CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the earliest social institutions. It is also one of the most rapidly changing institutions. It has evolved from a matriarchal form to a patriarchal one, from joint and extended to a nuclear family and now even to single parent and same sex families. Earlier it was recognised as a social unit with its members in a socially and legally approved relationship, in more recent times even living together, cohabitation and lesbian or gay relationships are recognised as characterising a family. Thus, a family may be defined as a group of persons (related through blood, marriage, adoption or other relationships) sharing a household and pooling together various resources, including economic and social resources.

Whatever the form of the family, it has been idealized as a private world, a sanctuary into which outside interference, whether of the state or other individuals is not tolerated. It is the first agency for socialisation of the child, the agency for meeting all physical and emotional needs, and the individual’s first contact with power and authority. The family as a social institution has always been regarded as a core element for the development of the individual as well as for the society and the state. It has existed throughout recorded history, and has undergone fundamental changes along with the change in the social attitudes and mores. When society changes, the family also undergoes certain transformations in order to adapt to these changes. The structure and form of the family is impacted by the structural arrangements as well as the political, social and economic changes occurring in society. For instance, the industrial revolution led to a major change in the family as an institution. Among other things, women and children entered the labour market. As the societies became industrialized and modernized, the family changed too. The family structure changed from extended to nuclear, and certain social institutions replaced the functions of the former. In addition, modernity supplied women with a medium to express their demands and to change their social standing. The growth of public education, the presence and ever-increasing number of women in higher education programs, and their engagement in economic and social activities, especially in large cities, has brought about a new value system within the family. However, unfortunately, despite these changes in society and family, inequality,
experienced intimate partner violence the previous year with 74 percent of these being "underage girls" (Attorney General’s Office Republic of Colombia, 2010).

Likewise, a girl’s life is valueless in parts of India and South Asia, where a strong son preference has led to female foeticide and infanticide. Girls, moreover, are perceived as a financial burden for the family due to small income contributions and costly dowry demands (UNFPA, 2005). In India, pre-natal sex selection and infanticide accounted for the pre-natal termination and death of half a million girls per year over the last 20 years (UN, 2010). Another prominent phenomenon, which is indicative of such devaluation is dowry and dowry deaths. In India and Pakistan, thousands of women are victims of dowry deaths. In India alone, there were almost 7,000 dowry deaths in 2005, with the majority of victims aged 15-34 (Garcia and Claudia, 2009).

Such devaluation of daughters is primarily the result of a mind set which views them as an economic burden, thereby limiting their rights to health, nutrition, decision-making, education, in fact all the rights which they ought to have by virtue of being human beings. Thus, girls are breastfed for a shorter duration as compared to boys, leading to malnutrition at a very early stage of their life, with the additional consequence of suffering from various health problems throughout their life. Not receiving adequate nutrition during a critical period of their life results in stunted growth and a weakened immune system, which impacts their own development, as well as restricts their participation in social and national development.

All these facts also hold true for India and Iran. Iran and India are similar in many ways; they have many affinities, the most conspicuous amongst them are a common cultural and a common language background. Both of them are still in the category of developing countries. The plight of women in Iran and in India is also quite similar; they face considerable cultural, social, and educational problems. Undoubtedly, there is a difference in the system of government in the two countries, one, a liberal democracy and the other, an Islamic government; however, life in India also is governed by religion from birth to death. The traditional culture of both countries requires women to be controlled and dominated by men. Women’s role in traditional societies is still understood in the restricted realms of family and confined to the home and hearth. It continues to be focused on producing children, cooking,
Government and society are governed by the injunctions of the Holy Quran. In the Quran's teaching, men and women are created from the same spirit and they complement each other. Islam recognizes no difference between men and women. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have misunderstood the role and status of women in Islam. Islam places a high premium on women for being a mother and a wife. The Quran states (45:15): “And we have been enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother carried him in pain and gave birth to him in pain, and his caring and weaning for thirty months until when he attains full strength.....”.

In India, the sex ratio is highly skewed; there is growing incidence of female foeticide; gender gap in literacy rate continues to be approximately 20 per cent; health wise, more than half of the women are anaemic; maternal mortality rate is high; female infant mortality rate continues to be high and there is increasing violence against women. Within the family, women have no de facto inheritance rights; no control over income, either their husband's or their own; little or no decision-making power; no control over reproduction or sexuality; and no identity, apart from their husband or family. The prevailing socio-cultural traditions of son preference, patrilineal inheritance, arranged marriage, honour killings, dowry, child marriage and others, all put the women at a disadvantage in the family. In fact, in India, earlier, the prevalent idea was that educating a girl is like watering a plant in the neighbour's garden. This was also linked with the idea that educated girls were unable to hold a family together. Education of girls was supposed to have a disruptive impact on the family. The 21st century women in India continue to be bound by suchlike shackles, regardless of modernisation and development. On the other hand, there is a marked improvement in literacy, decline in death rates and fertility rates, noticeable improvement in health care and other facilities and adoption of policies which are aimed at improving the socio-economic status of women.

