India is predominantly a rural society. It has nearly 5.5 lakh villages. Agriculture is the main occupation of these villages. According to the 1981 census the population of India was approximately 663,810,091. Out of this 353,347,249 were males and 330,462,802 were females, the sex ratio being 935 females for every 1000 males. More or less half of the population is represented by females. This is the case almost since the beginning of the census operations in India about a hundred years, perhaps indicating adverse life-chances for females.

Till recently there were very few studies regarding women. About rural women, who constitute a considerable size, such studies were very negligible. Since the launching of the International Women's Year in 1975 and subsequent announcement of the International Women's Decade by the U.N.O., people around the world have come together consciously to discuss, examine and understand the position of women. This has resulted in a spurt of studies and research on the present and the past conditions of women in different societies of the world.
Anthropologists and sociologists have recently shown an increasing interest on the problems of women in the changing Indian social order. For a considerable period anthropologists treated caste, kinship, leadership, traditional institutions, etc. as subjects of their inquiries, in both urban and rural settings. A.C. Mayer's 'Caste and Kinship in Central India' (1960), F.G. Bailey's 'Caste and Economic Frontier' (1955), M.N. Srinivas's 'Religion and Society among the Coorgs' (1952), T.N. Madan's 'Family and Kinship among Kashmiri Brahmins' (1965) and others have contributed towards the understanding of the rural Indian social order with an anthropological perspective. Only incidentally the roles of men and women in the context of their daily routine life have been discussed in these works.

Survey of Literature

Considerable work has been done on the position of women in India by different social scientists. Most of the studies regarding the position of women in earlier times are based on sacred texts and deal with only the women of higher castes. Very little attention has been given to the majority of women who do not belong to this group. From these texts which posit ideals, it is not possible to know the real position of women in Hindu Society. Based on these sacred texts historians and other
scholars state that the position of women in India was not static through the ages but has actually ranged from one of freedom and importance to the other extreme of considerable subservience.

Some studies regarding women have taken a diachronic view point. A.S. Altekar (1962) and P. Thomas (1964) made an attempt to understand the position of women through the ages. A historical survey of the position of women and the institutions of marriage and family in India from antiquity to the present day, traces the origin and development of various institutions and practices as they relate to women in India. Davaki Jain (1975) has dealt with the position and problems of women from the ancient to modern period.

S. Sengupta (1969) has dealt with the role, status and position of women of Bengal through a careful selection from different forms of folk-lore. Among others who have focussed their attention on the problems of women are William J. Goode (1969), and M. S. Kalanidhi (1966). They have examined the problem of divorce and job satisfaction among women respectively. Similarly attempts are being made to understand women through biographies, art and culture.
The problem of the position of women which has created much interest, has been exercising the minds of social reformers in India since early 19th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and others had an acute awareness of problems of the women-folk of that time. Many have pointed out the disabilities, problems and sufferings of women in their writings.

Women's role in the freedom struggle in India is one of the important aspects of study because some scholars who are interested in studying women's position in terms of low and high, are of the opinion that this struggle is the turning point from their position of inferiority, subjugation, subservience and inequality to the position of equality with men.

Some scholars have studied women with special reference to community. Zarina Bhatty (1976) tries to understand the "effects of purdah and restrictive operation of the Muslim Personal Law and suggests that in a changing environment, with new 'stresses and challenges', Indian Muslim women cannot remain isolated and unaffected." Rama Mehta (1976) in her micro-study of Oswal community has provided an excellent example of the new stresses and challenges. In the indepth study of 25 families of Oswal community
she has analysed "the values and the environment of the older generation of women up to 1947 and their adaptation to new reality, when the state merged within Indian Union;" (p.113). This study was restricted only to the middle and upper status groups. The role of women in the context of tribal culture is studied by Leela Dube (1956). She describes the role of Gond woman in the tribal setting.

Due to women's movements in the sixties and the seventies and also the declaration of the International Women's Year and later on continued for the whole decade, social scientists throughout the world have started taking interest in women's studies. While most of the works dealing with women's position tried to know it as high or low, some dealt with women's movements, emancipation of women, equal rights with men, etc.

