Woman, along with man, forms an integral and vital force of social structure. She plays a central role in the development of society. The term 'status' refers to the position of woman as a person in the social structure, defined by her designated rights and obligations. Each 'status-position' is explained in terms of a pattern of behaviour expected of the incumbent. The role and status assigned to women in society has always been a yardstick to assess the level of progress of a particular civilization.

The literature on women during medieval period is scanty and, therefore, the studies on Muslim women are only a few. Some authors deal with individual aspects and problems of Muslim women in contemporary India, like Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, *Social Pathology of Muslim Society*; Shibani Roy, *Status of Muslim Women in India*; Jamila BrijBhushan, *Muslim Women in Purdah and Out of It*. The study of their status in medieval India had, more or less, remained peripheral in the contemporary chronicles and the modern works. Since Muslim women remained in seclusion, public reference to them was avoided unless some one played a significant role in politics, literature or any other field. Whatever references are found, have to be interpreted and analysed in the light of the background and limitations of the contemporary chroniclers. Only ladies of royalty and nobility were in a position to create an impression. Modern work like Rekha Mishra, *Women in
Mughal India is primarily concerned with political role of women connected with Mughal royalty and nobility. Their contributions in other fields are barely mentioned. The thesis is an attempt to analyse the changing socio-economic-politico-cultural status of Muslim women of all classes in medieval India (13th-18th centuries).

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