In Iran also, the status of women both within family and outside continues to be quite deplorable. Violence against women continues to be a pervasive phenomenon. Domestic violence is more the norm rather than an exception. Son preference exists, but there is no female foeticide because abortion is ‘haram’ (unacceptable) in Iran. Nor are women able to participate in family decision-making. The subservient role of women is also propagated through the media, which depicts the ideal woman as one who obeys her husband and performs her wifely and
served to empower women within the family? Are educated women able to make decisions and abide by them? Are they able to establish their own identity? In short, are they able to make informed choices within the family framework? Is the impact of education independent of the impact of other variables such as level of development, gender stratification and the socio-cultural milieu? These are some of the issues, which the present study seeks to analyse in a comparative framework of two countries, which stand shoulder to shoulder in various matters.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Social scientists have constructed and considered the family in different ways. On the one hand, it is idealized as an institution which nurtures and shelters, with women playing a central role in this; on the other hand, its realities present a series of contradictions for women for it is also the arena where women are most suppressed, subordinated and devalued. Varied approaches have been adopted to study the family.

Structural functionalism, with its focus on who does what in the family has been historically the most popular and widely used approach. *Talcot Parsons* (1955) the foremost proponent of this theory, believes that the roles of men and women in family are not only related to values and norms but also related to their duties in the sub-systems of the families. Man in such families is the breadwinner of the family and this gives him a guaranteed legal position in a society, which gives credit and importance to a husband’s work and money earning ability. Due to this, the husband or the father is considered as a major family leader. Women play the important role of uniting and keeping the family together; this is not limited to the internal affairs of the family and housekeeping because she may also act as one who links the family with society. If it happens that the wife becomes the breadwinner of the family by getting a job then there is the possibility that there is a competition between her and her husband. This usually results in some trouble for the family. Parsons classifies the role / status of members of a family into instrumental or emotional. Obviously, distinct gender roles are ascribed within the family with the instrumental roles, i.e. the power roles held by males, while the emotional roles, the caring and nurturing roles are held by females.

Changes in the family structure with industrial progress and modernization form the crux of the modernization theory. Building on the theory of Parsons, William J.Goode (1963) argued that with modernization, the family structure changes from
perpetuates inequality and hierarchy within the family and institutionalize structural arrangements which keep some people powerless. All of these do view the women’s role as central to the functioning of the family and yet tend to ignore the specific and differential life experiences of women in the family; for the family as a whole is taken as a unit, ignoring the individuals within.

Feminist theorists have led to a rethinking of the concept of the family and highlighted the inadequacy of traditional concepts of the family in describing the social facets of most people’s family experience. They regard the family itself as the major site for the oppression of women. This, according to them, is the zone where women are most subordinated and the sexual division of labour is perpetuated. They challenge the belief that family is a natural biological or functional arrangement. It is further asserted that families and family life are not experienced by women and girls in the same way as by men and boys and women’s economic and social exploitation is reinforced through the ideology of the family.

Family, thus is believed to be the place where inequality is perpetuated and where women are given a low status and stereotyped roles. In their opinion, there are two structures that contribute to the inferiority of female within the family: first, the woman’s status as wife and mother, and second, the process of socialization within the family, through which the children internalise the concepts of masculinity and femininity, and transfer such concepts to their own children in the future. The feminists argue that the woman’s status as a mother or a wife leads to her inferior position in comparison with her husband or the family father. This is partly recognizable in the woman's economic dependence on man, as envisioned by the Marxist feminists. Furthermore, gender role division within the family lead to differential experiences of marriage for men and women.

The Radical feminists believe patriarchy to be the sole determining factor in women’s subordination within the family and some even go to the extent of claiming that family should be abolished.³

Thus, it is the concepts of patriarchy, gender socialization and gender roles

³ Shulamith Firestone is one such writer.
differentiation, which have formed the theoretical underpinning for the present study.

Review of Literature

The family as a subject of study has attracted the attention of scholars since ancient times. However, the study of women’s role and status in the family is a relatively recent development. A select few studies on the theme having direct relevance to the issue of women’s role and status in family are presented here in thematic form.

Structure of the Family

The first major issue of concern to scholars is that of structure of the family and the changes in it over the years.

