CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its Women”.

-Jawaharlal Nehru.

Men and women are two inseparable parts of human society and they always shared sorrows and joys together. If men have always endeavoured to free themselves from slavery, women have not lagged behind. History is full of heroic deeds of both men and women who have fought for independence of their fatherland. The history of the struggle for India’s freedom is like many other story of joint endeavour of both men and women.

1.1 Status of Women in India

In earlier days, the status of women in India was inferior than men in the practical life. However, they had a higher status in scriptures. They are considered as the perfect home makers in the world. With their incomparable quality of calmness of their mind, they can easily handle even toughest situation. Indian women are completely devoted to their families. They’re preached in the names of Goddess Saraswati, Goddess Durga, Parvati and Goddess Kali. History is full of Great women rulers all over the world and India is no exception.
In spite of these, in the pre-independent India, the condition of poor remained the same. At this time girls were forced to get married at a very tender age. The society also practiced ‘Sati’ where women were forced to jump over the burning bodies of their husbands during funerals. The Southern India also practiced ‘Devadasi’ tradition where girls were forced get married to trees or deity.

1.2 Current Status of Women in India

According to India’s constitution, women are legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men (Indian Parliament). Because of lack of acceptance from the male dominant society, Indian women suffer immensely. Women are responsible for bearing children, yet they are malnourished and in poor health. Women are also overwork in the field and complete all of the domestic work. A sizeable portion of Indian women are uneducated. Although the country’s constitution says women have equal status to men, women are powerless and are mistreated inside and outside the home.

India is a society where the male is greatly revered. Therefore women, especially the young girls, get very little respect and standing in this country. The women of the household are required to prepare the meal for the men, who eat most of the food. Only after the males are finished eating, can the females eat. Typically the leftover food is meager, considering the families are poor and have little to begin with. This creates a major problem with malnutrition, especially for pregnant or nursing women. Very few
women seek medical care while pregnant because it is thought of as a temporary condition. This is one main reason why India’s maternal and infant mortality rates are so high. Starting from birth, girls do not receive as much care and commitment from their parents and society as a boy would. For example, a new baby girl would only be breast fed for a short period of time, barely supplying her with the nutrients she needs. This is so that the mother can get pregnant as soon as possible in hopes of a son the next time.

Even though the constitution guarantees free primary schooling to everyone up to 14 years of age (Indian Parliament), very few females attend school. Female education is low in India. There are several reasons why families choose not to educate their daughters. One reason is that parents get nothing in return for educating their daughters. In addition, even if a woman is educated, especially in the poorer regions, there is no hope for a job. Most jobs women perform are agricultural or domestic which do not require a formal education.

1.3 Importance of Women – As a Human Resource

Women who constitute half of the world’s population are not fully harnessed as a human resource. Any society cannot go ahead if 50 per cent of the population does not participate in its developmental activities. Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India observed that neglect of women would be criminal since humanity had been
deprived of half of the energy and creative talents. Right through history, in all religions and cultures women have been assigned a secondary status.¹

The world wars proved to be a turning point in the history of mankind. The participation of women in the work force started increasing since then. This trend is observed in developing nations.²

In tune with the world wide trend, Indian women are marching towards self-development. In India, women played a secondary role for centuries together. During the colonial rule, women lived a miserable and horrible life in diverse situations.³

Mahatma Gandhi, Father of Indian Nation helped women to find a new dignity in public life, a new place in the national mainstream, a new confidence and a consciousness that they could act against oppression.⁴

The socio-economic changes that were set in motion in India after independence provided women with better educational and employment opportunities. Besides, a series of laws such as the Special Marriage Act 1954, the Hindu marriage Act 1955, Equal Remuneration Act 1976 passed by the government of India helped to improve the lot of women. Today, educated Indian women have made a landmark in the non-conventional

fields like consultancy, marketing, advertising, garment exporting, interior decoration, beauty parlours, road and building construction. Women have started coming forward in considerable number in certain spheres of higher category jobs like civil service, judiciary, foreign service, medicine and architecture. In organized sectors like banking, insurance, communication and air transport women’s share in employment has recently doubled over the decade and government’s intervention played an important role in this regard.\(^5\)

### 1.4. Role of Women

Women are at the heart of development. They control most of the non-money economy (subsistence agriculture, bearing and rearing children, domestic labour) and take an important part in the money economy (trading, the ‘informal sector, wage employment). Everywhere in the world women have two jobs around the home and outside it.

