CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION
THE PROBLEM

1.1. Rationale of the Problem:

Anne-Sofie Roald (2001:95-100) states that in the Muslim world, social changes have altered traditional gender and family patterns. Muslims in the diaspora faced with new social structures which are challenging the foundations of traditional faith and practices. To understand the issue of gender and perceptions of women in Islam it is necessary to look into the matter of Islamic Legislation.

Malavika Karlekar (1984:362-382) has highlighted influence on a women’s self perception. She suggests that most Indian women accept a world view constructed by men and often reinforced by women not because they are necessarily convinced of its validity but because the costs involved in attempting any changes are too great. The increasing involvement of Indian women in the domain of paid work brings with it a series of dilemmas and conflicts as due to certain deeply internalized stereotypes.

Sushila Jain (1998:XV) in her study Muslim women in a City, throws some light upon the perceptions of Muslims women themselves regarding such key issues as employment, education and control of household finances. She further says, “Muslim Women in India today are potential catalyst.” Their emancipation could be a special step in the modernization of the community.

Madeline Bunting (2001:http//www.guardian.co.uk/archive/article/o, 4273, 4314573, 00 html) speaks of the nature of the liberation of women in Islam. Through a scenario she depicts. In the modern world London is the most developed city but the atmosphere of London is also influenced by Muslim religion. Major example is that the some Muslim Women are sitting in a stylish club they all are wearing the scarfs and discussing about the position of women while the Club also shows the Muslim Identity because there is no alcohol and
downstairs there is a prayer room. This shows that they have liberty but bound by religion.

Humayun Ansari (2004:294-296) states that more young Muslim women are moving into higher level and better-paid employment. They may still face discrimination on religious as well as racial grounds, but they have become increasingly confident and able to challenge and combat it. In the public domain Muslim women are increasingly involved in local politics and voluntary work and holding public office. Their achievements cover a wide range of public arenas: politics, public service, the media culture and art. It is therefore arguable that despite access to better educational facilities, Muslim women have not fared much better than those of the first generation. The cultural ties and family bounds have proved remarkably firm, and maintained a degree of control, despite the relative wealth and economic independence of the younger generation.

Surya Narain (2003:111-113) states that with the spread of education and process of modernization, a change has occurred in the social position of Muslim women. However, the overall situation is not very satisfactory. It is also true that Muslim women are still among the most backward section of the society. Education both secular and religious is the key word to the progress of Muslim women, the positive impact of education on the lives and status of Muslim women has been highlighted in the various studies. The media should also play a most constructive role. Instead of projection the stereotype image of Muslim women, they should focus on successful Muslim women working in different walks of life, who have risen above their situation, without giving up their traditional culture and values. The additional change is equally important among the Muslims men. However, more than a change in societal attitude towards women, what is desired is a change in self-perception of Muslim women. The capacity building of Muslim women is a must to escape the destiny of ‘a minority with in a minority’ and to emerge as an empowered being, with a well defined status and identity.

Many of such studies of Muslim Women have noted several issues like new social structures are challenging the foundations of traditional faith and practices, effect of
education on the position of Muslim Women like involvement in paid work, try to manage public and private life and effect of Islam on women in the western countries also. But all that indicates religion affects the life (Public and private) of Muslim Women despite higher education, employment in paid jobs even while living in the Western world. But systematic documented studies of such impact are rare also of the processes how do they get adjusted in new spheres at ground level in day today life.

1.2. Statement of the Problem:

In the light of the above brief background of understanding of changing scenario of Muslim Women the proposed study focuses on the following specific questions.

1. What is the socio-economic background of educated Muslim Women?
2. How Muslim Women differentiate their Public and Private life?
3. What is the nature of the impact of religion on educated Muslim Women in their public and private life?
4. What is the perception of Muslim Women of their rights in society and at home and how is that determined or influenced by religion?
5. How education is playing an important role in maintaining a noticeable position of Muslim women and how Muslim Women are managing their public life under the influence of religion?

The first question means the study of socio-economic variables of the respondents namely age, education, occupation, social group (caste), family size and parent’s education, occupation.