In a compilation edited by Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong (2004) namely *Handbook of Contemporary Families: Considering the Past, Contemplating the Future*, the various authors attempt to trace the changes in the family over the past 30 years and speculate about the future trends. The volume is divided into IX Parts, each dealing with diverse issues such as contemporary couples, gender issues, raising children, changing family structures, race and ethnicity, socio-cultural attitudes and impact of technology upon the family. For the purpose of the present study, Part III dealing with gender issues is most significant. Mention may be made of two articles which are specially relevant. The first is an article by Lori A. McGraw and Alexis J. Walker, entitled *Gendered Family Relations: The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same*. In this, the authors trace the changes in the North American family structure and paid and unpaid labour. They conclude that while the family structure has definitely undergone a change, yet the gender arrangements remain the same. In another article in the same volume *Feminist Visions for Transforming Families: Desire and Equality, Then and Now*, Katherine R. Allen, attempts to apply feminist knowledge to one’s own life and scholarship. She uses an analytic strategy to reveal the connection between the personal and the political through her own life experiences.

Elaine Leeder (2004) in her study entitled “The Family in Global Perspective: A Gendered Journey”, on the one hand, traces the history of the family and expounds on the various theories advanced to explain the family structure, but
also presents a global picture of the family in various parts of the world. In the course of this analysis, she makes a special reference to the Indian family and women’s status within the family, which she asserts, has been extremely restricted, based on the diktat of custom, culture and society. She also explores the status of women and gender relations within the family. In one chapter entitled, Gender and the family, she investigates the concept of trans genderism as well as the social construct of male and female behaviours. She also looks at the issue of how race, ethnicity and class manifest themselves in family life, the difficulties faced by families as well as the effects of globalization on the family.

Tulsi Patel’s edited volume “The Family in India” (2005) is a collection of Papers published in Sociological Bulletin at various times. Most of the papers were published between 1950 and 1980 and attempt to trace the major trends and developments in the study of the family. The volume is classified into three themes into which the 12 papers included in it have been classified. The themes include the nature and scope of the family, an empirical analysis of the Indian joint family and finally some case studies representing different regions of India. M.F.Nimkoff in his article on the “The Family in India: Some Problems Concerning Research on the Changing Family in India” traces the gaps and problems in the research on the issue of family in India. K.M.Kapadia in his paper, “The Family in Transition” examines the problem of the family in India from two perspectives: the change in its structure and the change in the nature of interpersonal relations in the family. For tracing and understanding the changes in the family, he seeks to first understand two significant changes in the Indian ethos. These are spread of education among females and increasing urbanization. He opines that a factor of great importance effecting the family is the employment of women, which has become possible through education and present economic strains.

Although the compilation on “Writing the Women’s Movement: A Reader” edited by Mala Khullar (2005) focuses on the women’s movement in India, yet one section of this volume is devoted entirely to studies on the family. Patricia Uberoi in her paper titled “The Family in India: Beyond the Nuclear Versus Joint Debate” examines what she calls the Indological approach to the family and questions whether
the joint family is disintegrating and giving way to the nuclear family.

Mohammad Karim Mansourian and Leila Masoomzadeh and Nasr Pour Afkari (2010) in their study on “Social and Economic Factors That Affect Family Structure”, reveal that when the level of education of a woman and her husband is similar, their level of participation in the family is also similar. On the contrary partners with differing levels of education also show differing levels of participation in family affairs. In addition, they opined that the better the husband’s financial position in the family, the more the participation of the wife in family decision-making.

Naeima Mohammadi (2012) in his article “The Sociological Study of Life Satisfaction According to Family Pattern” studies the effect of family pattern (Single-parent, polygamous and nuclear) on “family satisfaction” and “quality of life.” The study reveals that the family pattern impacts female satisfaction, with nuclear family leading to the greatest satisfaction as compared to the other two types. Satisfaction in the female headed family depends upon the cause of female headed family and in polygamous family, it depends upon the number of wives. The author concludes that family satisfaction depends on cultural components that take shape during social interactions.

Thus, the various scholars have looked at the structure of the family, the changes in this structure over the years and the roles played by women in the family.

**Gender Roles in the Family**

Within the family, it is the stereotyped roles ascribed to men and women, which result in continuation of women’s subordination and devalued status.

Morris Zelditch (1960) in his study entitled “Role Differentiation in the Nuclear Family” observes that in the distribution of instrumental tasks, the American family maintains a more flexible pattern than most societies, in the sense that there is a more equitable division of household labour with the males helping the females in the household tasks and the females supplementing the family income by working outside the household. Nevertheless, the American male, by definition, must, “provide” for his family. He is responsible for the support of his wife and children. His primary area of performance is the occupational role, in which status
fundamentally inheres and his primary function in the family is to supply an income, to be the breadwinner. There is simply something wrong with the American adult male who doesn’t have a job. American women, on the other hand, tend to hold jobs before they are married and to quit when the day comes or to continue in jobs of a lower status than their husbands.

