

CHAPTER - 1

I N T R O D U C T I O N

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INTRODUCTION

Background:

All over the world women are denied equal access with men to enjoy to opportunities for their personal growth and social development. This is mainly reflected in the field of education, employment, marriage, family, professional and political life. In every community women constitutes an important segment in respect to their position in the society.

In India anthropologists and sociologists have not devoted much attention to the systematic study of women. It is only since the last sixties a number of studies have been done on women. The "Women Liberation Year" in 1975 has attracted the attention of a number of sociologists and social anthropologists to study women in various perspective.

The status of Indian women had never been at par with that of women of the developed countries. Low standard of living, low level of literacy, economic dependence, ignorance of their fundamental rights, low inter-spouse communication and stronghold of tradition are some of the factors which stand in the way of improving the status of Indian women. Of these factors, literacy and level of education play an important role.

The term "status" signifies the sum total of the various culturally ascribed roles one has to play and rights and duties

inherent in a social position. Beside the ascribed status, there is also the 'achieved' status which results from one's efforts and personal achievements. The concept of status is needed to indicate the ordering of individuals in terms of attributes as level of education, occupation, income, perception of one's status within the home and in the community, decision-making role, number of restrictions imposed on one's activities, freedom and so on. The level of status of women varies from country to country and from time to time.

By 'status' Linton (1936) means a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals, and by 'role', the behavioural enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to that position. Status and role, in these terms, are concepts serving to connect the culturally defined expectations with the patterned behaviour and relationship which comprises social structure.

Parsons (1951 : 25) defines 'role' as the organized sector of an actor's orientation which constitutes and defines his participation in an interactive process. Status on the other hand refers to the actor's position within an institution, i.e., within a system of roles. Roles is thus the 'Processual aspect' and status the 'positional aspect' of an actor's participation in a social system.

Morris (1971:397) defines 'status' as the location of an actor in a system of social relationships and 'role' as the set

of expectations applied to the incumbents of the particular status.

According to Merton (1957:369-7) social status of an individual is his 'status-set', each of the statuses in turn having its distinctive 'role-set'. Role-set according to him is the complement of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status.

Mukherjee's (1972: iii) study of "Social status of North Indian Women" has defined social status as the place that a woman occupies and the dignity as well as privileges she enjoys in society.

Thus for the purpose of our study, we may define social status as the position an individual has in society by virtue of having to perform certain roles. His or her social position includes position in the family, occupational hierarchy, politics and religion.

Women constitute half of the world population. The role of women differs from society to society and from time to time. Social structure, cultural norms and value system are important determinants of women's role and their position in a society.

Westermarck (1914:408) in his article 'The position of Women in Early civilization', observes that "the position of women is exceptionally good in tribe that live upon fish and roots, which the women procure with a degree of expertness equal

to that of the men. Whereas it was among tribes that live by the chase or by other means in which women can be of little service, that we find the sex most oppressed. Again, women among hunters and pastoral tribes had low status but among the agricultural peoples, the position of female is generally higher".

Prior to the spread of Islam the inhabitants of Arab looked upon women as their chattel. They did not any position either amongst their kin or in their society. Marriage was contracted on payment of a bride price" (Kapadaia, 1959:38).

In the Vedic period women enjoyed equal status and high position with men. They had full freedom for spiritual pursuits and intellectual development (Asthana, 1974:1). The daughters was given all privileges enjoyed by the son. In the case of education a daughter was not discriminated from the son. Widow remarriage was allowed during this period, So, we find that in the Vedic age women held a most glorious position and had equal rights to properties.

In Epic age we find many rules regarding women. It was a glorious age for women. A large number of women excelled themselves in all spheres as queens, house wives and ascetics and their contribution to the various field of education and culture were of a high order, and they enriched their homes, societies, states and countries.

In Puranic Hindu Society the position of women was inferior in nature. Women were considered as a slave of their

husbands. Child marriage was very common and widow remarriage was prohibited. Girl's education tended to be nil. Deesai (1957: 21) observed that "the religious life of women was restricted to the observance of some Vratas which more or less demanded blind faith from her". Polygamy and the practice of Sati was also prevalent which deteriorated the position of women in the society.