Women are half the world’s population, receive one-tenth of the world’s income, account for two-thirds of the world’s working hours, and own only one-hundredth of the world’s property. The process of industrialization, urbanization and the increased

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educational and employment opportunities for women have brought about changes in
the traditional attitudes and values of urban women in India.

The role of women in our society even as career women, not to speak of
householders, is not insignificant. They have played a significant role in the socio-
economic and political development of our country. The old order which confined
women to the home as servants, and helpers to their men folk, is being replaced now by
a new one in which women increasingly undertake to fulfil many roles, within the home
as wives, mothers and home makers and outside it, as partners and co-workers of men
in all types of enterprise. The few fortunate women who have the benefits of higher
education seem to be quite obvious of their immense responsibilities for the
emancipation of the women in the countryside and of the working and middle class
families in urban areas. The production side of women’s work at home is gradually
decreasing leading to a reduction of women’s role at home. Women perceive more and
more clearly that if they really want to contribute to the welfare of their family and
society the most effective way is to go out of home and earn money.⁶

Besides, soaring prices and rise in materialism make man work against time in his
attempt to survive in the fast changing society, and also to accumulate more and more

World, No.21-22, pp.4-5.
goods. If he cannot do it alone, his wife has to provide more, either by bringing in a fat dowry or by going out to work. Thus, we have a working women.\textsuperscript{7}

Today, the state has accepted women’s empowerment, and women as active agents participating in their own development. Most of the countries now recognize the need for gender justice and equality. Women can change the nature of power rather than power change the nature of women. Women try to devote most of their time for maintaining their living standard with the help of earnings through employment in urban areas.

Emancipation of women is one of the indicators of economic development and social changes. The position of women in a society is an index of its level of civilization. Women constitute one half of the population, that is one half of the country’s human resources. Apart from the fact that they constitute one half of the country’s ‘man power’, women play an important role in shaping the personalities of the nations’ young human resources.\textsuperscript{8}

The position of women has changes not only in the sphere of marriage and family but also in the spheres of education, employment and political life. Women’s employment has an important role in women’s empowerment. Employing of women


\textsuperscript{8}Rani moses, (1992), \textit{Dalits and Women}, Gurukal Summer Institute, Chennai, pp. 197-198.
particularly in the organised sector ensures better living conditions for herself and her family.

If women are to empower themselves they have to be provided with wholesome opportunities and rights, access to basic civic amenities, right to education, right to earn a livelihood, right to equal wages, right to question, and fight justice, right to decision-making, to live the way they want, protection against violence and injustice to them. They need the strength to free themselves from the oppressive and dependent conditions of living. If national development and women’s development have to be purposive and relevant, women have to be equal partners with men. The powerful and deep rooted cultural forces, outdated value systems, discriminatory socialization process, and oppressive social structural forces that obstruct such an access need to be confronted and reversed.

Women have achieved only limited access to some fields of life. More often they are the implementers of decisions, and not the decision makers for their own cause or any other related cause. They are under constant pressure on the home front and at the work place. The dual roles and responsibilities have resulted in a lot of tension, stress and strain for the women. They are therefore hard pressed in finding time to devote to themselves and their own personality development.
At present, women occupy positions in every field of activity, and command honour and respect similar to men. Thus, it may be understood that some of the sociological, economic, and psychological characterization of women have been changed because of education and employment.\(^9\)

Mahatma Gandhi referred to women as the nobler sex. According to him, “If she is weak in striking, she is strong in suffering”. In Indian society, the women are visualized in two extreme positions. On the one side, Indian women are celebrated as ‘Sakthi’, the source of power. On the other side, from the sociological set up, women are being considered as the weaker sex and hence they are left with closed commitments only. In modern society women are said to be equal to men. The actual situation is far from this. The fact is that in modern society women constitute the disadvantaged, if not depressed, section. Irrespective of their social status, women play a very active role in the economic activity either as workers, or as producers of various goods and services or in the domestic side as house-maids.

