tend to concentrate on the careers of middle-class women. Liberal feminism was quite popular till late 1960s. During 1970s the second wave feminists criticized it because it did not challenge the normative dualism that defines the essence of humanity solely on terms of rationality. Liberal feminists ignored the significance of bodies for both patriarchy and racism. It is failed aspects of women lives and structural power relations that continue to govern them. During late 1960s Marxist feminists took a new stand in which they talked about class and gender as twin social factors which constitute difference in oppressive ways. Gradually in response to critiques from women of colour race and sexuality factors were added to class and gender also. Earlier feminist writing treats class as the only structural form of oppression; due to socialist feminism it has also produced analysis of oppressive class behavior (Coole 1988).

Radical feminism conceives of womanhood as a “gender” a social construction based on biological, psychological and other sexual distinctions to justify the inferior position of women. They believe that gender inequality exists because of gender subordination. The main cause behind this subordination is patriarchy. Radical feminist writers introduced a range of issues into social sciences that have not conventionally been considered to be a part of an analysis of social inequality. Male violence against women is considered to be part of a system of controlling women, unlike the conventional view that holds that rape and battering are isolated instances caused by psychological problems in a few men. They believe in women-empowerment, via adopting three broad strands; Increasing women’s ability to be economically self sufficient (that is, to earn an income, own assets and manage their own finances; Increasing women’s confidence and ability to know and negotiate for their rights, in the household and community; and Increasing women control over their bodies, their time, and their movement, including freedom from violence. This approach of theory has failed to make an appropriate remark on gender differentiation on economic front (Ibid). Due to this failure in the end of 20th century postmodern theory criticized the usefulness of the contemporary feminism. To them feminist practice is
increasingly a matter of alliance rather than one of unity around a universally shared interest or identity. It recognizes that diversity of women’s need and experiences means that no single solution, on issues like child care, social security and housing can be adequate for all (Nicholoson 1990).

Multiculturalists’ feminism that came into existence during the end of 20th century believes that each society has its own social structure based on race, ethnicity and class, which become the cause of women’s subordination in one way or another. To some extent this approach believed that class differentiation and ethnicity make strong impact on the degree of gender disparities within a social system. They co-relate patriarchy also with them. They believe there is necessity to form alliances to solve the social problems or multiple shifting dimensions to save women from subordination. They also believe that each society has its own structure and women of that society can bring changes for themselves. They do not like the Western perspective about the women of developing countries because Western women were part of their subjugation during colonization. At present also ethnicity factor makes strong impact on intra-gender differences (Anthias 2000). At present one common theme in feminist political theory has been a critique of the liberal conception of public-private dichotomy. Thus in order to understand the position and role of women in the economy, one needs to analyse their position in the household/ reproductive sphere (Visvanathan 2006).

**Concept of Patriarchy:** Since patriarchy is common in all the theoretical frameworks and essential for our understanding. The one thing that is common in all perspectives of feminist theory and social scientists is that they use the concept of “patriarchy” in order to interpret the state’s role to control women’s life. The literal meaning of this term is a system of primitive government in family or tribe, in which the father is supreme. This term is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality and putting forward a theory. Patriarchy is cross cultural and is present in developed as well as developing countries or in modern as well as traditional societies. But when we converse about the quantity of patriarchy in the developing societies the ratio is comparatively higher in these societies because the government of these societies are still dealing with the old form of governance as in the case of West Asia where most countries even if having higher
standard of living due to petro-dollar (especially in Persian gulf region) could not move towards democratic form of government which became the cause of denial human rights to their citizens. Women rights are part of human-right to some extent.

Patriarchy as a concept has a history of usage among social scientists such as Weber (1947), who used it to refer to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of household. Some sociologists used it to describe the women’s subordination in the traditional societies. In fact this term is able to co-relate how modern as well as traditional societies derive their strength from their ability to satisfy basic needs – Man’s primary social structures—the family, the clan, the religious sects are the structures which most successfully address his most fundamental needs: his material interest, his security and his identity (Sharabi 1988).