The Hindu law given by Manu had made woman entirely dependent on man and subjected her to the authority of a father, husband and son in the different period of her life as daughter, wife and mother. Such a position of women continued throughout the Hindu period.

During the age of Jainism and Buddhism the position of women was glorious. The women of those days proved that they had honourable place in society and enjoyed equal rights with men.

The coming of Islam to India did not alter the position of its women. The Muslims brought with them the institution of parda. Moreover the parda had brought some significant changes in the status of women among the Hindu women of northern, western and eastern regions of India. The position of Muslim women was considerably better than that of the Hindus as the former enjoyed possession of the family property and alimony relating to divorce. The Muslim women had special privilege to remarry after divorce.

The coming of British in India did not change the position of Indian women out right. The work of reform and upliftment of

of the status of Indian women was done by Raja Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan and Annie Basant. Raja Rammohan and Vidyasagar had to their credit for the abolition of Sati pratha and introduction of widow remarriage in the Hindu society. Raja Rammohan founded the society of Brahma Samaj. At that time Dayanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj and this group emphasized the education for women. Ranade and Sir Sayyed tried to change public opinion regarding child marriage and education for women in Hindu as well as in Muslim Societies. Annie Basant and Sarojoni Naidu were the women who made the Indian woman to come in the forefront and to fight for India's freedom. The political movement acted as a primary factor for the improvement of the status of women in India. During 1874 many Acts were passed in the legislative council in favour of women.

At the beginning of 20th century a section of Indian women inclined to take higher education and professional studies. During the second world war the women took up jobs in various fields. The most significant years were 1955 and 1956 when equal rights for inheritance was introduced and Hindu marriage, divorce, adoption and succession bills were passed.

Statement of Problems:

Muslims constitute the largest minority group in India. They are not only a minority, but also the most orthodox, tradition bound and socio-economically backward community of this

country. It is generally assumed that the modernization in Muslim society has sustained a setback due to various factors, of which the insignificant role of women in the dynamics of their social system is the most important one.

It has also been observed that though Islam admits the equality of men and women, in practice there are inequalities between them in many areas of social life for various reasons. Consequently, women in Muslim Society have been suffering from several social disabilities such as, education, employment, social life and mental growth. They are economically dependant and backward and also educationally lagging behind. The female literacy among the Muslims is significantly very low and this is one of the important reason of perpetuating ignorance and illiteracy among them. It has been estimated that the literacy rate of the Muslims in India was only 34% (male 45% and female 19%) (Hamid 1989). Muslim women are mostly confined to their homes and mainly engaged in domestic activities. They are isolated and secluded thus their participation in economic, social and political matters are very negligible. Due to illiteracy, ignorance, isolation and male domination they are very conservative and tradition-bound. There are various systems prevalent in Muslim society those retarded the equal access of women with men to avail the opportunities of self development through education, employment, social and political participation. Owing to all these factors the Muslim Women seriously refuse to creative response to the changing reality. The Muslim women are also suffering from various health problems.

Traditional Muslim Society has given the women a very limited roles. As a matter of fact the only role that a woman was expected to play was that of a faithful and dutiful wife and an affectionate mother. In modern industrial societies, these domestic roles are supplemented and in some cases superseded by her role as a working woman.

The social status of a Muslim Woman is measured in terms of different roles she performs in the family and society. In operational terms, her social status can be measured by the degree of freedom she enjoys in the following spheres:

- (1) to get education,
- (2) to choose and hold a job,
- (3) to have say in spouse selection,
- (4) to participate in family decision-making including family budget, education and marriage of children, acquisition and disposal of consumer durables, real estates, etc.
- (5) to use one's income in her own way,
- (6) to participate in extra familial activities (religious, cultural and political),
- (7) to go out of home without male escort.