Indian women are patient in nature and do have the capacity to accept everything. Normally they do have more confidence in the male members of the family. Our culture makes them good subordinates and executors of decisions made by the male members. Moreover, in general women are capable of working hard physically on

all occasions and mostly at all ages. The women’s uplift depends upon two requisites, self-reliance and economic independence. Women’s participation in the economic activity is important for their personal advancement and improvement of their status in society. Women must join the labour force of the country on an equal footing with men and get integrated into the system.

Strands\textsuperscript{10} said that, “setting resources into women’s hands, integrating women in the wage labour force and securing female rights to enable and empower women for other actions are deemed significant in themselves”. Urbanisation, higher education, recognition of talents and abilities and meaningful employment have provided women with new avenues to express and assert themselves. The rural women have been working for a living in the fields alongside of their men. The middle class Indian working women in the cities have stepped out in search of economic gains as well as the fulfillment of their personal hopes and desires. Now, it is admissible even for married women to take up gainful employment. The upper and middle class women are finding a purpose in their lives. Women with education and employment make a mark for themselves in society by the flowering of their personality while retaining their essential womanliness. Their mental orientation is more prepared than a typical household. In the event of working outside, the traditional division of labour has been rearranged to meet the situation.

Educational, political, economic and social changes have changed women’s status, their roles and way of life. But, this could also change their feminine character a little. Indeed they work, but they work for the family that too for financial reasons. They work to support their family. The working women, on the whole, never sought to sublimate or bypass the demands of family life. Rather their homes and families have either come first, or have stood at par with their work.

This role is very significant, as far as the art of maintaining a stable family life and thereby a stable society is concerned.

These three categories of industries seem to provide the largest avenue of employment to women job seekers in India. Under the division of transport, storage and, commerce there was a substantial increase both in the number of workers as well as in their proportion.

The majority of women under these divisions takes up the white collar jobs and work as clerks, typists, stenos, telephone operators, secretaries, assistants etc. Women workers are preferred in these jobs because of their submissive docile nature. They do not, in general take active part in strikes and other trade union activities. This is an important feature of women workers.

1.5 Religious Minorities in India
‘MINORITY’ and ‘majority’ are relational categories. More than about numbers they refer to relations of power and domination, prejudice and exclusion. They are also modern categories. Though power and prejudice have long existed in human societies, their form and content has changed over time. Contemporary nation states, particularly those that have evolved as liberal democracies, perceive of themselves as secular institutions founded on the idea of individual citizenship and universal adult franchise. However, as historians and sociologists inform us, nation states, when they first appeared in the West European context were almost always marked by strong ‘ethnic-origins’, with a particular ethnic or linguistic group being the prime mover of the idea of a given national identity.

It is important to understand the conditions and problems of minorities in India. First, despite a relatively impressive array of constitutional and legislative guarantees, and the establishment of a broad range of institutions, autonomous bodies and commissions to monitor and protect the rights of minorities, India’s disadvantaged and marginalized segments find their access to power and judicial redress blocked by a coalition of powerful forces. Minorities face discrimination, violence and atrocities.

1.6 Muslim Women

Muslim women and the pre-independence women’s movement

The early twentieth century witnessed a nascent women’s movement which campaigned for furthering female education, raising the age of marriage for women,
and the removal of purdha. The position of Muslim women before independence did not differ significantly from that of women belonging to other communities. Differences emerged from caste, and region, rather than religion. Purdha was a common feature of all communities, but varied across regions and communities. Elite Muslim women used the argument against customary practice and non-implementation of women’s Islamic rights to denounce customs like purdha. In 1930, the Muslim Educational Conference observed that the practice of purdha was decreasing, attributing the decline to economic reasons; and personalities like the Nizam of Hyderabad and Mohammed Ali Jinnah took public positions against purdha. Meanwhile, in her address to the All India Women’s Conference, the Maharani of Travancore acknowledged the advantages of divorce and inheritance rights for Muslim women but felt that their realization was impeded by the practice of purdha.

The All India Muslim Ladies Conference, claiming to represent interests of all Muslim women, was established in Lahore in 1907. The latter’s session in Lahore in 1917 attracted 400 Muslim women participants from across the country. The Anjuman-e-Deccan (women’s association) was formed in 1919. At the meetings, resolutions were regularly passed in favour of women’s education and against polygamy and veil.

