# CHAPTER I

**INTRODUCTION**

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INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair, being complementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived and therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of boths."

"Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his."

M.K. Gandhi (1959) (36)

India is a land of various religious groups. Amidst the various religious groups, the Muslims form a unique group by themselves due to their religious orientation. Among the Muslims, religion regulates the sacred as well as the secular practices. The Muslims by and large accept their religion as unalterable and resist any major innovations. Under this condition the man-woman relationship and authority structure in the family continues to be rooted in traditional sanctions as written in the sacred texts. The close link between the authority structure in the family and religion affects decision making and overall behaviour pattern of the members. However, from time to time, the general social environment and forces of change
generated in the social system have not left the Islamic society entirely unaffected (Roy 1979) (102).

A historical study of women in India reveals that there were distinct stages of rise and fall in the status of women. Women in the Vedic times enjoyed a very high status. She had as much rights to enjoy life as man had woman as his friend, his co-worker and never his inferior. She had enjoyed the property rights and had access to the property of her father and husband. After the Vedic period, the position to women deteriorated considerably. This position of women continued throughout the Hindu period and was reinforced by the Muslim masters whose customs and traditions were noted for the complete subordination of woman by man which considered women as inferior to men. The decline of Indian women's status was reflected in the customs relating to marriage, religion, property, widowhood, dowry, role in the family, basic attitudes and also with respect to the social image of women. Even though this position continued in the beginning of the British period, the spread of English Education and the intermixture of Western and Eastern cultures enabled women to realise their subordinate position and persuaded them to regain their legitimate status. The Hindu rivalist organisations and the political leaders enlightened the public and pleaded for equal rights for women. Thus, women's economic horizon once confined to domestic labour on the farm had expanded and women from all shades of life started working in other fields as teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, engineers, journalists, and officers in the Government department.

After the Independence of India the significant changes that took place for the betterment of women did not affect the Muslim
women immediately and directly mainly because, the Muslim community as such was then more involved and concerned over the partition of the country on the basis of religion. It was only later that the Muslim women started realising their own stagnated state of existence after observing the other non-Muslim women who in the mean time had taken some advantage of the availling opportunities to better their social standing. The realisation of their backwardness coupled with all the exogeneous factors for change have brought about meaningful change in the situation of contemporary Muslim families. (Roy, 1979) (102).

1.1. STATUS OF WOMEN :

The status of women is crucial determinant in the present context of population policy as half of the population in the world comprises of women and perpetuity of the human race depends on them. Amid the current importance of emancipation of women, the role of women as a mother and how it influenced her status, all the more becomes an important factor. The International community has realised that social and economic goals cannot be sorted out without advancement of women. The greatest revolution which is taking place in the world is in the new relationship that is developing between men and women. The movement for women's freedom and equality is more than a century old when Susan Anthony, first started an agitation in 1848 in America for equality of women. And the present day world has come to understand that the ultimate demographic equation of human history depends upon the quality and nature of the changing status-role-relationship of men and women, particularly that of women. In recognition of this relation, United Nations designated 1975 as an "International Women's Year" consequent to
The resolutions adopted concerning the status of women in the World Population Conference held at Bucharest during the world population year '1974'. However the "Status of women and family planning" had been a topic of significance, initiated by United Nations as early as 1965 (35).

Anandalaxmi (1973) (6) defined "Status of Women" as implying the extent to which women can exercise their personal anatomy and have access to knowledge, to economic resources and to political power as compared to men. She classified the status of women into three broad categories: ideal, high and the low status. Ideal status prevails in a society when legal sanction for equality with men in matters of personal autonomy and choices or options exist. In such a society responsibilities are shared equally by men and women, as a way of life. High status implies a society where women are in a position, to exercise their economic, social and political rights in society and their powers of personal autonomy in the family. Low status of women is evident in societies where cultural compulsions prevail in domestic life and dominance of male is the rule.

India (inclusive of Tamil Nadu) unfortunately fails in third category. In general, sex based discrimination accentuating social economic and cultural inequalities are inherent in Indian Society.