*Juhee Park and Tin Futing Liao* (2000) make a comparison of the impact of multiple roles on married women professors and housewives. The study was conducted primarily due to the contradiction between the privileged position of women professors in society and the domination of traditional, patriarchal values in the South Korean family. The study concludes that undoubtedly, the women professors experience pressure and stress as a result of their multiple roles, but at the same time they had a sense of gratification, which compensated for the pressure. In addition, the research indicates that transnational resocialization from overseas experiences in a western society has positive effects on role gratification among the married women professors.

It is women who are universally recognized as the caregivers, while men are socialized into conceiving of themselves as providers. This role continues even if they themselves fall sick. In this context, *Susan M. Allen and Pamela S. Webster* (2001) in their study “When Wives Get Sick: Gender Role Attitudes, Marital Happiness and Husband’s Contribution to Household Labor” examine the factors impacting husband’s contribution to housework when their wives fall sick. Interviewing a sample of 319 married couples, the researchers conclude that the egalitarian attitudes and happiness in the marital relations positively impact male participation in the housework; while the traditional attitude and unhappiness in the marital relations burdens women. In relation to the first, the authors assert that both happiness in marital relations and egalitarian attitude go together. One without the other does not have much impact on husband’s contribution to the housework. Apart from this the factor of age and necessity also played a role in husband’s participation in housework.

*Mikael Nordenmark* (2002) in his study on “Multiple Social Roles” seeks to analyze whether multiple social roles of both men and women are beneficial or a burden to both. Thus, he investigates whether engagement in paid work combined with a family role was a positive or negative experience for both men and women. He
concludes that it is women, more often than men, who want to reduce their working hours, citing family responsibilities; while, at the same time, asserting that this does not mean that the levels of distress are higher, he emphasizes that the “the alternative resources provided by the multiple social roles in some sense outweigh the stressful effects that double engagements may have on psychological well-being” (2002).

Laura Sabattini and Campbell Leaper (2004) in their study “The Relation Between Mother’s and Father’s Parenting Styles and their Division of Labor in the Home” investigate into the relation between the reports of young adults of the sexual division of labour between their parents and their parenting styles. The researchers noted a vast difference in the parenting style of both parents depending upon the kind of household division of labour. If it was egalitarian, the mothers were more permissive and father’s authoritative. On the other hand, if the division of labour was traditional, then mothers were authoritative and fathers disengaged.

Rajni Palriwala (2005) in her study “Beyond Myths: The Social and Political Dynamics of Gender” traces the gender relations within the family system. The differential implications of marriage for males and females, differential power and the factors such as age, education, culture etc. which lead to the differences in bargaining power and authority within the household are analyzed with reference to the states of Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

Gitanjali Prasad (2006) in her work entitled, “The Great Indian Family: New Roles, Old Responsibilities” attempts to analyze the changing face of the Indian family with along the changing roles of men and women. For this purpose, she delves into the pros and cons of the joint family system, the full time housewives, the working women, working fathers and single persons; attempting to present a positive and negative picture of each category. In the course of the work, she attempts to delve into the issue of the work family balance and the implications for the family as more and more women enter the workforce. She further compares the Indian family with the contemporary family in the West.

In a study on women’s multiple roles Mina Sadat Akhavi (2010) reveals that women with fewer roles to perform have better interaction and relations with their husband. In other words, due to less role and responsibility, they have more time to spend with their husband. Yet she notices a contradiction in that, multiple roles of
women also lead to an increase in the husband’s cooperation in household tasks.

**Alieh Shekar Beigi and Shirin Ahmadzade (2010)** in their study on “Gender Inequality and its Effective Factors” analyze factors such as gender role socialization, ideology of patriarchy and stereotypical beliefs for their impact on gender equality. They conclude that whenever gender role socialization is stronger among women, gender inequality will increase. In addition, if women accept patriarchy more easily in their life and family, gender inequality will be higher. Finally, if stereotypical beliefs were deep, gender inequality will be more.

**Nasrallah Aghajani (2011)** in his article “Family Members Participation in the Housework” highlights some of the most significant cultural barriers which impact gender division of labour in a family. These include role confusion: whenever couples from different cultural environments come together, their marital roles would be too vague, as well as cynicism and distrust: not trusting enough, and sometimes mistrust and cynicism, greatly reduces the amount of family participation.

Women’s roles within the family, therefore, are greatly restricted and confined to the home and hearth. Most of the scholars are of the opinion that this gendered division of roles in the family has led to the devalued and subordinated status of women.

**Status of Educated Women in the Family**

One of the major factors impacting a woman’s status, role and empowerment in family, as well as the society at large, is her education. How far this is true within the family is the subject of a number of studies.