Independent India’s constitution redefined the relationship between the state and its citizens. The notion of the individual as citizen with fundamental rights, including the right to universal adult suffrage, was break with past authoritarian structures.
Since independence, successive Indian governments have avoided taking many legislative measures to end discrimination in personal laws. Such a policy contradicts India’s commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which upholds the principle of equality among men and women in the family. India has also entered the following reservations on Articles 5a and 16 of CEDAW.

i. With regard to Articles 5(a) and 16(1) of the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Government of the Republic of India declared that it shall abide by and ensure these provisions in conformity with its policy of non-interference in the personal affairs of any community without its initiative and consent.

ii. With regard to Article 16(2) of the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Government of the Republic of India declares that though in principle it fully supports the principle of compulsory registration of marriage, it is not practical in a vast country like India with its variety of customs, religions and levels of literacy.

iii. With regard to Article 29 of the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Government of the Republic of India declares it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this Article.

The Indian government’s rejection of the clauses with reference to personal laws highlights its lack of commitment to promoting women’s rights in the family and society,
and a violation of women’s constitutional rights to equality. Government positions notwithstanding, Muslim fundamentalist parties have appropriated the debate for their own ends, while the lesser vocal Muslim majority has been unable to voice its demands at a national level. Reform of Muslim personal law remains an urgent necessity. The socio-economic status of Indian Muslim women mandates attention not only because it is a maker of women’s progress, but also because it is difficult to institute legal reforms without simultaneous progress in Muslim women’s educational status and economic autonomy.

1.7 Muslim women in India

On the completion of five decades of independence, women in Muslim communities face considerable challenges as citizens of India and members of India’s largest minority. The poor socio-economic status reflects a lack of social opportunity which through that a feature exclusive to Muslim women is exacerbated by their marginal status within an overall context of social disadvantage for most Indian women.

According to Government reports Muslim women are among the poorest, educationally disenfranchised, economically vulnerable, politically marginalized group in the country. In 1983, the Gopal Singh committee instituted by the government, declared Muslims as a “backward” community in India. A central feature of this “backwardness”
is their exceedingly socio-economic status, particularly of Muslim women. Most Muslim women remain “invisible” workers in the informal economy. The Muslim share in public employment is less than 3 per cent within this. A lack of information of Muslim women contributes to the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes, surveying the obfuscate their life experiences and struggles. Consequently, the Muslim women’s status in India is attributable to certain intrinsic, immutable. “Islamic” features or that their social status derives solely from muslims laws, is widely prevalent

On the other hand, the appropriation of Muslim women’s issues by a vocal and politically influential male Muslim constituency for political purposes poses a considerable challenge to Muslim women’s legal empowerment. This was highlighted during the Shah Bano case and the passage of the Muslim Women’s Bill in 1986. In a context, the Shari’a is used to justify women’s subordination its imperative for Muslim women in India to enter the discourse on the Shari’a’s with reference to personal law, and challenge their historic marginalization from religions knowledge. Further, more it is glacial for Muslims “women and men” to debate among themselves the possible reasons and remedies for their poor status as citizens of India.

The lack of social opportunities for Muslim women is a crucial issue needing urgent action. An improvement in literacy rates would directly influence Muslim women’s socio-economic and political status as citizens of India.
The acknowledgement of the universality of women’s rights by the international community is relevant to the debate of Islam and women’s rights, particularly with reference to women’s rights in the family. The formation of forums and associations of Muslim men and women’s initiatives in the 1990’s is an important step towards public debate on Muslim women’s issues. Muslim women and men must collaborate with individuals and organizations. Who are committed to the realization of women’s human rights? The alliance of Muslim women with the women’s movement in India, as well as movements so secularism, democracy and human rights, are crucial for forging a common front against forces opposed to women’s self-determination.

1.8 The Economic Aspects of Islam

Wealth is the vigor and basis upon which life is maintained. The Islamic Shariah aims through it to establish a balanced society, where in social justice is upheld and one can live an honourable life.