This concept is related to feminism that used it to criticize the state’s role regarding women’s right in the state. Juliet Mitchell’s “Psychoanalysis and Feminism” offers a good definition of patriarchy. To her it is the law of the father, which is inherited inter generation ally via the unconscious. It is synonymous with civilization itself. To Kate Millet, in patriarchy male dominates female, elder male dominates younger male. Patriarchy means a set of attitudes learnt afresh by each child as it is socialized first by the family and later by a range of other patriarchal institutions (Golan 1997: 660). In simple terms Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The term social structure rejects both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in dominant position and every man in a subordinate one.

At the most abstract levels patriarchy exists as a system of social relations. At a less abstract level patriarchy is composed of six structures, which have causal effects upon each other, both reinforcing and blocking, but relatively autonomous. These structures are Patriarchal mode of production, which are related to household relations, where their cohabitees expropriate women’s household labour. Patriarchal relations in paid works are second in structure which deals with discrimination within the economic level. Labour market is a complex form of patriarchal closure that excludes women from the better
forms and segregates them into the worse jobs that seem to be less skilled. Patriarchal relations in the state are the third form of the structure. According to this structure state is patriarchal as well as racist. State is also the instrument of a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions. Male violence is the fourth structure, despite its apparently individualistic and diverse form. It is behaviour routinely experienced by women from men, with standard effects upon the actions of most women. Male violence against women is systemically condoned and legitimised by the state’s limited role to eradicate it. Patriarchal relation in sexuality is fifth structure. Compulsory heterosexuality and the sexual double standard are two of the key forms of this structure.

Patriarchal relations in cultural institutions complete the array of structures. This structure is composed of a set of institutions that create the representation of women within a particular gaze in a variety of arenas such as religions, education and the media. These structures are related to patriarchal practices in a society (See, Sharbi, 180)

**Patriarchy at the end of 20th Century:** There was a debate during the last decade of 20th century that there was modification in gender relations during this century because women participation in education has been increasing on universal level. Women are part of productive labour force and their rights are recognized by many countries.

Progress in education is typically defined as progress by Liberal feminists. Marxists discourse is as regress as followed by stasis, and radical feminist as embracing no significant change. Multicultural prospective on gender is also divided on the issue of progress and regress. The traditional view that modernization and westernization have been challenged both by those who have argued that these developments have been regressive, leading to the greater exploitation of women labour by capitalists. In fact to deal positively with these issues it is important to differentiate between degrees and forms of patriarchy. Degrees of patriarchy refer to the intensity of oppression on a specified dimension for instance the size of wage gaps between men and women. Forms of patriarchy refer to the overall type of patriarchy as defined by specific relations between the different patriarchal structures.
Difference between Private and Public Patriarchy: Sylvia Walby has distinguished patriarchy into two forms in her book "Theorizing Patriarchy". These two forms of patriarchy are private and public. Private patriarchy is based upon household production, with a patriarchal controlling woman individually and directly in relatively private sphere of the home. In this form of patriarchy the active exclusion of women from public arenas is actively maintained by other structures. Patriarchal relations outside the household are crucial in shaping patriarchal relations within it. However, the effect is to make women’s experience of patriarchy privatized, and the immediate beneficiaries are also located there. The major organs which propagate private patriarchy are cultural organizations.

The contemporary form of patriarchy is of more public kind, and the trend is still in this direction. Women have entered the public sphere but not on equal terms. They are now present in the paid workplace, the state and public cultural institutions but they are subordinated within them. Further, their subordination, in the domestic division of labour, sexual practices and as receivers of male violence, continues (Walby 1990).

History of Jewish Feminism

Israel is the state of West Asian region that is famous for having patriarchal societies. This study deals with the Jewish women’s status, so it is essential to deal with Jewish feminist perspective in Israeli context. Jewish feminism had started in the Yishu period.

