

P R E F A C E

Anthropological and Sociological researches on Muslim Women in India, particularly in West Bengal are very scanty. There are a few studies on status of Muslim Women of urban centres, but very little is known about the dynamics of their social position in rural areas.

The Muslims are the largest minority in India. According to 1981 Census they constituted 11.35% of India's total population and in West Bengal they were 21.51%. The total Muslim population in India were 75,512,439, of which 38,989,763 were male and 36,522,676 were female. The socio-economic and educational backwardness of the Muslims are well known. It is generally assumed that modernization in Muslim Society has sustained a set-back due to various factors, of which the insignificant roles played by its women is most important. Though Islam has given women as beings of their own right and given them an impressive array of claims, but in reality the women are the worst sufferer from several social disabilities. The Muslim social system has prevented easy access of women to avail various opportunities for their self development.

The present study is an attempt to analyse the socio-cultural aspects of women in Muslim Society. The position of Muslim Women has been examined on the basis of their status and

roles in different social context. Emphasis has also been given to find out the various problems faced by the Muslim Women and the socio-cultural constraints to their status upliftment. The study was conducted in two villages of West Bengal. Of the two villages one is located in the interior (remote) area of the district of Burdwan, while the other is situated near the urban (fringe) area of the district of Howrah. In this dissertation these two villages shall also be referred as interior and urban villages respectively.

The thesis is the outcome of my full time research work of more than five years. I am thankful to the authority of the University of North Bengal for providing me with a Junior Research Fellowship. I therefore, highly obliged to Prof. K.N.Chatterjee, Vice-Chancellor and Dr. T.K.Chatterjee, Registrar of this University for their kind helps to complete this research. I am also thankful to various officers of this University who have extended full co-operation during the tenure of the fellowship.

I find it difficult to adequately express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. R.K. Bhadra of the department of Sociology & Social Anthropology, University of North Bengal, for his generous guidance and valuable suggestions throughout the course of this study. Without his sincere supervision the work might not be completed. I am also grateful to my other teachers of the department of Sociology & Social Anthropology of this University for their help and encouragement.