Since Islam considers money one of the indispensable necessities without which individual nor society can exist, it has ordained that Zakaah be taken (2.5 per cent) from the capital of the rich, if the necessary amount from which it is taken is in that person’s possession for a full lunar year. This money is to be distributed amongst the poor. It is a due right of the poor, and it is forbidden to with hold if from them.
This does not mean that Islam abolishes individual ownership and private business, rather it sanctions and respects them. There are many explicit torts which prohibit transgression against wealth and property of others.

1.9 Political Aspects of Islam

Political aspects of Islam are derived from the Quran the Sunna the sayings and living habits of Muhammed, Muslim history, and elements of political movements outside Islam. Traditional political concepts in Islam include leadership by successors to the prophet known as caliphs. (Imamate for shia) the importance of following Islamic law or sharia; the duty of rulers to seek shura or consultation from their subjects and the importance of rebuking unjust rulers but not encouraging rebellion against them.

A sea change in the Islamic world was the abolition of the ottoman caliphate in 1924, which some believed meant an end to the Islamic state both in “symbolic and practice terms”.

In the 19th and 20th century a common theme has been resistance to western imperialism, particularly the British Empire and sometimes the perceived racist policies that discriminated against some Muslims. The defeat of Arab armies in the Six day war, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Communism as a viable alternative with the end of the Soviet Union and the cold war has increased the appeal of Islamism and
Islamic fundamental movements, especially in the context of popular dissatisfaction with ruling regimes in the Muslim world.

1.10 Christian Women in India

Christian women in India have a comparatively better status than Hindu and Muslim women. In India, Christian women are treated on par with their men in their community. Even according to Bible, they are equal to men.

Politically, economically, socially and educationally Christian women are in a better position than women of other religious in India.

Christian women in India can move freely, travel from one area to another independently, and take part in business or professional, educational or any other type of activity on par with men. Since monogamy is the prevailing rule of marriage among the Christians, women are well looked after, and respected.

Christian women possess equal rights in the society which may be stated below:

Economic Rights

Economically, Christian woman is free to have property in her name, to use it, to sell it or to deal with it in any manner she likes. She is free to join any profession of her liking and earn money to become economically independent. Large numbers of Christian women are found to be employed in India.
**Marital Rights**

As far as marriage is concerned, Christian girls have got the final say. Since child marriage is not practiced amongst them, women have their right to select their life-partners. No marriage can be performed against her wish by the Clergymen.

**Status of Women in the Family**

Christian woman is not a slave of the family. She is a co-sailor along with her husband in the ocean of family life. She cannot be confined to four walls of the house. Christian women in India render active co-operation and help for the smooth running of the family.

**Political Rights**

Indian Christian woman as any other woman belonging to any community in India has all the political rights. She can cast her vote in the elections, and herself contest elections. Christian women are politically more conscious also.

**Religious Rights**

The Indian Christian woman has almost equal religious rights on par with men to take part in religious activities. She can read Bible, go to church along with the men folk, participate in common prayers, take part in religious activities, and can even become runs and dedicate their entire lives for the cause of the religion.

**1.11 Distribution of Population by Religions**
Religious profile of the population is an important socio-cultural and demographic feature noticeable from the first Census in 1872 till now. The data of religions or religious groups for which information was collected had some variations in the pre-Independence period. But after independence, particularly since 1961 there has been some uniformity in the collection and the generation of the religious data. Besides the five major religions, e.g. Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain and Sikh, census also collected data on other religious faiths and denominations. Some of the religious faiths and persuasions are variants or varied manifestation of the major religious groups. The huge list of these other religions were checked, edited, classified and processed to get the precise picture of the data.

In the past, information on religion as provided in Census was very limited but in the last Census 2001, a number of cross – tabulations were made available. The data shoring distribution of religious groups in 2001 is available at State and district levels down to sub-divisions and towns. Cross-tabulation of different religious groups by literacy, classification of workers and non-workers provided new insights. These are additional information compared to those published data of past Census.

1.12 Distribution of Population by religious groups and their sex ratios

Of the total population of India in 2001, 80.5 per cent are Hindus, while Muslims account for 13.4 per cent and Christians 2.3 per cent respectively of the total
population. In absolute numbers, approximately 828 million are Hindus while Muslims are around 138 million out of India’s total population of approximately 1,029 million. Sikhs account for 1.9 per cent of the total population. The proportion of Buddhists, Jains and other religions are 0.8 per cent, 0.4 per cent and 0.6 per cent respectively.