Importance of the Study:

In every community women constitute an important segment in respect to their position in the society. They are distinct from men not only for their biological differences but also for their differential status and roles in the society. The position

of women varies from society to society and religion to religion. The women's position and changes in their status and roles in the society provide us an important area of Anthropological and Sociological research. Till now the Indian Anthropologists and Sociologists have not devoted much attention to the systematic study of women. However, since the last sixties a good number of studies have been done on women by Sociologists and Social Anthropologists through various perspectives.

In India the position of women is not same among the Hindu; Muslim, Christian, Tribal and other communities. In the field of women studies in India, much is known about the position of women in Tribal societies. The special volume published by the Indian Anthropological Society entitled "Tribal Women in India (1978)", deals with various topics on problems and prospects of tribal women in India, while a very few studies are available on the position of women in non-tribal societies.

The Muslims occupy an important position in Indian Society. They are a minority community in this country. According to 1981 Census, the Muslim population in India was nearly 12% of India's total population and in West Bengal they constituted about 23% of its total population strength. In India the socio-cultural life of the Muslims has a distinct character as it bears the traits of both the Islamic and local traditions. A cultural synthesis with respect to great classical tradition of Islam and local cultures of India is noticed among them. This synthesis of tradition and culture has emerged as an unique pattern of society

and culture among the Muslims. Factually Muslims are not only a minority community, but also a most orthodox, tradition bound, conservative and backward community. Under the constitution of India, backward communities are those who are not adequately represented in public offices according to the strength of their population [Vide Art. 16(4)] (Masad : 1984).

The orthodoxy and backwardness of the Muslim community and their problems of modernization have been pointed out by various scholars. There is an opinion among a section of scholars that, the modernization in Muslim society has sustained a setback due to various factors, of which the insignificant role of women in dynamics of their social system is the most important. In Muslim Society inequalities between men and women is very pronounced due to various socio-economic-cultural reasons. There are systems prevalent in the society that divided equal access of women with men to opportunities of self development through education, employment, social and political life. The Muslim women are mostly confined in their homes and are more likely to be engaged in female's occupation, i.e. domestic works. Observance of Parda is a prevalent practice among them. Though there is a definite position of women in the social system of Islam, yet in actual life situation the position of women is something different. It has been observed that the women in Muslim society are the worst sufferer from several social disabilities viz. in mental growth, lack of education, employment, social and political

participation etc. The various social problems of Muslim women viz. ignorance, illiteracy, unilateral form of divorce (talak) and polygamy of the husband, etc. are now-a-days the most debatable issues among the intellectuals. There is a general stereotype that the principles of Islam are responsible for the backwardness of the Muslim women. But there is no empirical basis of such a stereotype.

Researches on Muslims in India are rather inadequate. Some scholars have noted the inadequacy of anthropological and sociological studies on Muslim communities in India (Answari : 1960, Ahmed: 1976, Mondal : 1983 etc.) Ahmed (1976 : 172) has pointed out that it is however, one of the characteristics of the discipline today that it has tended to emphasize the study of Hindus and their religious tradition, the study of non-Hindus and their tradition has been sadly neglected by both Indians and foreigners. In the field of Sociological researches on Muslims in India there are some studies on social organization, social stratification, religious life, political behaviour, social change and problems of modernization (Ahmed: 1973, 1976, 1983, 1984; Answari : 1960, Bhattacharya : 1973; Hasan : 1975; Imam : 1975; Krishna : 1976; Madan : 1976; Misra : 1964; Marriott : 1960; Mondal : 1985; Siddiqui : 1974, 1984; Singh : 1973 etc). But very little is known about the position of women in Muslim society. Hence, there seems to be a big gap in sociological research in this field of study.

Review of Literatures:

Sociological and anthropological studies on women in India was very much neglected before 1960's. After 1970's most of the studies on women have been done to examine the changing roles and attitudes of women, particularly the middle class, educated and urban dwellers. The studies on women in India are basically focused on their status and roles in the family. While some studies clearly indicate the integral relationship between roles and status of women vis-a-vis the nature of their social position.

In the field of women studies in India, much is known about the position of women in tribal societies. While a very little material is available on the position of women in non-tribal societies. In the field of women studies among the Hindus mention can be made of some works.