The status of the educated working woman within the family is the particular focus of Promilla Kapur’s study entitled, “The Changing Role and Status of Women” published in a compilation of Seminar Papers organized by the Family Life Centre of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. (Indian Social Institute, 1972) She particularly focuses on the educated working woman and her status within the family. She concludes that the fact of her being educated and working does bring about a change in women’s own attitude towards her work and her family, yet there is no significant change in her legal status and the social attitudes and beliefs. She states that “In the social structure of the tradition-oriented family, the typical pattern of husband-wife relationship is “male dominance and female dependence” (Indian Social
In another compilation edited by Carol Chapnick Mukhopadhyay and Susan Seymour (1994), *Women, Education and Family Structure in India*, the authors attempt to highlight both the reasons for educating women in this region as well as the catalytic potential of education in changing women’s role and status. The book attempts to understand the linkages between women’s education and women in the family. Susan Seymour’s comparative study of 24 households in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, based on micro ethnographic, longitudinal, comparative research, reveals significant changes with respect to education and marriage depending upon residence, caste and class status.

Seeking to explore the linkages between the socialization of girls in the home and their access to education in schools, Susan Seymour (1995) conducted a case study of Bhubaneshwar town of Orissa. She observes that education, particularly higher education, had brought about challenges to patrilocal structure and ideology of the family. She concludes that female education, marriage and family are inextricably interlinked.

John Simister and Judith Makowiec (2008) in their study "Domestic Violence in India: Effects of Education" have analyzed the extent of prevalence as well as attitudes towards domestic violence in the context of wife beating through analysis of data from Demographic and Health Survey, (1998-2000). The reveal that domestic violence is very widespread in India. They further reveal the interlinkage between education and perpetration of domestic violence as well as its acceptance. Higher education is linked with lower level of domestic violence as well as lower tolerance levels of the same.

**Feminist Critiques of the Family**

The concept of family has drawn the ire of feminist scholars, particularly the radical feminist scholars who have insisted that it is in the family and due to women’s reproductive roles that they are subordinated and subjugated.

**Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions** edited by Barrie Thomas and Marilyn Yalom (1982) focuses on the current feminist critiques of the family. An interdisciplinary book, with authors from varied disciplines such as
anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, etc., it first of all critiques the prevalent assumptions about the family. Certain key issues in the debate on the family are examined by eminent feminist scholars such as Lina Gordon, Nancy Chodorow, Sara Ruddick, Eli Zaretsky and others. The focus is on issues related to women in the family viz. sex/gender system, mothering, different family experiences of men and women, sexual division of labour as well as the intersectionality of family, class and the state. However, the articles in the volume are totally theoretical with no observations from the field, nor is there any suggestion of how women’s status within the family can improve.

**Women, Work and Family**

The concept of the public-private domains had effectively ensured that women remained entombed within the four walls of the home. However, there was a belief among feminist scholars that if women were able to emerge from this entombment and get employed their subordination would be eliminated. A number of studies have attempted to analyze the truth or falsity of this assumption.

A.M. Shah and B.S. Bariskar (1996) in their study entitled, “Women in Indian Society” observe that in India, women’s work outside the family may not ensure a better status within the family or society. However, at all levels of society, even, among the poorest, parents realize the importance of the links between education, training and employment. Women tend to withdraw from the work force when family income is sufficient or improves. Older women engage in economic activity outside the household, while younger daughters-in-law and adolescent girls remain the property of men and work at home on domestic chores. The work role of women is determined by ideological and gender considerations. The view of women as dependents and as obligated to the family first serves the interests of employers for cheap labour and low-cost production. Education should have liberated women from some traditional values and customs and helped to initiate and support social change. Studies of low-class women during the 1980s reveal that working conditions were poor. Many times women gave their earnings to their husbands or mothers-in-law. When the formerly female-dominated food processing industry was mechanized, men replaced women, accepted meagre earnings and inhuman working conditions in order to meet family needs. Common sense revealed that women have a lower status than
Family in Global Perspective

Not only has the structure of the family been changing over the years, its structure and organization also varies across nations and cultures.

“Families in Global and Multicultural Perspective” is a compilation edited by Bron B. Ingoldsby and Suzanna D. Smith (2000) which attempts to explore the diversity of the world’s families cutting across geographic, cultural and historical boundaries. The various articles in the volume deal with diverse themes such as family structure, family development, global variations in the family and the social inequality in the contemporary world. Mention may be made of an article by Sandra L. Russo and Suzanna D. Smith entitled “Women in the Two-Thirds World” which is based on the experiences of the women in Third World. The particular focus is on gender roles in the household in which they analyze women’s labour, gender relations, education, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, cultural practices, missing women and other issues. The study is exploratory in nature and concludes that “preference is given to men and boys in the distribution and control of three critical social and human resources, education, employment and health.” (Ingoldsby and D. Smith, 2000) However, the authors conclude on a positive note by claiming that women are becoming empowered as social practices are gradually changing.