**TABLE 1.1**

**DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THEIR SEX RATIOS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Religion</th>
<th>Percentage to total population</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of India 2001.*

Sex ratio which is the number of females per one thousand males is 933 for all the religious groups at the national level. Hindus and Sikhs are below the national average while the rest are above the average. The highest sex ratio is seen among Christians with the rest are above the average. The highest sex ratio is seen among
Christians with 1009 females while the lowest is among Sikhs (893). Constituting the largest segment of the population, the Hindus have a sex ratio of 931 while Muslims, the second largest religious community have 936.

1.13 Child Population in the Age Group 0-6 Years and their Sex Ratios

Proportion of population in the age group 0-6 to total population offers a general picture of the relative fertility status among the religious groups, a higher proportion meaning a higher fertility. While the proportion for all-India is 15 per cent, five religious communities, namely, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists an Jains exhibit rates lower than the national average, the lowest being 10.6 per cent for the Jains. Proportion of 0-6 population for the Sikhs (12.8 per cent) is also lower than the national average by more than 3%. Hindus have 15.6 per cent. On the other hand, Muslims have the highest proportion of 18.7 per cent while other religious groups have a rate of 18 per cent.

The child sex ratio which is 927 for all India is lower than that of the total population by 6 percent. The decline in the child sex ratio in 2001 Census is a major cause of worry among the planners, demographers and researchers. Lower sex ratio among children is indicative of more females than males among child population which may lead to demographic imbalance over time if the trend continues in future. Sex ratio
among Sikhs (786) in 0-6 population is the lowest among the major religions groups. Among Jains also the ratio is only 870 which is 57 points below the national average of 927. The child sex ratio among Hindus is 925. Other religious communities with sex ratios higher than the nations average including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and other religions, the highest being recorded against other religions with sex ratio of 976. The sex ratio of the Christians with 964 females per 1000 males comes next. The next highest ratio is found among Muslim with 950. Muslims are also the only major religious group having a child sex ratio higher than that of the total population of the religious group.

**TABLE 1.2**

CHILD POPULATION IN THE AGE GROUP 0-6 YEARS AND THEIR SEX RATIOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Religions</th>
<th>Percentage of 0-6 population to total</th>
<th>Child Sex Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**1.14 Literacy Rate by Religious Communities**
The rate of literacy of the population computed for 2001 Census after excluding the population less than 7 years of age is found to be 64.8 per cent for the whole country, male literacy percentage being 75.3 per cent while the percentage for female being 53.7 per cent. Except Muslims and other religions, all the rest of the major religions have literacy rates higher than the national average. Jains have the highest total literacy rate of 94.1 per cent followed by Christians with 80.3 per cent. Buddhists with 72.7 per cent occupy the third position. The lowest total literacy rate of 47 per cent is found among other religions. Hindus have a total literacy rate of 65.1 per cent which is slightly above the national average while Muslims have a total literacy rate of 59.1 per cent, below the national average.

The pattern of the total literacy rates emerged among the major religious communities is followed in general among males and females also. Jains have the highest literacy rates for both males (97.4 per cent) and females (90.6 per cent). In the second place Christians have 84.4 per cent for males and 76.2 per cent for females. While for males, Buddhists (83.1 per cent) occupy the third position, for females the position has gone to Sikhs (63.1 per cent). In the case of the Hindus, the male literacy rate (76.2 per cent) is above the national average of 75.3 per cent whereas the female literacy rate (53.2 per cent) is slightly below the national average of 53.7 per cent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of Religion</th>
<th>Literacy Rate (Total)</th>
<th>Literacy Rate (Males)</th>
<th>Literacy Rate (Females)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Census of India 2001

The gap of male-female literacy rates is the lowest among Jains which is only 6.8% point against the national gender literacy gap of 21.6% points. Among Christians
also the gap is as low as 8.2% points. The biggest gap is found against other religions (27.6 % points) followed by Hindus (23% points) and Buddhists (21.4 % points).
1.15 Work Participation Rate by Religion
Work participation rate, i.e., the percentage of workers to total population for the country is 39.1 per cent in 2001 Census. Religious groups which have work participation rate above the national average in descending order are Other religions (48.4 per cent), Buddhists (40.6 per cent), Hindus (40.4 per cent) and Christians (39.7 per cent), Muslims have the lowest participation rate of 31.3 per cent followed by Jains with 32.9 per cent and Sikhs with 37.7 per cent.