In India the disabilities and disadvantages faced by women are imposed either by the traditional culture or by distortions. The World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of International Women's Year (1975) states that "The right of women to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information and means to enable them to exercise that right has a decisive impact -
on their ability to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities and to participate fully in community life as responsible citizens. The exercise of this right and the full participation of women in all aspects of national life are closely inter-related with such crucial demographic variables, a crucial point of one's life cycle such as age at marriage, total number of children born, spacing of births and the like. The exercise of this right is basic to the attainment of any real equality in status between the sexes and without its achievement women are at a disadvantage, in their attempt to benefit from other reforms" (36).

Biological consequences may form the basis of distinction between men and women. But it does not mean that the differential access and receipts of benefits rooted in biology should be imposed on women. This situation requires remedial action so as to enable women enjoy the scope to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political processes of their societies.

1.2. WOMEN AND EDUCATION :

'Education is an important key indicator which decides the improvement of status. It determines the aspirations, levels of skills and therefore also of productivity, vertical and horizontal mobility in the society, changing perceptions of the cost and values of human beings and their contribution to the household and national economy. Therefore, access to education is of great significance in the context of status of women. (Mitra 1979) (74).

It is now recognised that Education is the major instrument which societies can use to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. It provides for vertical mobility and can
thereby help to equalise status between individuals coming from different social strata. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights regards it as one of the basic rights of every human being. "The movement for improving women's status all over the world has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in society. The better a woman's education the greater the availability of social opportunities. Whenever new opportunities come in, there is conflict with existing institutions. This leads to a change in thinking and in the pattern of living (Vohra and Sen 1986) (125).

**EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA**

According to the 1981 census (16), of the total population of India 241.03 millions are literates. The literacy in urban areas is 57.40 percent as compared to 29.65 percent in the rural areas. The urban literacy rate is higher than that in the rural areas in the case of both males and females but the difference is particularly noticeable in the case of females.

During the different plan periods, the enrolment of girls in educational institutions has increased gradually. During the period of ten years (1970 - 1980) there was annual growth of 2.4 percent in enrolment in classes I to IV and four percent increase in classes VI to VIII. The highest priority is given to the education of adult women in the age group 15 as a matter of national policy (Report by Department of Statistics 1985) (38).

But still girls account for as much as 77.3 percent of 6 to 14 years old non-school going children. This situation indicates that only does girls' education continue to fall behind that of boys but
also that the goal of universal education is nowhere in sight. The low enrolment and high dropout are the national phenomena. In the case of girls, the contrast is all the more glaring. Social bias against female education is gradually on the wane, but usefulness of sending a girl to school is yet to be appreciated. The position of unemployment is so acute in the countryside that education hardly improves one's prospects of getting a job.

During the past thirty years the enrolment of women in higher education has increased by about twenty times. The role of University Grants Commission in women's education has been commendable. The number of colleges for women has increased from 430 in 1971 to 609 in 1980. Endeavours are being made to promote and strengthen women's education in selected universities and institutions. The Commission provides also financial assistance to women's colleges more liberally than to other colleges, meeting 75 percent of the expenditure on construction of women's hostels as against 50 percent on boy's hostel(38).

EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU:

The post-independence period has witnessed a significant improvement in women's education in the country though the overall situation still remains far from satisfactory. The Southern Region has had a relatively favourable record in the field of women's education but even here the education gap between boys and girls still persists (Development of Women Report, 1986) (26). Tamil Nadu has witnessed some improvement in literacy levels, both male and female, over the decades. In 1981, 46.6 percent of the states' population figure among literates. The overall, as also the female literacy levels in Tamil Nadu, however, compare favourably with the rest of the Southern Region, with the exception of Kerala which records the
highest levels of literacy among both males and females in the region. Tamil Nadu also fares relatively better than the nation in female literacy. In terms of total population, it may be noted that a little over 40 percent of the male population in Tamil Nadu are illiterates, while about 65 percent of female populations are illiterates. Despite the fact that progress in literacy is treated as a priority programme nearly 16 million females and 10.5 million males were illiterates in Tamil Nadu (Census, 1981) (16).