Family and Culture

The form and structure and women’s status within the family is significantly impacted by the particular culture of the society and nation. Bidyut Mohanty (1998) in his article “Women and Family in India and China” focuses on the social and economic status of women in India and China. He asserts that although the patriarchal system in both the countries have been buffeted with winds of change, yet women in the dominant ideologies of the two nations are treated with discrimination. In the Indian context, he makes a mention of various socio-cultural practices which discriminate against women. These include son preference, dowry, violence against women, child marriage, casteism, discrimination in health, etc. on the social front. On the economic front, he notes that women’s work is unrecognized and invisible. If they
do work it is mostly work in the unorganized sector and there is a significant gender gap in wages. China, he emphasizes, has come a long way both socially and economically. Likewise, Chinese women have made giant strides on both the social and economic fronts. Socially, there is high literacy rate, low death rates, low fertility rates and nuclear family. On the economic front too, China is miles ahead of India. There is high female employment rate, with women employed primarily in industry, agriculture, building etc. However, the other side of the picture is equally true. Son preference is equally prevalent in Chinese society as in India. The girl child is discriminated against in matters of education and health. Mohanty also refers to the continued gender gap in wages.

One major factor impacting the status of women in India is childbirth. Most of the discriminations and subordination to which women are subjected is related to the biological factor of childbirth, i.e. the ability of women to give birth to a child. When for some reason they are not able to have children they are even more discriminated against and are stigmatized as barren and ill omens and the like. In her study “Stigma and Everyday Resistance Practices: Childless Women in South India”, Catherine Kohler Riesman (2000) draws on fieldwork and personal interviews to analyze the experience of stigma of childless women in South India. She concludes that various factors such as social class, age, poverty, urban/rural background, working/non-working all impact the way the women experience stigma and the strategies adopted by them to cope with it. According to her, voluntarily childless women, although rare in South India, are challenging stigma and hegemony directly and are “openly contesting the importance of motherhood” (Riesman, 2000).

Taghi Azad Armaki (2003) in his article “Generational Attitudes towards Women in Iran” analyses the attitudes towards gender issues through a study of three generations. He seeks to analyze whether there are any differences in attitudes towards women between generations; is there any similarity between rural and urban attitudes and is there any difference between male and female attitudes towards women’s issues. Analysis of data from a survey research with interview technique in the capital city of Tehran and Kashan shows statistically meaningful differences regarding attitudes towards women between generations, urban and rural residents, men and women.
Prem Chowdhry in her article “Customs in a Peasant Economy: Women in Colonial Haryana” (2011) also looks into the reasons for women’s low status in the family. She observes that women have been regarded as a part of men’s properties, in the same way as house, animals, land, etc. This attitude had an impact on women’s situation and their access to equal rights, such as health and education. Moreover, in this region, literacy had been considered useless, particularly for girls. There was a gradual realization of the importance of education but only for boys, it continued to be regarded as insignificant for women. The basic purpose was that a woman should remain a homemaker only and not endanger her position by going outside. According to this social attitude, education for women can destroy social structure.

Women’s Human Rights in the family

Focusing on human rights within the family, Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive (2005) seeks to analyze the applicability of human rights, particularly women’s human rights, within the context of families and households. The researcher emphasizes the importance of changing value systems to include women’s worth as human beings. Women changing power and transforming society could happen only if they had a different value system. With the current value system in which children are socialized into the belief that dominance is the expression of power, this cannot happen. With this, she also alludes to the danger inherent in women propagating and becoming agents of patriarchy alongside men.

Women’s human rights in the family are particularly impacted by the overt as well as covert violence to which she is subjected. “Inspecting the factors effecting the violence of man against women” is the title of the research study conducted by Parvize Bagrezai (2009:211), in which he reveals that the man who has been witness to violence in his paternal home shows more violence in his behavior and treatment of his wife. Further, he opines that the social and economic status of men has a great influence on their behavior in family, but higher education of women has decreased the violence of men against women.

While analyzing the different types of crimes against women, P.K.Giri (2009) in his book entitled “Crime against Women” also focuses on domestic violence and its causes. He believes that violence against women is often a cycle of abuse that manifests itself in many forms through their lives. Domestic violence, according to
him, is not restricted to married women, for girls face such violence in the form of female foeticide, malnutrition, early marriage, incest, lack of access to health and education, etc. He believes that the major and basic reason of domestic violence is historically unequal power relations between women and men and belief in the inherent superiority of men. Moreover, legislation and cultural sanctions have traditionally denied women an independent legal and social status.

Ali Shekar Beigi (2012) in her article “Relationship between Domestic Violence Against Married Women and Mental Health” studies the relation between domestic violence and mental health of married women. She studied 380 married women in two places - at home and in the court. Research findings reveal that most women face violence in their common life from their husbands. This entire group of married women suffered from emotional problems. Those who had faced more violence have more mental problems. This fact shows positive relation and correlation between rate of violence and mental health among married women in the family.

Women and Decision Making in Family

Decision-making in the family is an important determinant of women’s role and status within the family. A large number of scholars have attempted to analyze this aspect.