The second question means the study of the causes and conditions on which Muslim women differentiate their public and private life by their positive attitude, talent and will power. The role of Muslim Women in public and private life having different types of contributions in different public sector for example in education as household education for their family wards and in public their role in school and college education and as a school worker also (as in Primary and Higher education) has been studied.
The third question focuses on the lifestyle of Muslim women. For example, what is the reason that being highly educated they are used to put on a veil in their public life and how they are modifying their public and private life.

The fourth question means the study of the highly educated women’s societal thinking on that basis we have observed that how far they are aware of their rights and being Muslim how far they have some restrictions like purdah system. To understand the influence of religion in their way of working and thinking, their public and private lives at work place and at home have been studied.

The fifth question focuses on the impact of education. To know the essential role of education we studied a group of Muslim women who are maintaining a noticeable position in society and tried to know that if religion effects their private life whether public life is also influenced by religion and what is the line of demarcation on the basis of which they are managing their public life under the influence of religion.

We have studied relationship between the variables of socio-economic background and the variables of Impact of religion. Variables of socio-economic background age, religious education, secular education, father’s occupation and mother’s occupation have been found more important than other variables. These variables have been described in relation to the aspects of Impact of religion i.e. put on veil at work place, management of behaviour when an outsider gent comes at home, management of behaviour when attend a function where gents are also present, go to market and criticism by relatives and neighbours.

1.3. Area of Study:

Deoband is a part of greatness and honour because there is Asia’s number one Islamic University, Dar-al-Uloom. Deoband is situated in north India on
29°58′ latitude and 77°35′ attitude. The Northern Railway passes through the south-west of Deoband. The Deoband railway station is 144 kilometers north of Delhi on the Delhi-Meerut-Saharanpur section. Being a religious seat, Dar-al-uloom of Deoband has fame of ‘fatwa giving’ and inclined the people to seek fatwas in legal (Shari’i) matters. The main business of the town is related to the publication work of religious books and literature work in Urdu and Arabic languages. These books are supplied throughout the world. So there are many big book depots. Islam is the major religion observed by most of the residents of Deoband. Apart from Islam the other religions followed there are Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. There we can see clearly impact of Islamic University on Muslim Women’s life style.

1.4. Methodology:

1.4.1. Universe/Sample:

The number of Muslim educated women in the town is 11,667 out of total number 23,588 approximately (i.e. about 65%). Highly educated women are 20% approximately. Thus, about 2,000 plus highly educated (graduate and above) woman constitute the universe of study. Of these approximately 10% sample (in round figures 200) has been drawn by a combination of sampling methods. Web approach was also used in identification.

1.4.2. Methods of Data Collection:

Historical facts have been collected from the secondary sources. Case study method has been used for collecting primary data at the first stage of explore maximum possible aspects, by using observation and conducting interviews. Later on interview guide was prepared. After necessary modifications this was finalized.

Field work was conducted in Deoband town through interview guide. The interviews were conducted mostly, at work place and some at the residence of the respondents. Interviews were held in strict privacy. While starting for Interview,
we explained the purpose of the study very clearly to the respondents, and a near complete integrity of the interview was maintained.

1.4.3. Methods of Data Analysis:

Care Studies Data collected with the technique of observation, interview (Muslim women) from respondents were analyzed quantitatively, simple statistical techniques like tabulation, percentages, comparative analysis are looked into to indicate the extent of relationship between background factors and the aspects of present attitudes of Muslim women and their patterns of adjustment.

1.5. Terms/ Concepts /Operational Definitions:

1.5.1. Public and Private Life:

If boundaries seem very clear cut of public and private life at first look, at a second sight the dichotomy gives way to a complex intervening situation. Private is the house, public is the street. Private the quarter in which the woman is working at home for her family and she tackles the people who are coming at home, related to her family members. With these people a woman communicates and has contact with him/ her on the basis of her mental status, religion and family limitations. Public life is related to the work place of a woman where she interacts with a lot of people in society related to her work and has to maintain professional relations with those people according to the need of time which are must in public life. Public and private consequently lost its definiteness; it varies not only according to space and time, but also at any given moment within the same cultural setting, according to the point of view.

John B. Landes (1988:17-18) states that the personal and patriarchal politics universe tolerated arenas of public speech and performance by women. Indeed, many contemporaries exaggerated their importance still, elite women achieved a public position that had little if anything to do with their domestic roles. (Of course, a woman’s public position was conditioned by her “family interest” in a
wider sense that is by her location within a lineage system or a series of kinship relations.) Women’s involvement was in society, in a public life outside of the household and increasingly distinguished from the court as well.