Female literacy rates differ greatly between urban and rural areas. It was seen that progress in literacy and education has not been uniform in the state and largely confined to small pockets namely the urban areas which forms about 30 percent of the total area (Census, 1981) (16).

The situation in respect to female literacy reflects greater inadequacies in regard to enrolment of females, as well as their continuation in the formal education system. A study undertaken by the Planning Commission, Government of India - on the special programme for girls education (1971) has enumerated the reasons why most girls do not attend to school system are:

1. Financial Problems
2. Preoccupation with household chores
3. Looking after younger siblings
4. Engaged in economic activity to supplement the household income.

One more reason, which is a corollary to the social set up in the country, as a whole, is that girls are considered as liabilities and anything expended on their education has no economic return, in as much as their marriage with another household depletes only the
Keeping pace with the increase in enrolment, the performance of the girl students at the examinations continue to excel steadily and far ahead of the performance of the boys. (Directorate of School Education 1985) (38). The situation is gradually changing and it is felt before long that there would be greatest participation of females in the education sector, when their inherent efficiency is recognised as an asset to the community as a whole.

EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN :

Education amongst the Muslim women has been treated under two heads, that of religious and of secular training. The traditional education pattern which is largely religious in orientation includes initiation of the children in the reading of the Holy book. Secular education is imparted in two ways, either at home or at school.

(a) TRADITIONAL EDUCATION :

Among the Muslims the holy book Koran is highly revered, Education commences with the reading of the Koran. Religious instruction gets first priority in the life of a Muslim. In the sphere of education reading of the religious scripture is the first landmark in the life of a Muslim. For the traditionalists the entire function of education is the ability to read and understand the Koran. Bismillah is the ceremony which formally marks the beginning of the education of the person. In the Muslim families the children irrespective of their sex are made to memorize the Koran or at least read it once, though not necessarily understand it. The age fixed for the ceremony is four years, four months and four days. Koran is written in Arabic, So the children are first of all taught the Arabic Alphabet. As soon as the children gain a fair knowledge of the Arabic Alphabet they are made to read the Koran. Every child
goes properly dressed for his Koran lessons. The time taken to complete the Koran lessons is 4 to 6 years approximately at the age of 8 to 11 years. Some of the children learn Koran at home from a tutor. While others go out to the Ustani's (the tutor) place or learn at the Masjid under the guidance of Maulana (Nadwi, 1951) (85).

About 30 years back, when sending girls to school was not in vogue the parents laid more emphasis on this type of traditional education. To this learning of Arabic, was added the basic fundamentals of Urdu and some elementary knowledge of arithmetic, this was all that a girl could acquire in her childhood, under the name of education. The few who went to school, did so after completing the Koran and that was beyond seven years of age, thus school education reached them at a late age. Now-a-days this cannot be practised because five years is the fixed age for admitting a girl to school. The young parents of today feel that the school hours of their children take away the major period of the day. At the end of the day the children are too tired for another class of Koran. As it is, they are laden with school homework to be completed. Usually it is found that the young parents of today do not want to over-burden their children with reading Koran. Some of them actually stop sending the children for the class, but in case the child shows the slightest inclination, which is rare, the parents consider it to be their usual duty to arrange for a tutor. In spite of all the difficulties a majority of the parents still encourage their children on this issue (Roy, 1979) (102).
(b) SCHOOL EDUCATION

The orthodoxy of Islam led to practise of some social evils leading to the deterioration of the social condition, and oppression of women amongst the Muslim and the deprivation of their basic rights. Social reformers have many times commented on this situation. In India Sir Seyyed Ahmed was one who had supported the cause of women, and had devoted his entire life for the upliftment of this class and spread of Modern education amongst the Muslims. His efforts led to the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University where modern education is being imparted in an Islamic setting. By this mainly the Muslim men and their few privileged sisters were benefitted. Modern education was beyond the reach of the average Muslim women who remained enveloped in the traditional set-up. Education reached these women after partition. The increase of educational facilities did not necessarily increase the number of literate women among the Muslims. This was mainly due to the opposition the woman received from the family members. The family elders somehow could not reconcile the fact that their women needed education. At present, gradually the intensity of the resistance is waning thus permitting an increase in the number of educated Muslim women (Roy 1979)(102).