Bina Agarwal (Khullar, 2005) in her paper entitled “The Family in Public Policy” seeks to analyze how the concept of family is understood in policy making and how the wrongful understanding of women’s experiences within the family are detrimental to the empowerment of women.

Kathryn M. Yount (2005) in her article, “Women’s Family Power and Gender Preference in Minya, Egypt” seeks to explore the influence of women’s resources and ideational exposures on their family power in Minya, Egypt. Through a survey of 2226 married women, she establishes that residence with marital kin decreases women’s family power. Other factors impacting their power are endogamous marriages and education. Non endogamous marriages deprive women of their power, while education does tend to give her some power. However, regardless of the fact of education or endogamous marriage, women still tend to prefer sons to daughters.
Factors influencing women’s decision-making in the family was also the subject of Ali Emami NasirMahalle (2005) study titled “Survey of Effective Factors That Influence the Power and Potency of Women in Decision Making in Family.” He comes to the conclusion that there is a meaningful relation between the income, education and number of children with the ability of women in decision making in family. In fact, higher education and more the income of a woman, more is her influence and power in family and greater is her status in life. Another study which attempted to analyze the factors influencing women’s decision-making in the family is Amir Said Rezai’s (2010) study titled “Survey of the Influence of Convergence Between Socio-Economic Status of Couples on The Decision Making of the Women in the Family”. He observes that education of couples, their income, religious beliefs and their age gap had the most important impact on the status of women in family in Iran, while lower education and income really diminishes the women’s influence in the family.

In a similar vein Fateme Keshavarznia (2010) analyzed the “The Effective Factors on the Various Way of Applying the Power of Women in Family.” The study involved 200 married women in Iran between the age range of 14-65 years. It reveals that the women’s financial economical source, family status and position of working women is in direct and meaningful relation with the various ways of applying the power and authority of women in the family.

Ali Rabbani and Bahjate Yazd Khostis (2010) in their study entitled “Study of Power Distribution in the Family” focused on married men with the view of analyzing how power is distributed in the family. The study revealed that causal conditions, including cultural norms and exclusion from financial resources led to the phenomenon of power inequality. The main causes of this inequality vest in socialization of males’ right from childhood.

Gaps in Research

Obviously, family has emerged as a much-studied topic in social sciences. However, there are very few studies on women’s role, status and experience in the family, i.e. studies from a woman’s perspective, primarily because the family itself is regarded as a unit and so studied as a whole. Until recently, it was inconceivable for an outsider to attempt to penetrate the sanctuary of the family and so studying the
internal dynamics of the family, particularly pertaining to the status of women and children was unthinkable. However, in recent years, studies on the family have included women as a unit of study, yet specific studies on the role and status of women in the family are rare. It is not that women have not been included in the studies on the family, but that women’s specific experiences have been distorted.

Another aspect left out of these studies is the impact of higher education on the role and status of women in the family. The link between the private world of the family and the public domain of education particularly, higher education, has remained relatively unexamined. Higher education is being specifically mentioned keeping in view the fact that primary education just makes one literate, while higher education actually tends to empower a person. Furthermore, there arises the issue of inter linkage of education with other factors such as age, class, caste, work status, religion and others, all of which are inter-linked and impact women’s status in the family. Most studies on women’s role in the family have tended to focus on one or the other aspect ignoring the others. What makes the study more significant is that there are very few or no studies on women and family in Iran. Moreover, a comparative study of women in the family in India and Iran has not been attempted at all. It is these large gaps that the present study seeks to address.

Objectives

The overall objective of the study is to analyse women’s status and role in the family and the impact of higher education on this. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the similarities and dissimilarities in the status and role of women in family in an evolutionary perspective.
- To analyse the status and role of women in family in India and Iran in a comparative perspective.
- To assess the impact of higher education on the internal dynamics and structure of family in India and Iran.
- To assess whether higher education enables women to effectively participate in family decision-making.
- To study the impact of higher education on women’s productive and reproductive roles within the family.
• To examine whether higher education positively impacts women’s status and role in the family.

• To analyse interlinkages between socio-economic and cultural factors such as class, caste and religion on women’s status and role of the family.

• To analyse whether higher education affects women’s attitudes and expectations with regard to their own status and role in family.

• To study the impact of higher education on women’s attitudes and expectations with regard to the status and roles of others in the family.

• To examine whether higher education affects women’s perceptions of their own role and status in family.

Research Questions

The broad research issues, which the present study explores, are:

• What similarities and dissimilarities can be traced in the status and role of women in India and Iran in an evolutionary perspective?

• What is the status of women in the family in India and Iran?

• What are the productive roles performed by women within family?

• What reproductive roles do women within family perform?

• What has been the impact of higher education on the traditional status and role of women in family?