### TABLE 1.4
**WORK PARTICIPATION RATE BY RELIGION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of Religion</th>
<th>Work participation Rate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001.

Male work participation rate for the country in 2001 is 51.7 per cent. Male work participation rate for Hindus, Jains and other religions are above the national level. The
highest was among Jains with 55.2 per cent which is followed by Sikhs (53.3 per cent) and Hindus (52.4 per cent). Muslims, Christians and Buddhists are the other major religious communities which have rates below the national level. The work participation rate for Muslims which is 47.5 per cent is the lowest. The second lowest of 49.2 per cent is found among Buddhists.

Wide variations are found in the female work participation rate among the major religions. The rate varies from the lowest of 9.2 per cent among Jains to 44.2 per cent among other religions, work participation rate at the national level being 25.6 per cent. Female work participation among Muslims is found to only 14.1 per cent. Besides other religions, Buddhists (31.7 per cent), Christians (28.7 per cent) and Hindus (27.5 per cent) have female participation rate above the national level.

The gender gap in the work participation rate is particularly very large among Jains (46% points), Muslims (33.4% points) and Sikhs (32.1% points), even as the gap at the national level being 26.1% points.
Figure 1.2
Work Participation Rate by Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Other religions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Total Male

Male

Female

In percentage

Figure 1.2
Work Participation Rate by Religion
1.16 Proportion of Workers by Category

Workers are broadly divided in 2001 census as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industry workers and other workers. Other workers include workers in service, manufacturing, trade and commerce and allied activities.

**TABLE 1.5**

**PROPORTION OF WORKERS BY CATEGORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of Religion</th>
<th>Percentage to total workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Categor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001.

At much as 49.9 per cent of the total workers among other religions are cultivators which are much higher than the all-India rate of 31.7 per cent. Next highest is
among Hindus with 33.1 per cent of the total workers. Sikhs with 32.4 per cent is also above the national average of 31.7 per cent. Among Jains, cultivators account for only 11.7 per cent which is very much below the national average. Agricultural labourers constitute 26.5 per cent of the total workers at the national level. The percentage is highest among Buddhists (37.6 per cent), other religions with 32.6 per cent comes in the second highest position. The percentage of agricultural labourers among Jains is as low as 3.3 per cent. In fact only 15 per cent of the total workers among Jains work as cultivators and agricultural labourers.

In household industry, the participation of workers among Muslims which is 8.1 per cent is almost double that of the national average of 4.2 per cent. In the category of other workers, 37.6 per cent of the total workers at the national level are in this group. Among Jains, 81.7 per cent of the total workers are categorized as other workers, the highest among all the major religious groups. The proportion of other workers among Christians and Muslims are 52.8 per cent and 49.1 per cent respectively. Hindus with 35.5 per cent is below the all India figure.
Figure 1.3
Proportion Of Workers By Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural labourers</th>
<th>Household industry</th>
<th>Other workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.17 Socio-Economic Profile of Working Women:

Women constitute a sizeable section of workforce. The realization of women’s full potential is crucial for the overall socio-economic development of a society. Women require the transfer of skills of management and control of economic activities to enable them to feel confident and empowered.

Empowerment as a strongly articulated goal of development has become very attractive in recent years in the poor countries of the world. Many development agencies and governments realize that the key to long term poverty alleviation in developing countries in its broadest sense of increasing self-reliance of women.

The working women make a significant part of their empowerment both in social-economical aspects, most of the women are able to help in the development of their family, many of the women are participating in the financial decision of the family, which they were not earlier able to do.

1.18 Need for the Study

India is one of the largest democracies in the world. It also has one of the largest minorities. A true democracy ensures not only individual rights but also rights of minorities as a community. Our Constitution has laid down in Articles 25 to 30 the rights of religious minorities and thus made India a truly democratic and pluralist nation. There was, however, a big gap between noble intentions and actual realization. The minorities
continued to face several problems. The most important was of security, especially as far as Muslims were concerned. Minority rights in India have, at least indirectly, obstructed the pursuit of gender equality. In India each community is, in matters relating to family, inheritance, adoption etc., governed by the Personal Laws of the community. Although protection of the Personal Law was not considered as the fundamental right of the community or its members, yet, the right to culture, granted to communities, has been used to advocate non-interference of the state in the Personal Laws of communities. Insofar as the communities’ Personal laws are concerned, they are generally biased against women, and the continuation of these laws has hindered the process of ensuring gender equality for all sections of the population.