During the last few years, however a number of visible changes have occurred in Muslim society. School and college education has become a routine affair even for lower middle class girls. Daughters of Clerks, Peons and even Cooks have become graduates. It is significant that amongst the Muslims of Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India who belong to prosperous merchantile communities and are more forward looking than the Muslims of the Feudal North, higher education for women has become almost common place. In Bombay
alone the Muslims run a network of girls' high schools where, because of heavy attendance classes are run in the morning and evening shifts.

In spite of the rights of the constitution the condition of Muslims remained unsatisfactory. Depleted in number and debilitated by the flight of talent and the absence of far-sighted leadership, economically ruined and educationally backward, the Muslims in India, presented a very depressing and sad spectacle in the early decades of Republic. The All India Muslim Educational Society was established with an objective to consider measures for the advancement of Muslim education and economic activity and to stimulate and coordinate the functioning of existing institutions and organisations. Various All India Conferences were held, and the impressive participation by educationists, leading social workers, public functionaries, at different conferences had a tremendous impact on the activities of the society. This society also has branches in several states. It has a youth wing to promote social work and women’s education and to work for the emancipation of their condition. There are a number of member organisations which run a number of colleges. Action plan are charted out to maximum advantage to set the Muslims of India on the path of progress. ("Towards the path of Progress" - AIMES, Eighth Conference 1987 Booklet) (99).

1.3. INDIAN WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT :

Traditionally, women's position in all societies has been one of general subordination to men. Even in the matriarchal societies, the actual power holders in the families were men. The United Nations Organization in 1948 opened the doors of freedom to women all over
the world by recognising equality as a fundamental human right irrespective of sex, race. As a result present world is striving to bridge up the centuries' old gap between the man's and the so-called woman's sphere of work. (Vohra and Sen, 1986) (125).

Employment is closely linked with "Education" and the two act as catalysts to each other in the process of human resources development. Merely education to women will not solve the problem of inequality or neglect of women as such. Whatever knowledge they gain or acquire should have a proper expression in the form of employment, to ensure maximum advantage to the society. Women form an integral and important component of work force. (Women and Employment, 1985) (127).

**WOMEN'S WORK PARTICIPATION IN INDIA**

India is primarily an agricultural country and women working outside their homes is not a new phenomenon as they have been always working in the fields by the side of their men. According to 1981 census more than 60 percent of our female workers are occupied with cultivation and agricultural business. Peasant women worked on their farms if they had no land of their own, they worked on the farms of others for wages. Usually the work of weeding, threshing and manuring is done by women and the strenuous task like ploughing and irrigation are left to men. Thus large number of women in agricultural work supplement their husbands' income. About 30-35 percent of the total agricultural labourers in most of the Southern states of the country are women whereas in Northern states like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh they comprise less than 10 percent of the total agricultural labourers (Vohra and Sen, 1986) (125).
Women's work participation in India presents various trends which are reflections of the structural features of the Indian economy and society. Her outside work participation is quite low in comparison to that of other countries. In advanced industrial countries, the female work participation rate ranges between 30 to 45 percent while in India it is just 13.2 percent (Census of India 1981)(16).

We find that modern India has facilitated the entry of women into all fields of activity where women were rare about 3-4 decades ago. Women are following such learned professions as teaching, medicine, social work, law, etc assuming new roles, they are even more radical than women working in factories or those in western education. In recent years, however there are few adventurous women and bold women who have entered into professions and occupations where women were unconscious by their absence. Like the administrative services, technical occupations, scientific pursuits, business and legal professions.