• Is higher education by itself sufficient to empower women within family?

• Is empowerment of women within family contingent upon the presence of other social and cultural factors along with higher education?

• What specific socio-economic and cultural characteristics in India and Iran underlie the impact of higher education on women’s status and role in family?

• What specific socio-economic and cultural characteristics in India and Iran lead to the different or similar impact of higher education on the role and status of women in family?

• How does higher education affect women’s attitudes with regard to their expectations of the roles and status of others in family?
Hypotheses

In keeping with the objectives of the study, it was hypothesised that:

- Higher education will lead to an improvement in the status of women in the family.
- Higher education affects the roles performed by women within the family.
- Women’s own perception of their status and role in the family are positively related to higher education.
- Higher education loosens the shackles of parochial factors such as caste, class, religion, tradition and culture, which hinder the empowerment of women within the family.
- There is a positive correlation between higher education and women’s participation in family decision-making.
- There is a positive correlation between higher education and women’s handling of their multiple roles in the public and private spheres.

Research Methodology

The focus of the present study is on the impact of higher education on the role and status of women in the family in India and Iran. For the purpose of the present study, the definition of ‘status’ and ‘role’ as given in the ‘Towards Equality’ Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India was taken. Accordingly status is defined as, “Status refers to a position in a social system or sub-system which is distinguishable from and at the same time related to other positions through its designated rights and obligations. In the pure sociological sense, status does not imply rank or hierarchy but denotes only position in relation to others in terms of rights and obligations” (Government of India, 1974). Status, therefore, necessarily involves comparison in relation to others in the family. It may be determined by: place in family hierarchy; control over resources; participation in family decision-making (relating to various matters such as child-rearing, education and marriage of children, household expenditure and other personal decision-making within the family); control over income and expenditure; ability to avail of rights such as reproductive rights, access to health care, right to participate in productive work outside the household; as well as experiences of domestic violence and discrimination and so on.
Status is realized through the roles performed by a person. Role is defined as a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status position within a group or a social situation...around each particular status position centres a role-set” (Government of India, 1974). Thus, a woman’s status in the family may be analysed through an assessment of the expectations and obligations imposed upon her, that is, through an analysis of the roles performed by her in the above mentioned areas. Thus, for the purpose of the present study, the roles performed by women in the family in relation to: caring, rearing, education and marriage of children; caring for other family members; in household budget allocations; purchasing both goods of daily use as well as larger items; i.e. in terms of the productive and reproductive work performed by them within the household, were examined in order to assess their status and roles in the family.

The present study attempted to analyse the impact of higher education on the status and roles of women in the family in India and Iran in a comparative perspective. Comparative studies are increasingly being undertaken to understand women’s issues. They necessarily require a comparable universe. As stated earlier, India and Iran are both developing countries having many similarities, as far as the status of women is concerned. For the present study, a microcosm of the larger universe was taken. Accordingly, two cities, i.e., Chandigarh from India and Teheran from Iran were taken for the present study. Both are modern cities offering a large number of facilities (health, transport, communication, employment, etc) to the citizens. At the same time, both have a high overall literacy rate and a high female literacy rate. Both are home to two old and prestigious Universities and a number of other Institutions offering higher education.

A total sample of 400 respondents was taken (200 from each city) Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample from different parts of the two cities from among married women whit a degree of graduation and above. For the sake of convenience, the term (graduate) is used to her by refer to these respondents throughout the thesis. The strata was defined in terms of level of educational attainments starting from graduate degree. From each of these strata a sample was selected using simple random sampling. Apart from this a control group of 25 males with a degree of graduate and above, and 50 women with an educational level below
graduation was taken, from each city, through simple random sampling to have a comparative perspective.

Data has been collected through an interview schedule which had both structured and unstructured questions. Separate interview schedules were prepared for the control groups. The data so collected was correlated and analysed through Statistical Package for Social Science and presented in the form of Tables. The research hypotheses were examined by “Somers’d”, the existing relations among them were presented by cross tabulation.

Chapterization

The first chapter is introductory, presenting the statement of the problem, review of literature, the theoretical perspective, objectives, hypothesis and the methodology used to conduct the survey. The second chapter presents an overview of the status of women in Iran and India, with a special focus on Tehran and Chandigarh. The socio-economic profile of the respondents forms the focus of the third chapter. The fourth and fifth chapters focus on the status and role of women in the family in Tehran and Chandigarh. The fourth chapter assesses the impact of higher education on the status and role of women in relation to marriage, children, reproductive role, discrimination in the family as well as women’s rights and duties in the family. The fifth chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 looks into the impact of higher education on the participation of women in family decision-making, economic participation of women as well as violence against women. The second part of this chapter presents the results of testing of the hypothesis through “Somers’d”. The last chapter presents the conclusions arrived at from the study and puts forth some strategies for more equitable gender relations within the family.