Celia Allison Hahn (Christian Century: http://www.religion-online.org/show article. asp? Title=104) has focused on the growing division between procreation and dominion and between the private sphere of women and the public sphere of men. The divorce between public and private arenas has multiplied over the centuries. Before the Industrial revolution men and women worked at home, and women like men, could be butchers and gunsmiths and shipyard operators. But after industrialization the world of work became the province of men, and home and family the proper arena for women. Celia says, “I do not mean to deny that there are women who are already powerful leaders in public life, nor that there are men who are wise and affectionate fathers.” In the workplace itself a women may still be identified with the procreative task. She may find that her talents are discounted? Her female coworkers are jealous, and that her male coworkers sexually harass her.

Rehana Ghadially (2007:345) has highlighted major group purpose a comprehensive set of laws that would collapse the distinction between the public and the private domains, and de-link personal laws from religion. The major problem with this is that religion and personal laws are seen as occupying separate compartments, whereas, the inter winning of religion, culture and personal law is complex and historically determined. Hence, the disentangling of these strands is a difficult task that cannot be effected by administrative or legal fiat, but would be possible only through a comprehensive social movement that engages politically and practically with these questions. Besides, religion is a way of life for the vast majority of men and women, comprising a world view that shapes people’s perceptions and influences their life choices. This is something that cannot simply be wished or legislated away. Moreover, there is a more fundamental question before us: does a democratic society presuppose a space where in communities/groups of people can enter in to a dialogue with each other and
renegotiate the public/private dichotomy on their own terms i.e. keeping in mind their specific histories, cultures, social structures and specific oppressions.

Linda Wood head (2002:333) says that advanced industrial/highly differentiated/Western societies: from at least the nineteenth century industrialization was generally accompanied by the drawing of a clear distinction between private and public life. Women’s proper sphere was the former the family and domestic life. Men dwell in both spheres, but their natural realm is the rationalized, impersonal, secular sphere of public life. Throughout the twentieth century and beyond women have increasingly won the right to move into the public sphere, but the latter remains masculinized and male dominated. Religion in the nineteenth century was itself pushed in to the private realm, and tended to reinforce women’s domesticization by becoming the guardian of private life and family values. Consequently, religion became a natural environment for the articulation of the lives and desire of women whose lives centered round, home, family, children and husband. Women, who move in to public life by (for example) entering one of the professions, however may experience tensions between traditional religious values and the values of their public/professional lives. This tension may be found to be creative or it may lead to an abandonment of traditional religion and/or the creation of new spiritualities.

Laila-Al Marayati (2002:http://www.mwlusa.org/topics/dress/burka.html) states that the word “veil” does not even have a universal meaning. In some culture, it refers to a face-covering known as niqab. In others, to a simple head scarf, known as hijab. Other manifestations of “the veil” include all-encompassing outer garments like the ankle-length abaya from the Persion Gulf States, the Chadar in Iran or the Burka in Afghanistan. Anyone who has spent time interacting with Muslims knows that numerous obstacles, Muslim women are active, assertive and engaged in society.

On the basis of these studies we have used private life is in the house and, public is the street and it is also clear that after industrialization women are taking
active part in the public life and contributing their best in the public life. It is their will power and extra ordinary management that they are managing both public and private life simultaneously which are also influenced by religion.

1.5.2. Hijaab and Niqaab:

Here the differentiation between Hijaab and Niqaab is that Hijaab is more usually understood to mean simply covering encompassing the hair and neck, but not the face itself while Niqaab is face veiling.

1.5.3. Shariah:

Shariah is defined as “Islamic Laws.” On the other hand we can explain those Islamic rules and regulations which are governed under cover of four fundamental universal facts of Islamic religion No.1. Quran 2. Hadith 3. Unanimous decision of Islamic religious intellectuals 4. Thinking based in the light of Hadith and Quran.

1.5.4. Hadith:

Hadith stands what was transmitted on the authority of the Prophet (PBUH), his deeds, sayings, tacit approval or description of his sifaat (features) meaning his physical appearance.