Of late several studies on the changing position of women in the Third World countries have been undertaken. The problem is thus gradually assuming global significance. Cross-cultural studies have provided a new dimension to the understanding of the position of women in their specific cultural contexts. Janat Zollinger Giele (1977:3) states that, "the overwhelming evidence so far is that virtually no society in the world provides women equal status with men." After reviewing a number of studies on women in different societies Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974:3) conclude:
"Everywhere we find that women are excluded from certain crucial economic or political activities, that their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer power and prerogatives than are the roles of the men. It seems fair to say then that all contemporary societies are to some extent male dominated and although the degree and expression of female subordination vary greatly, sexual asymmetry is presently a universal fact of human social life." Suma Chitnis (1980:2) maintains that, "although exploitation of and discrimination against women are global phenomena, their consequences are particularly tragic in the Third World." Alfred D'Souza (1975:ix) is of the opinion that, "in both the industrially advanced and less developed countries women are burdened with cumulative inequalities as a result of socio-cultural and economic discriminatory practices which, until recently, have been taken for granted as though they were part of the immutable scheme of things established by nature." Similarly, Mandelbaum, Bhatnagar, Titmuss, Gandhiji and others have referred to the inferior position of women.

At the same time a few studies deal with the phenomenon of unexpected strength in the position of women in the traditional cultures of the Third World. The participants in the international seminar held in Madras 1979 indicate
that in Sri Lanka, Philippines and Indonesia the traditional
d values, norms and patterns of behaviour allow considerable
 autonomy, equality and dignity to women. Suratmi Sudjahri
(1980) shows how the bilateral or parental kinship system
which is widely practised in Indonesia protects the status
of women in marriage by allowing spouses to continue to
belong to their family of orientation. Here, the women
have equal position with men. They have equal right to
inheritance and properties gained during the marriage.
She emphasizes that though the Indonesian women suffered
disadvantage and discrimination as their counterparts in
other parts of the world, there are certain counts on which
the dignity and equality of women are protected. H.E.M.
Perera (1980) states that in Sri Lanka women are almost
revered as mothers. Damayanti Herath (1980) supports this
by saying that polyandry along with Binna Marriage (after
marriage the women continue to stay in their parental home)
h酣ises the position of women. Emelina Garcia (1980)
writes that prior to colonization of Philippines by Spain
women were educated, respected and could even succeed to
Sultanate when male heirs were wanting. Monogamy with
bride-price was present. Women retained their maiden names
and were treated as equals by their husbands.

In a recent cross-cultural study of (women, \( ^{\text{\textregistered}} \) Theasson)
(1974) has discussed the role of women in economic production to explain equality between the sexes. She found that women in agricultural society where she participates less in agriculture has low public status and men dominate in the affairs of the village. In rice-growing regions where women do most of the work, the status of women is high. Similar are the views of Patai (1967) and Ester Boserup (1970). Giele (1976) is of the opinion that different studies on the status of women in different countries share a striking historical theme. Women's status was high at some earlier time. It then passed through a period of constriction, before showing improvement in recent times. He has examined the position of women and has stated that the "position of the sexes had changed with each stage of social evolution." (p.8).

Some sociologists and anthropologists have studied the statuses and roles of women. Some have taken biological differences between men and women as the basis for their studies. Others have related gender with role; some have emphasised economic participation as an important factor in the study of position of women and their dependent roles. For instance, Murdock (1949) sees biological differences between men and women as the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. He suggests that biological difference
such as greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children, leads to gender roles out of sheer practicability. Because of physical strength men undertake different tasks and women are tied to the homes due to their biological functions of child-bearing and rearing and their contribution is limited to less strenuous tasks. Thus Murdock finds the sexual division of labour in 224 societies of his sample and concludes that "the advantages inherent in a division of labour by sex presumably account for its universality."