The early Jewish women’s struggle was part of the socialist Zionist vision of a “new man” or a “new Jew”. The leaders were immigrants who came from Russia, educated women who had absorbed revolutionary ideas. In the framework of Zionist immigration—about 30,000 immigrants in the first wave (1882-1903), 35,000 in the second wave (1904-1914), 30 percent of whom were women- and 35,000 in the third (1919-1923), 36.8 percent of whom were women. The women who had struggled for equality constituted a very small revolutionary minority within a very larger Jewish minority. These women could not deal with Arab, Oriental or Orthodox Jewish women. Several women movement came into being in Israel that acted toward political as well as economic rights of Jewish women. To deal with the problems of women at economic
front in 1911 the women workers from agriculture commune began to organize. They opened agriculture training school for women but these Women Workers’ Movements were unable to cope with the discrimination meted out to them by their male-counterparts at decision-making level. Later in 1920 when Histadrut (National Federation of Hebrew Workers) was created most of the organizations and resources of the labour movement were subsumed under its roof and became dependant on it. Officially women’s movement was not represented at the founding convention of the Histadrut, because the representation was based on political party membership, and women viewed their organization as non-partisan one. Due to Ada Maimon’s efforts two seats were reserved in Histadrut for women workers. Those women representatives who were elected by the Women’s Worker Council filled this quota in 1921. But Women’s Workers’ Council failed to achieve economic or political power. In 1926 only one woman, Ada Maimon, was the member of policy making body of any of the economic body created by the Histadrut. These Workers’ movement lost their relevance in 1930. By that time, the Labour movement had gained supremacy within Palestinian Jewish community and its energies were devoted to the maintenance of that supremacy, vis a vis the center and right wing opponents, as well as to leading the national struggle, vis a-vis the Arabs and the British. Due to all these causes the labour hierarchy superseded the gender equality (Izraeli 1981: 89-90).

The issue of women’s voting rights first reached the local agenda in 1903, in the agriculture village of Zichorn Ya’acov in Palestine, where the local governing body decided against women suffrage. Later in 1917, Tel Aviv Jewish women won the voting right, followed by the women of Hafia and Rishon L’Zion, who had also organized women’s societies. In 1919, these Jewish women established a nonpartisan organization, the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Israel; the local Women’s Societies provided the organizational base. Even if women participated in elections that were held in 1920 but women’s suffrage was formally ratified by the Representative Assembly (governing body of Jewish population at national level in Palestine during that period). Jewish women got representation right at local level in late 1930s. During 1940s,
the burning issues were the World War, the Holocaust, the struggle against the British Mandate, and the war with the Arabs (Ibid).

**Jewish Feminism in Israel: 1948-70:** In 1948, once the state was established, the scene related to gender equality changed once again, in face of mass immigration of Jews, many of them in distress, and a new minority of Arabs under Jewish domination. The veteran women activists had become a part of new “ruling elite”, as the labour parties had come to dominate political institutions and their husbands and comrades were now managing to state apparatus. The suffragists were a part of the sector that managed private and government enterprises as well as army. No new women movement proliferated. Jewish women themselves were not predisposed to reach out and recruit new allies among the new group. Instead, Women Workers’ Council, the Hebrew women slowly took on a “social service” orientation, in keeping with their new class positions. This was also the demand of Jewish state apparatus at that time, which faced with massive welfare and social service needs, found in activist women a convenient solution.

During that period a massive inflow of financial aid from Jewish communal organizations abroad, among them Hadassh, Women International Zionist Organization, and Pioneer Women also pushed in the same direction. These local elite were the “natural” counterparts of the middle and upper class Jewish philanthropists from abroad. In fact it was like the Women Workers’ Council, the Union of Hebrew women gradually shifted its focus to philanthropic and social work activities, until it was absorbed by WIZO. Efforts at liberation from Jewish women would not be resumed until the new women’s movement spread to Israel in the 1970s (Bernstein 1987: 45-47).

**Jewish Feminism in Israel after 1970s:** The new feminist movement in Israel did not originate in a civil rights or a student movement as it did in the United States and Western Europe, but was the result of the direct influence of new immigrants from the United States and other English – speaking countries. In fact the Women’s Movement in Israel during this period was started by two seminars- which evolved into consciousness-raising groups on women’s issues given at Hafia University by two immigrants from the United States: Marcia Freedman, a philosophy lecturer, and Marlyin Safir, a psychology lecturer. These two ladies at first formed the consciousness-raising groups on women’s
issues at Hafia University. Due to the efforts of these organizers and some other participants later in 1972, Hafia women consolidated in a movement called *Nilahem*, acronym for Women for a Renewed Society (Freedman, 1981:91-94).