WOMEN'S WORK PARTICIPATION IN TAMIL NADU

According to the Census 1971 (15) Tamil Nadu in its population of 48.4 million, has total work force of 20.2 million, 47.1 percent of its population. This workforce comprises 19.0 million main workers, who work for at least 183 days a year, and 1.2 million marginal workers who work for some time during the year but not for a major part. Though more than half the addition to the total work force in the state during 1971 - 81 consisted of females, women still form only a small proportion of the work force, around a quarter in 1981. An encouraging feature however is that their share is on the increase over the decade. Of the 23.9 million females in the state, only
6.3 million are in the workforce, of these, a million are the so-called marginal workers. A sizable portion, (86 percent) of the women workers are in the rural part of the state. Almost the entire female marginal worker population live in rural areas, concentrated in agricultural operations.

The participation level for women has increased between 1971 and 1981 in both rural and urban Tamil Nadu. The rise in the work participation rate is more significant in the rural areas, where there are 471 working females per 1000 working males in 1981 against only 298 in 1971. The urban areas have witnessed a slower rise in the work participation levels despite increased employment opportunities in these areas; the sex ratio in employment increased only from 173 in 1971 to 207 by 1981 (Development of women report 1986) (26).

In the primary sector, agriculture is the major source of sustenance. Wage employment is dominant among female workers in the primary sector, accounting for 68 percent of the total against only 40 percent for male labourers, against this 55 percent of the males in the primary sector are cultivators, the corresponding figure for females is only 29 percent. More than half the female labour force in Tamil Nadu, 899 female agricultural labourers in the state per 1000 male labourers.

The secondary sector absorbs around 15 percent of the total labour force in 1981. The proportion of women workers engaged in household industry has increased from 27 per cent in 1971 to 38 percent by 1981. The areas of concentration are processing of cereals and pulses, pottery, brick, palm gur, fibre, matches and beedis.
Data on factory employment in 1983, indicates that only 18 percent of factory workers are women; their share in employment has declined over time though both the number of factories and total factory employment have gone up.

The tertiary sector absorbs 21 percent of the state's labour force. The two important areas of absorption of female workers in this sector are construction and service. Among services, the major avenues are teaching, nursing, and clerical services besides domestic service. Sectorally, the public sector is a major employer of women in state, though the level of female employment in most areas is very low. Even in such areas as the Indian Administrative services, with no sex discrimination there are hardly 18 percent of women; the proportion is much lower in judiciary service. (Reported by Development of Women, 1986) (26).

EMPLOYMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN:

Industrialisation have brought about many changes in the family. The economic development of India has brought about certain alteration in the attitude and value of the people. One of the major shifts in this regard has been the widening of the role for the woman. This resulted in the change in outlook regarding woman and her usefulness at home and outside. Many parents started educating their daughters thus preparing them to be economically independent in the case of a monetary crisis in the family. In many instances the women were gainfully employed in various institutions. In such a situation the woman had to be viewed as an individual with much greater potentiality than before, with the result, that male female relations started taking a new shape. In many homes the brothers and sisters
were given equal opportunity to study. Moreover, an educated woman gained importance as a significant member of the family and society. She could no longer be treated as totally dependent on men because the altered situation gave her some independence. The men initially could not adjust to the idea of women working outside the family. Her status raised and her domain of interaction extended beyond the family. Economic necessity was not the only reason which made women seek employment. In many cases the educated women found that the domestic chores were not sufficient to keep them occupied for the whole day thus for mental satisfaction the women took up jobs. Besides there is always the urge to better the standard of living, and in many cases the combined efforts of husbands and wives resulted in the fulfillment of this desire.