Ann Oakley, a sociologist, argues that "there are no exclusively female roles and that biological characteristics do not bar women from particular jobs" (quoted in Haralambos: 1981:374). The biologically based incapacity of women to undertake heavy and demanding tasks is a myth. She concludes that, "Gender roles are culturally rather than biologically determined. Evidence from a number of different societies shows that there are no tasks (apart from child bearing) which are performed exclusively by females. Biological characteristics do not bar women from particular occupations. The mother role is a cultural construction. Evidence from several societies indicates that children do not require a close, intimate and continuous relationship with a female mother figure" (Ibid 374-75).
Ernestine Friedl (1975), an anthropologist, gives an explanation for the division of labour and male dominance. She supports cultural explanation noting the great variation in gender roles between societies. She also argues that any activity if it is done by male is considered as prestigious due to male dominance. Men dominate because they control the exchange of valued goods beyond the family group.

Some studies have been undertaken regarding the position of women in urban setting. Ann Oakley (1974) argues that the institutionalization of the mother housewife role has caused the subordination of women in the labour market. As such, the paid employment for them receives a secondary consideration. She strongly believes in the abolition of the sexual division of labour or in upgrading the women's jobs in order to achieve equality with men.

Blackburn and Stewart (1977) view sexual inequality in the labour market as reinforcing sexual inequality in other areas. In capitalistic system the position of women in the labour market tends to be very low and the exploitation of them seems to be more prominent. Margaret Benston (1972) argues that capitalism benefits from its
large reserve labour force of women to keep wages down and profits up. The exploitation of women by the employers continues because they i.e. women are less likely to join trade unions, go on strike and take other forms of militant actions.

The position of women is studied also by using Marxist approach. David Lane (1970) believes that communism has made considerable advances towards sexual equality. But again the problem of female liberation continues to exist as the attitudes of men take a longer time to change and treat women as their equal partners. The changes in the institutional arrangements are in no way linked to the attitudinal changes.

The foregoing studies bring out the fact that the problems of women's liberation and equality of status have been responsible for evolving different anthropological and sociological perspectives. These perspectives are centred round the relation between male and female roles, increasing economic participation of women and access to power.

Several scholars on the 'Women in the Third World' referring to the recent impact of modernization, describe
the manner in which industrialization has adversely affected women in traditional societies. Analysing the views of Aiko Carter on Japanese women, Chitnis states that the Japanese tradition and modern capitalism have "combined to create a situation in which women are ruthlessly exploited as cheap labour for Japanese industry. At work, they are governed by traditional value system of the Japanese which requires women to work hard, to accept authorities with deference and to suffer silently." (1980:5). They have to retire at the age of 30 to ensure that they do not neglect their families while they are earning. Chitnis also summarised the views of Jamilah Arafán on the impact of modernization on women. She has stated that "young girls uprooted from villages and from small towns brought to work in urban multi-national industries, are required to adopt the norms of behaviour preferred by their respective managements, allowed to drift away from their bearings in the family and the community and abandoned to an ambivalent uncertain and insecure city life." (Ibid:5).

It is very difficult, but not impossible to evaluate objectively the position of women in any society. Studying the position of women as higher or lower than in other societies is not the most profitable question. Evans-Pritchard (1965) suggests that one is required to know
in what features they differ. Any consideration and comparison of the position of women in different societies would be misleading if the specific cultural contexts are not taken into account.

Emphasizing the increasing area of women's activities during the past few decades, Patai summarises the changes that have taken place in the position of women in recent times. He writes that "throughout the world women have moved toward greater freedom and have achieved greater equality with men both within and outside the family in the legal, sexual, social, occupational, economic, political and cultural realms. The old order, which confined women to the home as servants and helpers to their menfolk has been, or is in the process of being replaced by, a new one in which women increasingly undertake to fill many roles, within the home as wives, mothers and home keepers and, outside it, as partners and co-workers of men in all types of enterprises" (1967:1).

Majumdar (1954:48-49) has advocated functional model to study the position of women. He has stated that the position of women can be analysed in terms of her roles in different fields of activity namely family, economy, interpersonal relations, decision-making, etc. His over
emphasis only on function makes one believe that the question is treated in its static form.

A survey of anthropological literature reveals that until recently most anthropologists saw little reason to give special attention to women, viewing any concentration on them as a diversion from the main current of anthropology. In most monographs women are depicted merely as shadowy figures, as a background for the men's activities and only the bare bones of the women's roles are described. Some studies, however, did compel some limited research on the activities of women. The field of culture and personality studies includes some attention on women in their interrelations and interaction with men and as mothers in relation to the children. Those who studied the economic aspects of simple societies had to take into account women in their roles as food-producers and co-workers. In this way, the data on women are fragmentary, disparate and often distorted. (Hammond and Jablow: 1976).