The movement soon spread to Tel Aviv, where a group of women, among them Esther Eilam, Ruth Rasnic and Joanne Yaron set up a feminist organization that stressed equality and legislative reforms and resembled the American feminist organization NOW or the French Choisir, eventually calling itself “The Israeli Feminist Movement”. At the same time feminist groups were also formed in the Jerusalem. These women groups protested against the “Women of Valor” and beauty contest. But the Israeli feminist movement took a new shape in 1973 when Shulamit Aloni formed the Citizen Right Movement and got support from these women organizations to get the threshold to make its entry in the *Knesset*. Marcia Freedman who was the founder of new feminist movement in Israel became the first feminist member of the *Knesset*. She contested the election on the behalf of Citizen Right Movement. During the late 1970s, due to efforts of these feminists several shelters for battered women were opened in Herzliya and Jerusalem; and several rape crisis intervention centers were also opened in Haifa, Jerusalem, Raanana and Eilat.

Following the pattern of development in other countries, especially those of the Third World, women’s issues came to be promoted not only by grassroot organizations calling themselves “feminist” but also by the political establishment: what women historians call “feminism form above”. In 1975, the United Nations Decade of women prompted Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to appoint a committee to examine the status of Israeli women. This committee published its report in 1978 that is still the definitive statement on the status of Israeli women. Israel also sent official representatives to the United Nations Conference on women in Mexico (Leah Rabin, wife of then Prime Minister, rather than Marcia Freedman), Copenhagen and Nairobi, and “the status of women” took the shiny surface of respectability (Mies 1986: 9).

Israeli feminist sociology in reality began to emerge as a recognizable trend in the 1980s. This new trend was formed under the dual influences of developments in Western especially American sociology, as well as local Israeli social and political developments.
But there is a basic difference between Israeli and American social structures that makes an impact on feminist movement in Israel.

When we compare the American and Israeli middle-class culture, Israeli society is highly family oriented. Career woman also shares this family oriented attitude. The other distinguishing feature about Israeli society which has made strong impact on Jewish feminist movement is that it is a comparatively new society which has adopted certain models from Western societies. Israeli society is also having constant security threats from its neighbours, which make strong impact on women's life because it is an assumed fact at universal level that women and children are soft targets in a war. All these factors were the primary causes of non-acceptance of Women Liberation movement during the decade of 1970s.

Unlike feminist sociology feminist mass movement has never attained popular status in Israel as it has in America but feminist sociology (meaning thereby those interpretations of Israeli feminist academia which deal with gender-difference in the Israeli society despite the claim of gender-equality of the Jewish state) is obviously concerned first and foremost with women, it bears critical implications for Israeli society (Ibid). Feminist movement bears criticism in Israel on that very basis as it does in other Asian countries, that it is the ideology of elite or middle class women and does not represent those women's problems which are not from this class.

Though Jewish feminism has not got the acceptance from women of Jewish section of Israeli society but in 1980s during first intifada feminist were active in Israeli peace movement. To deal with Jewish women's status it is essential to find out which form of patriarchy exists in Israel. As mentioned above liberal feminism talks about legal-political equality Dafna's work shows that in Israel from the very beginning the law guarantees women's equality, but still matrimonial matters are adjudicated in Orthodox Courts by an explicitly discriminatory halkhic codex,(Jewish law) women are absent from religious courts and even during any suit they are not allowed as witness. An ambiguity also surrounds women military service. In political leadership also ambiguity prevails. Although women in Israel have universal suffrage from almost the beginning of
its institutionalized polity, their participation in national leadership as well as local level is meager.

Women participation in the labour force is about 50 percent but most of them are related to the middle income group. They are still getting less pay despite the fact that there are several legislations passed by the Israeli government to provide them equal pay. Izraeli Dafna puts the whole phenomenon in perspective when she says that “Israeli society is a modern market society inhibited by traditional culture”. There are several indicators to assess the economic status of women namely their access to education, employment opportunities in various sectors of the economy. To evaluate the changing economic status of Jewish women it is essential to find out whether they are still working in the traditional field of economy, like education, nursing and manufacturing.