The modern women are availing of the opportunities provided to an average woman citizen of India. However, for women to work along side of men is still considered shocking. The few women who are employed, have to take up the professions which do not impinge upon the traditional values and sanctions. Thus the choice of careers for women very limited and they are rarely given the liberty to select a job of their choice. Teaching in a women's institution is considered to be the most honourable occupation for women. The persistence of these traditional norms like segregation of men and women reflects the unchanged character of this community and the reason for its limited progress. But in any case the basic level of women's participation in family finances is comparatively higher than that of the males due to traditional reasons. This high status of the women with respect to family finances is further elevated with the increase in their education and employment (Roy, 1979) (102).
1.4. FACTORS IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN

A major factor contributing to the status of women is the change in the structure of the economy which offers greater role for women in the productive function. In the modern period this occurred through industrialisation. Goode (1963) (34) points out that industrialisation is the main explanation for the trend towards egalitarian relations within and outside the family. The industrialized economy and its need for a mobile, flexible labour force is best served with a small family. Goode postulates a 'fit' between the conjugal family and the modern industrial system stressing the individual's right to move about and the universalistic evaluation of skills. The increasing demand for skill and flexibility tend to eliminate barriers of race and sex and in addition, forces within the conjugal family press for equality between husband and wife. The availability of the job for women, with the change in the economic structure and organisation permitted meant that women no longer necessarily depend on the husband (or father) for support. No longer is marriage an economic necessity nor divorce economically impossible (Myrdal and Klein 1956) (34).

Another factor which is related to change in the social position of women is education. Educated women began to enter the school system in large number. Once educated, their road to the world of employment was smooth and straight. More and more women now have the opportunity to pursue higher education and more of them exercise this option.

Another important factor attracting more and more women to employment is the hard economic necessity. In the urban, middle and lower middle classes this is very much the case. Some women from the middle and upper middle classes take up employment to
improve the standard of living of the family. Under the pressure of economic necessity opposition to the gainful occupation of women is steadily diminishing even among traditional, orthodox and conservative groups.

Hence it is seen that the increasing industrialisation of society with its accent on the expansion of the service sector has made the induction of women into the service sector not only desirable but necessary. Today, women are the integral part of new economic older and important part of its manpower resource (Klein 1968) (54).

FACTORS IN THE STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN:

Among the Muslims, religion regulates the sacred as well as the secular practices. The Muslims by the large accept their religion as unalterable and resist any major innovation. Under these conditions the man-woman relationship and the authority structure in the family continue to be rooted in traditional sanctions as written in the sacred texts. The close link between the authority structure in the family and religion affects decision making and overall behaviour pattern of the members. However, from time to time the general social environment and forces of change generated in the social system have not left the Islamic society entirely unaffected (Roy, 1979) (102).

Amidst the various religious groups present in India, the Muslims form a unique group by themselves due to their religious orientation. Writing on this Ward (1964) (129) mentioned that, this monotheistic religion based on revealed scripture has a history of persecution at the hands of non-believers and unlike other religions, in Islam, it is believed that a religious life can be lived in this world.
Let us now see the impact of modern or secular education on the attitudes and values of the Muslims. Amongst the Muslim, religious education is one of the fundamental rights of the followers of Islam and in early childhood every Muslim boy and girl undergoes the ceremony of Bismillah. The main idea behind this ceremony is to make the children memorise the Kalma so that they may be able to read the namaz five times a day. For the women of the earlier generations this used to be the beginning and end of formal education. Hence whatever little they learnt from their elders was accepted unquestioningly. This kind of training gave very little opportunity to the women to learn other things besides the maintenance of the home. Moreover, these women had a very shallow knowledge of their own religion, which they thought, conditioned and directed their entire life. Today, the formally educated Muslim women have a first-hand knowledge of the religious texts. With the result that on one hand they have begun to challenge the validity of interpolative elements in the religion and on the other hand they have become staunch followers of Islam, fully aware of the restrictions and liberties sanctioned to them in the Koran. These women are different from those of the earlier generations in the sense that they have not oriented their lives on the so-called traditional religious behaviour blindly, but have made efforts to understand the religious scriptures (Roy, 1979) (102).

Thus we see that education is an important factor leading towards modernisation, but it does not necessarily change the Islamic orientation towards life and social behaviour. Instead, the educated woman finds herself comparatively equal with men to search for personal salvation, through pursuit of religion while following the
Islamic course of living, she finds herself to be discriminated against in many domains and suppressed by the sanctioned traditional authority pattern.