Beteille (1975) points out that the caste background affects women's self image and influences selection of a role model or reference group. He also says that there are a number of caste related factors which clearly affect the position of women in Indian society. Beteille also observes that among the poor and low castes the relationship between men and women is more egalitarian than among the higher castes.

Jain (1975) points out that in all societies there are certain abilities and aptitudes which are typically male and

others are typically female. She argues that research formulations will depend upon whether women are considered similar to or different from men.

In the edited volume of Roy (1978) there are some studies of dynamics of status and roles of women among various communities. In this volume there are a few studies on changing position of women due to impact of education, modernization, family planning and development programmes.

Marriage and kinship have been studied in relation to status of women in a society. Scholars like Desai (1959), Dube (1963), Hate (1969), Kapadia (1959) have taken interests in studying position of women, their changing roles, status and attitudes.

According to Karve (1965), the system of caste, family structure, kinship and marriage affects the status of women in a fundamental way. There are a number of factors related to caste in India which clearly affect the position of women in Indian society.

Kapur (1974) has studied the middle class educated urban working women for understanding their changing status, attitudes, marital and familial relationships. It is found that educated women workers are not only more tolerated and accepted in society than before, but are even more respected and admired. Old prejudices against work in offices and shops are gradually declining, unmarried and married women of middle and upper classes are increasingly entering into all types of office jobs both in public and private sectors. Women are getting into jobs and

professions and continues even after their marriage not only of economic necessity but also out of various other socio-psycho-situational factors and motivations. Kapur explores the various factors studied on objective and subjective perspectives. The objective factors are the family composition, husband's income, number of dependants, types of wife's service and husband's occupation. The subjective factors are the agreement and disagreement between husband and wife on values of life, each others role and status, sharing of household responsibilities etc.

The traditional attitudes and practices related to the position of women vary from region to region and also from caste to caste and community to community. The regional variation is more important than caste variation. As Kolenda (1976) points out that the incidence of bride price, divorce and remarriage varies in practices from region to region, despite the differences in ideals among caste within one region.

Khanna and Varghese (1978) in their studies on women in various parts of India deals with the position of women in modern India. In this book they have discussed about the various aspects of women, mainly marriage, conjugal life, sex and family planning, socio-economic and cultural aspects, fashion, social issues, role and ideals, and finally the employment of women and their changing socio-economic life. The changes occur in various aspects due to education, employment opportunities, social awareness etc. According to them the change in outlook should come in men also if women have to contribute more to the

society. The changes of the position of women are also discussed in details.

In the edited volume of De Souza (1975) there are various studies on women of contemporary India with special reference to their traditional images and changing roles at present situation. In this volume there are studies on women of various parts of India both rural as well as urban. In this volume there are also studies on women of various community living in India. This book covers different aspects of women, viz., socio-economic status, social mobility, family status, the image of women and their changing roles.

Srinivas (1978) has studied a number of factors related to the caste system which clearly affect the position of women in Hindu society. Among the low castes the relationship between men and women are more egalitarian than that of the higher castes. Now a days the lower castes are found to try to raise their caste status through Sanskritization, the consequence of which is the lowering of the status of women and making them subordinate to men in the society, particularly in economic and ritual spheres.

According to Srivastava (1978) the educated urban women work mainly for certain non-economic advantage. Employment has raised the status of educated middle class women and they have become more conscious and independent. As both husband and wife co-operate and share domestic responsibilities there is not much problems in functioning on the family. Therefore women's participation in work does not adversely affect the interpersonal

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relationship between husband and wife, and also the authority structure of the family. It is observed that working women belonging to the lower class groups, however, are not much in favour of women's employment, as they face much difficulties to work both in home and outside. The educated employed women are favourably oriented towards freedom from traditionality. It is found that education and employment acting as determinants of modernity. ✓

Apart from the above studies on Hindu women there are a few studies on Muslim women in India. Detail study on Muslim women is quite a few in number, while there are number of sketchy and partial studies on them. Review of some of these studies will help us in evaluating this neglected area, which will become the main basis of objects of the present study.