Israel is a family oriented society in which home is the responsibility of women. According to the Jewish tradition and values the well being of the family members has been the responsibility of the wives and mothers. The precarious security position due to its Arab neighbours and Palestinian problem since the establishment of the state has also become the cause of militaristic society. Military is not only a patriarchal institution but also becomes the cause of women’s secondary role in the Israeli society. Immigration of Arab and African Jews has also been responsible for the containment of tradition in the society. This trend of Israeli society can be summed up in these words of Nitza Berkovitch that “there are two “gendering forces” that shape Israeli society. By gendering forces is meant ideologies and practices that construct male and female as two distinctive social beings with different social roles that consequently have differential patterns of participation in Israeli collective. These are militaristic culture and strong family positions”. During the 1990s a new turn came in the Jewish feminism in Israel that is very near to multi-cultural feminism. Marcia Freedman who is a former Member of Knesset and a founder of the Israeli women's movement described it in these words

“Gender-based stereotypes are still very much in place in Israel (women are emotional, men are rational; women are weak, men strong; men, but not women, can work in the trades or drive buses). So are norms of inequality that teach boys and girls, men and women to build inequality
into their relationships (husbands should be taller, richer, older and more successful than wives). Assertiveness training for women is today very popular in Israel, but little is being done to uproot the values and norms that make it necessary for women to learn to be assertive in the first place”.

The second reason, in her opinion, that Israeli feminists have not been able to change women’s lives is that, from its beginnings, Israeli feminism has been a white, European (Ashkenazi) movement which, by definition, had little knowledge of or authentic connection to the majority of women Mizrahi and Palestinian women and, more recently, Ethiopians, women from the former Soviet Union and foreign workers.

Ashkenazi Jews may dominate in Israel, but they are not a numeric majority. A purely western, white, middle-class feminism cannot possibly speak effectively to or for the mix of women in Israel. During the 1990s there have been growing demands made on the Ashkenazi-led and -dominated movement by Mizrahi, Palestinian, lesbian and religious feminists for recognition, inclusion and resources. At the same time these communities established their own separate organizations. Although the process is often painful and wounding, the Israeli feminist movement has been grappling with the issues of diversity and identity politics for almost a decade (Freedman, 2004: www.socialaction.com/issues.html). At present several grassroots feminist organizations, the women’s centers in Haifa and Jerusalem in particular, have responded by reorganizing themselves to meet the challenges of multicultural feminism.3

Methodology

This is an analytical study based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data will be collected from the various relevant reports of the World Bank, the United Nations and the Israeli Government. The secondary data will be collected from books, articles, newspapers and Internet.

- To evaluate the economic status of women indicators would be used namely; their education standard, presence in service sector, industrial sector, equal wages etc.

3 Patricia J. Woods pointed in her article, “In Israel it is still believed that feminism is a Foreign born product”. She found in her study it is not the whole truth because most of women who are involved in Israeli women movement become the part of them because of their personal experience. Even if it is true that Ashkenazi women have played a dominant role in this movement.
To weigh up the political status variables like voting rights, women representation in the legislative, executive and judicial branch of political system not only on national level but at local level also will be used.

To reflect on their socio-cultural status variables like women's role in family, marriage and divorce law, inheritance law and religion would be used.

To sum up, there is hardly any comprehensive work done on the changing status of Jewish women by any scholar. The aim of present study is to fill the knowledge gap that exists in India about the myths of gender equality in Jewish society. In International arena, certain states have provided economic and political rights to their women citizen. The same is done by Israeli state. However, it is quite difficult for a state to go against popular tradition of a society or to enhance the social status of women citizen as a whole. While discussing Jewish women's changing status one important point has been kept in mind that Israeli society is a transitional society (Israeli state is only 57 years old and due to certain ethnic origin people, and security threat this nation is having a more distinguished democratic culture than Western countries.) These factors also make their impact on women's status of that particular society.