All the above mentioned factors are jointly responsible for the backwardness and the slowness of the women in improving their status (Roy 1979) (102).

1.5. WOMEN IN THE FAMILY:

Family is the area in which the role of women is traditionally the most prominent. Indeed women had practically no role outside the home in traditional middle and upper class families and their whole life had been spent within the family. The family and the home still hold their position as the focus of their activities though considerable number of women, both employed and unemployed, have outside roles. Any change in their position will be reflected in their activities within the family and it will also affect all the other members of the family. So the family provides the most suitable area for examining the changes in women's status brought about by their employment.

It is generally accepted fact that the participation of women in employment outside home has greatly changed their family lives. Perhaps the most far-reaching effect has been the economic independence attained by working women. Another possible effect is the family so that the employed women can still participate in their work while continuing many of their traditional familial obligations. The modern families tend to preserve a satisfactory division of labour. The tasks previously assigned to the wife are being assumed or shared by the husband and wife jointly so that the wife can have near equal responsibility for earning the family living,
where the husband or male members do not share the household work, alternative help of a relative or servant is often sought for. Thus employment of women may be viewed as a cause for a decrease in the differentiation of sex roles. In a tradition-bound society man is the head of the household and he makes most of the decisions. But this predominance of the male has been considerably undermined due to the employment of women. The employment and education of women have given them resources which their unemployed counterparts do not have. The salary income of working women is a substantial contribution to the family income which would be expected to give her greater interest in financial decisions and greater respect from her husband and other members of the family. The participation of women in the activities of the outside world through her job gives her contacts with fellow-workers, which lessens her dependence on her husband for emotional support and increases the knowledge and skill she brings to decision-making. Such factors have made them resourceful and competent decision making (Lalitha Devi, 1982)(60).

MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE FAMILY:

"He it is who made the earth, even and smooth for you; so traverse through its lands and eat of his provision. And unto him will be the resurrection" (Surah 67:15). Hence, we find that Islam grants to all the individuals equal rights to carry on any lawful occupation. On the other hand in Surah 4:34 Koran says that God has made a man superior to woman, and man has authority over woman because he spends his wealth to maintain her. These two quotations from the Koran imply that, Islam has an equalitarian attitude towards all men but the women are definitely in the lower rung of the status hierarchy. Basically, the women are given a lower status than men,
based on the fact that man is the supporter and protector of women in a family. Thus, it is obvious that in a traditional Islamic set-up, a great deal of importance it attached to the man's role and his authoritarian position as a patriarch contrasted to the man's important role as the breadwinner for the entire household, the woman's roles are non-glamorous and have less importance attached to them, thus resulting in her subordinate status in the family (Roy 1979) (102).

With the coming of industrialization many changes have been brought about in the family. The economic development of India has brought about certain alterations in the attitude and value systems of people. One of the major shifts in this regard has been the widening of the role for the woman. This resulted in the change in outlook regarding women and her usefulness at home and outside. Many parents started educating their daughters, thus preparing them to be economically independent in the case of a monetary crisis in the family. In many instances the women were gainfully employed in various institutions. In such a situation the woman has to be viewed as an individual with much greater potentiality than before, with the result, that male-female relations started taking a new shape. In many homes the brothers and sisters are given equal opportunity to study. Moreover, an educated woman gained importance, as a significant member of the family and society. She could no more be treated as totally dependent on man because the altered situation gave her some independence. The men initially could not adjust to the idea of women working outside the family. Thus her status was raised and her domain of interaction extended beyond the family. Economic necessity was not only reason which made women
seek employment. In many cases the educated women found that the domestic chores were not sufficient to keep them occupied for the whole day, thus for mental satisfaction, the women took up jobs. Besides, there is always the urge to better the standard of living, and in many cases the combined efforts of husbands and wives resulted in the fulfillment of this desire (Roy, 1979) (102)