Brijbhusan (1980) has studied Parda practices and status and roles of Muslim Women. For understanding their position in society she has discussed in detail the effect of parda system on women and its consequence to the Muslim society.

In this study she has shown how a few Muslim women viz., Lady Wazir Hasan, Lady Abdul Qadir, Lady Muhammad Shafi, Begum Shah Nawaz, Lady Iman, the ladies of the Tyabji, Rahimtoola and Chinoy families and others discarded parda and participated in the women's movement during the British period in spite of traditional seclusion imposed on them.

She has stated that education has a vital role to change all aspects of women's life. She has also pointed out that

according to Quran — "it is essential for every Muslim man and woman to acquire knowledge". To her education has given superior position to the Muslim women in the modern society. She has shown how traditional parda practices have been gradually changing due to the impact of education and forces of modernization. She observed that the Muslim women have been gradually entering into various professional streams of broadcasting, engineering, diplomacy, designing, modelling, acting etc.

This book examines various aspects of Muslim Women and is based on interviews with women from all regions of the country and belonging to all levels of society. All aspects of personal law, marriage, polygamy, divorce, inheritance, adoption and education are discussed here.

The book is based on theoretical discussion about the status of women in Islamic society. Only in some cases the facts from Indian Census have been incorporated in her study. The book lacks the empirical facts about the status of women among the Muslims of contemporary times.

Bhatty (1975) examines the pattern of social stratification of a Muslim village in Uttar Pradesh to study the institutionalised differentiation in status and life styles of Ashraf and Ajlaf (non Ashraf) women. The life style of Ashraf women, who belong to the upper social strata, were determined by the characteristic of a parda society, confinement to the home, subordination to male authority and no alternatives to the role

of wife and mother. On the other hand the Ajlaf (non-Ashraf) women do not observe parda, enjoy relatively more freedom in role performance, and work outside the home with their husbands. A division of labour based on sex is commonly practiced.

In her article she has stated that education and urbanization of the Ashraf women. She observed that there is a tendency to come out of parda and to seek employment outside of home. She has also stated that though a process of "emulation" non-Ashraf women are retiring into parda, withdrawing from the family work force and regressing towards less egalitarian relations in the family.

Dube (1969) in her study on the Muslims of Laccadives has an account of a matriliney in that Island society. The society being matrilineal, female oriented and does not have parda. Except the Tangals of Laccadives who insist upon their own women for observing parda mainly because here it is the question of prestige of the priestly family. It may be mentioned here that observance of parda is not practiced in the Island. The common dress for women is a cloth going down from waist to a few inches below the knees, a high neck and sleeves reaching upto the wrists but often backed up to the elbows. They carry a piece of cloth as an outer covering for shoulders which is often used to cover also the head. According to her, this society, inspite of following the Islamic norms is matrilineal and has female favouring residence, property and divorce rules. She has shown that the authority pattern of the society and seclusion of women are interdependent.

Thus she concludes that among the Laccadive Islanders there is no parda since the legal rights are oriented towards women.

The edited volume entitled "status of women in Islam" by Engineer (1987) is a significant contribution in understanding the status of women in Islam and also in Muslim society with particular reference to India. There are four articles in the volume.

Lokhandwala (1987) in his article "the position of women under Islam has pointed out four causes of educational backwardness of the Muslim women viz., political traditions, social custom, religious belief and poverty.

Engineer (1987) has examined in detail the position of Muslim women from the theological point of view and argues in favour of enhancing status of women within the framework of Islam.

Puri (1987) has examined the case of Muslim personal law as it operates in India and has discussed its implication in Muslim society and culture.

Shakir (1987) has also examined the case of Muslim Personal Law in India and argues in favour of change. He has examined the problems from the historical point of view. To put the problems in perspective he relates it to the social structure which is basically as inequitable as it is capitalistic.