The foregoing survey brings out the following points:

1. Economic, technological and cultural values are relevant for understanding the position of women and hence inadequacy of earlier studies.

2. Works with preconceived value judgements have limited objectives and the 'high' or 'low' expressions become untenable owing to their value preference.
3. There is a need for objective understanding of the new opportunities unleashed by forces of modernization that affect women and consequently new roles of and changes in the status of women.

The Problem of Study

A review of the anthropological literature on the Indian village studies reveals certain gaps which need to be filled up by further research for a more comprehensive understanding of the Indian way of life. Of the several gaps, the one that is more obvious is about the awareness of the position of women in rural society. The traditional textual explanations of the position of women in Hindu social order and the actual position of women at present in rural India are quite different.

The pace of social change has accelerated after Independence by the process of modernization, urbanization and industrialization. The roles of men and women and the values centering around such roles have been undergoing changes as brought out in many recent studies. In these studies women are seen participating in politics and professions, and seeking education and white-collar jobs outside their homes. Yet, a majority of women in India live in villages where most of them carry out their traditional occupations and adhere to values and norms which have been followed from generation to generation. Even in rapidly
growing urban centres, traditional roles and values relating to women find wide acceptance. Though a number of women occupy highest positions of responsibility, they seem to be the exceptions rather than the rule. But anthropological studies about rural women have revealed that they have not absorbed the new values to the expected extent. One of the considerations for such resistance to new values is supposed to be the cautious and conservative attitude of rural women. Women in rural India appear to be the custodians of traditional values. The slow acceptance or the immediate acceptance of new values depends considerably on the ideas and attitudes of women.

However, we have to realise that the planned change has had its differential impact on the villages. It is hypothesized that the villages which are situated at the fringe of urban areas tend to show a response different from the villages which are far from the urban centres. It is assumed that the people of the fringe villages are more change-prone to new values and less in comparison with commuter villages. However, this needs to be examined empirically. The present study aims at this objective.

During the last two decades or so the position of women in the urban context has been studied intensively.
These studies have dealt with different problems and issues connected with the changing roles of women. But very little attention has been paid to rural women. The most sensitive area of such a study seems to be the fringe villages. Sometimes such villages may not give the impression of a developed village in terms of buildings and institutions characteristic of urban areas. But one can see the unmistakable urban influence through the dealings of such people with their urban counterparts. Their constant exposure to the urban way of life, urban values and ideas may make them more change-prone. Under such circumstances, it becomes necessary to conduct anthropological studies of such sensitive zones which probably may throw light on the problems of rural social change and also the future of Indian villages.

The present study focuses attention on the position of such rural women as a dimension of changing village. Though anthropologists and sociologists have studied Indian fringe villages their studies are of a very general nature. (Asharya 1956; Rao 1956; Majumdar 1958).

Objective of the Study

The present study as mentioned earlier attempts to understand the position of women in a fringe village. It would reveal whether the process of modernization has affected the position of women, as our society is undergoing transition from the traditional to a modern one. Probably such a study will better explain the transition from rural to urban. Economic development and cultural modernization
are the objectives of our government. Hence this study can be of immense benefit to the planners while framing the development schemes to accelerate the process of change as women's contribution also is considerable. Again one of the objectives of this study is to find out the truth of the statement that women are the levers of change. This idea is gaining ground among the scholars whose aim is to locate the levers of change. It is generally conceded that women are the custodians of the traditional way of life and any change in rural setting cannot take firm roots unless women accept the need for change and facilitate accelerating the process of change.