1.6. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

There have been a good number of studies conducted on Indian women. Hate (1969) (43) had made an attempt to study the changing status of Indian women in post-independence era, touching upon various facets of women's life. His sample consisted of women from Maharashtra. Mukherjee (1974) (81), based his findings on his survey conducted in Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya, reached a number of conclusions regarding the status of women. Chaudry (1969) (19) studied on the women in employment in Delhi. San Gupta (1970) (107) devoted his study to the understanding of the position, status, power and roles of women in Bengal in different spheres of life. The status of working women in Lucknow was investigated by Jauhari (1970) (48) who found that inspite of social progress and increased education working women perceived that the society was critical to them. In general these studies show that the women have been accorded a low status.

There are also a number of other studies which have reported a fair degree of change taking place in the Muslim population. Roy (1979) (102) has shown the changes taking place in the three generations and its effects on the status of women. Her sample has been concentrated mainly on Delhi and Lucknow. The educational and
social status of the women from Northern districts of Kerala was studied by Nanon (1982) (71). Her findings revealed early marriage, instance on religious instructions and absence of socially approved occupational roles contributed to the low status of Muslim women. Siddiqui (1987) (112) study provided authentic empirical data on different aspects of Muslim women in Delhi, comparing rural and Urban areas.

Since there is a paucity of research on the status of Muslim women in South India especially in Tamil Nadu the investigator aims at filling this gap. In a country like India, where large section of the population is still below the poverty line and the majority being illiterate Muslim backwardness for obvious reasons, should be studied in the context of the overall backwardness. Sociologically speaking what we should be concerned with is the extent of backwardness of the Muslims in relation to other communities in India. Thus our study proposes to study the Muslim women in comparison with other communities.

The study thus sought to attempt an objective enquiry in respect to status of Muslim women example their present level of religious orthodoxy, its nature and extent and related impact on the life styles of Muslim women, the Purdah practice and the related problems particularly its impact on social participation of women, their educational level and employment prospects and the like. It also attempted an assessment of women's status with reference to their participation decision making within the family, in respect to education of children, marriage, day to day matters and determining their own life styles, their educational attainment. An effort has been made to study their attitudes in respect to education, employment, decisions
Regarding marriage, purdah, polygamy, small family norms and political participation.

1.7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Religion plays an important role in the life of the individual and society and has been a supreme force in the development of mankind. Though the world has advanced a great deal from the point of view of culture and civilization, though man has been able to achieve a great deal through scientific enquiry, mastery over nature and mastery over time and space, his faith in God remains intact and belief in God and divine laws reigns supreme.

In the Indian society which consists of many communities professing diverse religious faiths religious tradition becomes of paramount importance in understanding the relative status of women and men. Religion has provided the ideological and moral basis for the status and the role of women in society. The people's notion about the proper role of women in the home and society and the social restrictions on women are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women. Each religion has its own myths and legends which emphasize the position of women (Chatterji, 1985) (18).

Although the religion has dominated the lives of women, no religion accords them either freedom or equality with men. She is denied education and enlightenment and has been confined to the home in the name of tradition and religious precepts. She is bound hand and foot by religion, society and male chauvinism. She is leading a miserable life without any individuality and as an inferior person (Subbamma, 1988) (119).
The picture emerging from the study is that in the traditional Muslim social set up the authority pattern is vested in the males in accordance with the tenets of Islam. With the change in social climate the attitude of the Muslim men changed and they wanted the women to participate in more areas of social life. In this respect education has played one of the most significant roles. With the initiatives and support of men, the women entered the new avenues prohibited to them so far. With the increase in their activity pattern the women started realising the stuffy atmosphere of their home which they felt needed ventilation. In order to achieve this they had to sever some traditional ties and forego the various protective mechanisms that the Muslim social structure vouchsafed them. Hence, the women all put in a dilemma, and the little they are able to achieve is within their cultural and religious milieu. This study assumes importance since at this moment in the time the Muslim Society is in a transitory stage and we are witnessing the emergence of a different pattern of life.