/Jain (1986), in her study of Muslims in the city of Jaipur has critically, has examined the position of Muslim women and discussed about their various social problems. She has observed that

though Islam has an egalitarian attitude towards men and women, yet in actual behaviour, there are enough differences between them. She has tried to highlight the extent and quality of changes that have taken place in the Muslim families and consequent impact on the status and role of women. It also probes into their value system and aspirations in the light of their educational, economic and social development. Various factors viz., educational, economic, mass media influence, degree of secularization and political modernization on the status of women and their political awareness, have been separately discussed. It also suggests the prospects and possible directions for further change.

She has observed that Muslim women are suffering from various social disabilities, such as, early marriage, unilateral form of divorce, illiteracy, ignorance, lack of confidence, insignificant role in family and social matters, problems in decision making and lack of participation in political and social matters etc.

Jacobson (1976) has studied observance of parda by Muslim Women and their family organization in Bhopal. She finds parda serving important functions in the family and among the larger kin group. It also plays a vital role for social integration amongst the groups whose women practice it as per social rules. It is also a symbol of prestige to them.

The study reveals that the wealthy Muslims of Bhopal ideally do not allow their women to be seen by men who are not

their kinsmen. Observance of parda is a mark of social honour to them. There are some differences in the parda observance of the high and low socio-economic groups. The practices of parda by the low socio-economic status is similar in many respects to that of high status Muslims and also to the Hindus of the region. The women of high status use burkha for covering their head. In her study she has clearly shown how the traditional parda practices of Muslim Women has been gradually changing due to the impact of education and modernization in Muslim society.

Khwaja (1965) in her study of Muslim Women of Kanpur critically analyses their attitude towards parda practices.

Kutty (1972) in her study on Laccadive Islanders has shown how a husband does not have economic rights over his wife and can not demand her productive labour.

Khan (1984) has critically examined the economic condition, educational problems and status of women among the Muslims of Karnataka. He has pointed out various factors responsible for their relative backwardness. He examined the extent of participation of Muslim Women in various development programmes of the regions.

Lateef (1983) in her study on modernization in India and the status of Muslim Women has analytically discussed the changing position of Muslim Women in recent years. Her study consists of four parts. Part one attempts to identify historical factors which has made the modernizing process in Muslim Community. She also examines the effect of historical process on Muslim women and their

development before Independence.

The second part deals with the period after Independence of India which is characterized by the national focus on the economic development and modernization of the country. It examines whether this national drive for modernization stimulated the desire of the Muslims for social and economic progress which might improve the role and status of the Muslim Women.

Part three is her empirical study based on survey among Muslim women regarding their ascribed and achieved status both in family and society. Her enquiry is directed in assessing the extent to which Muslim Women are limited by the Community's adherence to the Shariah or Muslim personal law. In her analysis she has shown how the ascribed status of the Muslim Women has affected their achieved status and to what extent the process of modernization has an impact on the position of women in Muslim Society.

Part four deals with the prospects and possible direction of changes in social status of women of the Muslim Community.

Mondal (1979) has given an account of Para observance among the Muslim Women of a village in West Bengal and has examined the consequences of such practices in social and cultural life of the Muslims. According to him, the concept of modesty, i.e. Saram is central to the ideology of parda. The central object of parda is to prevent women from interaction with men, and in some circumstances from certain outside affairs.

In his article he has observed that the Muslim families of Chakbanakha village do not allow their women to be seen by men who are not their kinsmen. The Parda system is strictly followed by women belonging to the upper social status. While the women of lower social status barely observe parda rules due to some economic reasons. The women of this category are involved in great variety of activities - they sell rice, paddy husks, pottery jars etc, to the villagers and thus they cannot afford to seclude themselves properly. They however consider that parda is a mark of prestige and a social prescription.

The various consequences of parda observance of the Muslim Women and their impact on the society has also been discussed in details. The study noted that due to the impact of urbanization and modernization the well-to-do Muslims have induced certain changes in parda observance, but they are not willing to give it up totally. To them parda is still a mark of status in Muslim Society.