In the present study an attempt is also made to understand how far the position of women has changed from its traditional order. It is important not only to know what the customary or the ideal norms have to say about the position of women, their roles, rights and obligations in the rural setting, but it is also necessary to know whether social practice conforms to them and if not, how far they differ and in what way. A basic question arises here. Position of women in relation to what? Anthropological inquiry warrants the consideration of any such issue in terms of several substructures of rural social structure and the analysis of the position of women in each of the
substructures. For example, social networks, economic, religious, political and educational arenas encompass the several activities of women as they occupy varied statuses and roles. Hence, the present study is undertaken at micro-level using the method of qualitative analysis in order to have an in-depth understanding of the changing position of women in a fringe village.

In order to study the position of women in a fringe village, as mentioned earlier, a village known as Siódapur (a pseudonym to conceal identity) was selected after careful thought. It is situated at a distance of 8 kilometers on the outskirts of Gulbarga, a fast developing city and is close to the campus of the newly established Gulbarga University. It is here that the urban influence has its least impact and beyond this village, there is no significant influence of the city. It is a meeting point of rural and urban way of living.

Operational Definitions

Position and Role: In this study position of woman is defined in terms of roles or the patterns of behaviour expected of the occupant of a status. It consists of rights and obligations which are given expression through the appropriate roles in a given social structure.
"A position defines a minimum of obligatory behaviour for the incumbent but it cannot ensure that the incumbent will carry out this behaviour perfectly. How an individual actually performs in a given situation, as distinct from how he is supposed to perform, we call his role. The role then, is the manner in which a person actually carries out the requirements of his position. It is dynamic aspect of position" (Davis 1957:89-90; Cf also Linton 1936:114).

"Status is capable of being elaborated into roles while all roles have a foundation in status...". They are complimentary concepts, so to speak two sides of the same coin (Nadel 1969:29; Cf also Linton 1936:114).

In the present study the position of woman is identified in terms of the roles of decision-making, diversification in occupation, the extra-familial and outside the village relations/mobility, education, political and religious participation appropriate to their status. These aspects of status are treated as the sub-structures of the total structure of the social order in which individuals interact.

The concept of 'position' as understood by the people of the village is quite different from that of the social scientists. Similarly it varies from rural women to urban
and educated women. No doubt rural women have some considerations regarding their *kimmat* (status). Hence they cannot tolerate anything and everything. A daughter will not tolerate any abuse or allegation from the parents or the elders, though she respects them. A wife will not tolerate unquestioned liberty of the husband, though she thinks of him as head of the family. The mother does not accept uncontrolled behaviour of the children. But rural women do not consider the equality of status between males and females as the Westerner thinks or the women of educated urban society think. They do not think in terms of superiority or inferiority of the sexes, equal opportunities for the sexes, emancipation of women or subordination of women. For them men and women are not competitors but complementary to each other. It is the urban educated who think of position of women on western model.

In my study of Siddapur, for the sake of analysis, I consider the status of woman in relation to man; but village women are not thinking in this way. I am not a social worker interested in improving or elevating the position of woman in rural area but I want to study as it is found. Hence in my study I am not interested in bringing about changes in the position of woman. In this study I have accepted the meaning given by Linton and Davis to the
Structure: Structure is understood in terms of statuses and roles that constitute the social system. The statuses are synonymous with the positions. These positions constitute the arrangement of the personnel in a society. The structure has its several sub-structures which are capable of providing an analytical frame for any researcher. Each sub-structure has its own set of roles or expected behaviour. It is presumed that in a given social structure, the roles or the expected behaviour may find modifications and alterations due to the choices available in the structure itself. Structure is treated as a dynamic aspect of social system and not as a static phenomenon. Kinship, economic order, religious order, juridical and educational order constitute the sub-structures. An attempt is made to analyse the roles or behaviour of the interacting individuals in each of these sub-structures.

Modernization: Modernization is understood as a process in terms of provision of formal education, contact with market economy, secular ideas and values, use of modern technology, improved means of transport and communication and participation in urban life.
**Class:** Class is explained in terms of economic position a family occupies in the village. Incomes from primary and secondary sources are taken in order to classify the families into upper, middle and lower classes.

**Fringe village:** Fringe as a concept in village studies has been used to denote the meeting point of rural and urban way of living. It is here that the urban influence has its least impact and beyond this there is no significant influence of the city.