The main grievance of the Indian minorities has been discrimination, especially in the economic field, with the result that they are economically worse off than the majority community. The discrimination against Muslims in matters of employment, permits, contracts, and admissions to various institutes has brought them to the verge of economic ruin.

More over there are wide disparities among the various religious groups in India. Christians are in general considered to be economically and socially superior to Muslims and other religious minorities. So, a study on the economic status of religious minorities in workforce participation is the need of the hour.
1.19 Statement of the Problem

Women who constitute half of the world’s population are not fully harnessed as a human resource. Any society cannot go ahead if 50% of the population does not participate in its developmental activities. Right through history, in all religions and cultures, women have been assigned a secondary status. The world wars proved to be turning points in the history of mankind. The participation of women in the workforce started increasing since then. This trend is observed in developing nations. In tune with the worldwide trend, Indian women are marching towards self-development.

The socio-economic changes that were set in motion in India after independence provided women with better education and greater employment opportunities. Today, educated Indian women have made a landmark in both conventional and non-conventional fields. In the case of Christian and Muslim women, the religion prevents them from getting equal access to education and work participation. It is well known that the work participation of Islamic women is very low more due to the force of religion than the patriarchal structures and patterns as well as low mobility and lack of opportunity. It is worth noticing that the work participation rate of Islamic women tends to increase in recent times. The position of Muslim women has changed not only in the sphere of marriage and family but also in the spheres of education, employment and political life. Women’s employment particularly in the case of Christian and Muslim women has an important role in women’s empowerment. Hence, the present study is
an attempt to analyse the nature of women workforce, particularly that of Christian and Muslim women in Madurai district with the following specific objectives.

1.20 Objectives of the Study

The present study is set to meet the following objectives.

1. To analyse the characteristics of the Christian and Muslim women and their family profile.
2. To examine the relationship between Socio-Economic variables of both Christian and Muslim women and their monthly income.
3. To assess the Work-Family conflict, Quality of work life and job involvement of Christian and Muslim women employees.
4. To study women empowerment of minorities women through decision making.
5. To offer suitable suggestions for the uplifting of women minorities in Madurai district.

1.21 Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no variation in income among the Christian and Muslim women workers in public, private, central and state, and industry and service sectors.
2. There is no difference in the perception of quality of work life and job satisfaction between Christian and Muslim women workers in public and private sectors.
3. There is no difference in Christian and Muslim women’s empowerment between public and private sector women employees.

1.22 Limitations of the Study

The study is restricted to Madurai region where the female working population is sufficient in number for the study purpose and belongs to different sectors. Though a number of governmental organizations are functioning in Madurai region, the researcher has selected Christian and Muslim women employees working in state and central governments or public sector, and industrial and service departments of the private sector. As Madurai region is a semi industrialized area, the researcher studied the private industrial units that employed Christian and Islamic female workers. Hence, the results of the present study are to be viewed with the above limitations.

1.23 Chapterisation

The present study “An Economic study of Religious Minorities with Special Reference to Women in Madurai District” has been presented in Seven chapters.

The first chapter presents the Introduction, Empowerment of women, Importance of women, Role of women, Minorities in India, Need for the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives, Hypotheses of the study, Limitations of the study along with Layout of the study.
The second chapter deals with the Review of literature of earlier studies, Methodology and the Profile of the study.

The third chapter analyses the characteristics of the Christian and Muslim women respondents and their family profile.

The fourth chapter examines the relationship between socio-economic variables of Christian and Muslim women and their monthly income.

The fifth chapter examines the Work-Family Conflict, Quality of both Work life and Job involvement of Christian and Muslim women employees.

The sixth chapter deals with women empowerment through decision making.

The last chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and suggestions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE, METHODOLOGY AND PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

SECTION – A

REVIEW OF LITERATURE