Menon (1981) in her study of "status of Muslim Women in India" has noted the position of women and their various problems. She has also attempted to find out the impact of modernization on the traditionally ascribed status of Muslim Women. She has observed the role of education to improve their social status. According to her the factors like, early marriage, Parda etc. acting as barrier in the way of their educational attainment. Though Islam is not against of education of women, yet they are unaware of it due to their lack of knowledge in Islam. The Muslims in general consider Women's education as unnecessary. She mentions

that parda system is looked as a symbol of respectability. But today some women have come out of parda under economic pressure. She observes that the educated women have taken part in different economic activities.

The study noted that a large number of women still use veil. Today they perform variety of roles and engage themselves in political and social work. Thus the women are gradually improving their traditional status. In contemporary times the spread of education, economic and political participation have increased among the Muslim Women, and these have brought considerable changes in the attitude and practice of Parda. Educated Muslim Women are now found to move outside of their home for various activities related to modern life. The most significant changes are noticed in the areas like age at marriage, selection of spouse, dowry, decision-making in the family, choice of occupation, family planning and political participation. But the Muslim Personal Law, absence of socially-defined occupational roles of women and the practices of parda are creating serious obstacles towards rapid change of status of women in Muslim Society.

Roy (1979) in her study on Muslim Women of Delhi and Lucknow cities has highlighted the extent and quality of changes, that have taken place in Muslim families within three generations and its effect on the status of women. She also examined how the placement of women in the society. Shifted along with the shift in basic attitude of the people towards traditionality and

modernity. The study also deals with the aspects of social structure of Indian Muslims and also about the historical sketch of women. The system of parda observance of the Muslim Women are also discussed in details. According to her the system of parda gives the women safety and security and detach them from many kinds of public participation. The Parda functions as an essential part of social system in Muslim Community. She has shown that there is a significant difference between the pre-marital and post marital status of women due to their role differentiation. Now-a-days changes have taken place in socio-economic and educational status of the women and that had altered the entire atmosphere of the Muslim home. Participation of women in various employment has been increasing due to spread of education among them. The importance of Parda and burkha have been slackening due to the impact of modern outlook and education. In Delhi and Lucknow the burkha has very little meaning in contemporary times. In discussing the impact of education among the Muslim women she has traced the factors like attitude, aspiration and achievement in life. She noted that the educated women have realised that Mehar money is one of the strongest defence of them against the easy divorce. In the past the girl remained under male authority after marriage. Women of new generation do not follow the rituals blindly but try to understand the Holy book of Quran. The young women are attentive to their religious rituals but they are more knowledgeable about Islam as compared to aged women. Education is making them more religiously conscious, but at the same time reducing their blind faith in ritualistic beliefs.

She concludes that the placement of women in the society shifts along with the shift in the basic attitude of the people. In Indian context the Muslims, inspite of their rigorous and effective traditional social pattern, have changed their behaviour in changing circumstances. She observes that how and what types of changes have taken place among the Muslim women within three generation. She also highlighted the various aspects of change which gives them superior status in the family and society. Lastly, she has discussed the changing position of women due to various external and internal influences. She concludes that due to increase of literacy and education the women led to economic power along with the marginal change in the spheres of Parda, marriage and religious life.

In his study Saiyed (1976) has mentioned that seclusion and isolation have forced the Muslim Women into a limited circle of interaction. Due to the system of parda the Muslim Women has been suffering from various social disabilities viz, early marriage, divorce, illiteracy, ignorance and other social and political problems. He observes that the Jamaati Women in a village of Maharashtra are free from Parda rules and enjoy considerable freedom in education and social movement. The non-observance of parda and independence of Jamaati women are not an example of lower class behaviour. This non-observance of parda is not a result of either westernization or modernization but a practice developed out of social needs.

Vreede-de-Stuers (1969) in her study of parda among the Muslim Women in Northern India has shown that practice of Parda has become a part of women's life and it is carried on even after her marriage. She finds that in contemporary times there is neither total preservation of the traditional parda system nor its total elimination which she refers to as a process implicitly generates frustration of girl students between the two worlds of their home and their college. However, it needs to be mentioned that it is not women alone who consciously or unconsciously want to emancipate themselves. The Muslim woman is motivated to change not only because of her own desire but also because of the change in the attitude of the males. The Muslim men are aware of the fact that the non-Muslim Women in India have moved faster to accept modernization during the last few decades. This has been possible for them due to the acceptance of modern education by their women.