**Methodology**

There is a difference in the perspectives of different social sciences to the study of "the position of women." Cultural relativism is a distinctive feature of anthropological inquiry. It implies that every culture is unique and as such it has to be analysed in its own terms. Thus, every aspect of life is investigated and considered as important only in the context of its own culture. This has enabled anthropologists to understand societies in their cultural diversity. An anthropologist, unlike other social scientists, studies one aspect of life in its sociocultural context and presents his observations on the problem of study against the background of the total life situation of that particular society. He follows holistic
approach and examines different aspects of life in order to find their functional relations.

Though I have followed the holistic, structural-functional and contextual approach in my study, sufficient care has been taken to treat the village not as an isolated unit as it is linked with the outside world. The changing position of women is understood by taking into account the urban forces impinging upon rural areas.

In order to formulate the research design and to develop theoretical perspective, I undertook a survey of literature concerning the changing position of women in urban and rural settings and women's studies concerning the third world countries. Both these gave me certain perspectives to study the village. An attempt was also made to get myself acquainted with the history of the city and the ecological environment in which the village is located. Information about the history of the village was collected from the elder members of the community.

The present work is thus based on an intensive study of an Indian village at micro-level involving all the households. The heads of the families were personally contacted during field work to obtain information on the
problem of research. The womenfolk of the village were given more importance as the present study is related to the position of women. Information was elicited from the respondents on the basis of an interview-schedule prepared for the purpose. It was realised that without several visits to the residences of respondents, the collection of data could not be completed. The initial contacts with the respondents took some time but my stay in the village gradually facilitated establishing rapport with them.

Siddapur forms part of a group panchayat which consists of Zhapur, Paliya, Siddapur and Tanda and as such its prospects are linked with the surrounding villages. It was necessary to meet the panchayat officials and to study the programmes and activities of the panchayat. It was also necessary to interview all the government and voluntary agencies, officials of District Rural Development Society which are associated with the village in its various activities such as family planning, education, agriculture, health care unit, etc. The village-based institutions such as Yuvak Mandal and scheduled caste associations were also studied.

After conducting house-to-house survey, intensive interviews were held with some selected persons considered
more knowledgeable and important in the village. To understand the details about the position of women in earlier times (i.e. before Indian independence), several men and women were interviewed with the help of unstructured interview-schedules. Similarly, to examine the present position of women, some case-studies were made in which girls, adult women and elderly women were included. Through participant and non-participant observation the problem was explored in relation to other aspects of life. For indepth study representative families, men and women were interviewed in greater detail, and the information was recorded in the field diary. In addition, official and non-official documents, government records, etc. were also used. Technical aids like the camera were used for collection of qualitative data.

Field work was conducted in the village from September 1981 to March 1983 in three instalments with some unavoidable gaps in between. The initial contacts with the village were made during the months of September and October 1981. It was during this period that I established the rapport with the people. At the outset I experienced many difficulties in being accepted by the people of the village. During the course of household surveys from December 1981 to February 1982, in the beginning people took me to be a family-planning
educator particularly when I asked questions relating to the number of children and number of persons in the family etc. Their inhibitions against family-planning made them hesitant to meet any stranger and provide information. Naturally, in the beginning I could not get their full co-operation. But my subsequent visits, my stay in the village and the discussions with them convinced them that I did not belong to the health unit and I had come there for the purpose of study. Later on, when they were convinced, I did not experience any difficulty and without any hesitation I got the needed information. As I was filling the census schedule before them they started calling me as baredukolluvavaru (one who takes down). They became very enthusiastic and invited me to go over to their houses to write about them. At the same time, some people asked me what benefit or reward they would get by providing information to me. Afterwards, they came to know that I could not give any money or reward and that I had gone there merely to study them, and yet they showed interest and co-operated with me.

I availed myself of every opportunity of observing and attending the festivals, rituals, weddings as well as of trying to understand their problems without bothering about being invited or not. Sometimes, I myself showed interest to attend their functions etc. saying that I liked
to observe such occasions. I tried to be modest, tolerant and adaptable with the village people. I gave them and their children small gifts as a token of affection. Occasions were also created to invite persons with knowledge to my place of dwelling and thus get an opportunity to discuss with them the various issues connected with the routine life of men and women of the village.