The review of the above literatures suggest the facts that the sociological studies on Muslim women are a very few. The materials, which are available are basically conducted at some regions of northern, western and southern parts of the country. The study of Muslim Women of East and North-East India, particularly of West Bengal is totally negligible. The above studies also reveal that the position of women in Muslim society is very ambiguous. There is again a gulf of difference between the text (ideal Islamic norms) and the context (the behaviours in practice) so far the status and roles of Muslim Women are concerned.

Objectives of the Present Study:

On the basis of above observations following questions can be formulated for the present study. These are as follows:

- (1) What is exactly the position of women in Islam as suggested by Islamic great tradition i.e. Quran and Hadish.
- (2) What is the real position of women in Muslim Society?
- (3) What are their roles in the Society?
- (4) How does their position determine those roles and vice versa?
- (5) What are the guiding principles behind the position of women and allocation of their roles?
- (6) What is the notion of Islam towards status and roles of women in the Society?
- (7) Is that notion congenial to social progress (status upliftment) among the Muslim Women?
- (8) How does that notion interpret and characterise the Muslim Society in India?
- (9) What are the problems faced by women in Muslim Community and what are the constraints towards their status development?
- (10) What have been thought by the Muslims regarding the status and roles of women in their society at the contemporary changing social context?

With the above aims in mind, the basic objectives of this study are to examine and to analyse the position of women in Muslim Society. The position of women in Muslim community will

be examined on the basis of their status and roles in the society. A special emphasis will also be given to find out the various problems faced by the Muslim Women and the constraints behind their status upliftment as well as modernization in the contemporary situation.

The purpose of this study is of three folds. Firstly, the investigation on women in Muslim Society will help us to understand the nature of their position as well as activities in the society and so also their various problems in social life. Secondly, it will throw some light to identify the various factors that are acting as barriers toward status upliftment and modernization of the Muslim Women. Finally, the results of the study will give some ideas to formulate a way through which the emancipation of the Muslim Women by way of their status upliftment can be achieved.

In the present research it is intended to examine the position of Muslim women of two villages in West Bengal. The study confines to the Muslim women of Bengali origin only.

To substantiate the above objectives firstly, I shall try to find out the main factors those determining the status and roles of Muslim women. To deal with this, I shall analyse the concepts in relation to the status and roles of women in ideal Islamic Society, and the interpretations of those principles as viewed by the Muslims since historical times. Secondly, empirical study will be conducted among the Muslims of two villages in West Bengal to examine the position of women in their society.

To prosecute this study only the major areas of their participation in social organization will be analysed. To understand the position of Muslim Women the variables like - cultural values, self image of women, womanhood and women's role in economy, authority, social, educational and religious spheres of life shall be examined. Finally, the changes in the position of Muslim Women will be analysed by comparing their present situation with the recent past. And the problems of social life as well as the modernization of Muslim Women will be examined in the background of social organization of Muslim Community and the codified roles of women as embodied in Islam.

Methodology:

(i) Research Design

The design of this study has been formulated on the basis of aims and objectives of the research. The study area, the people, the tools and techniques of data collection have been chosen on the basis of the nature of the study. The main purpose of this study is to gain insight of the life of the Muslim women and their various problems.

These data have been analysed with the structure-functional approach. It is purely an exploratory study with diagnostic outlook in some cases. The approach is purely descriptive with an analytical base wherever necessary.

The data for this research have been gathered both from primary as well as from secondary sources. The facts on ideal Islamic notion about women's social position have been gathered through analysing the textual materials. Published and unpublished materials from various sources had also been consulted for having data on women of various areas in the past. While the empirical facts are collected through field work in two villages.

(ii) Locales of the study

The study has grown out of field work in two Muslim villages situated in two different districts of West Bengal. The name of the villages are Chakmodhu and Kochutia. Chakmodhu is a village of Howrah district, which is located in the South of West Bengal. While Kochutia is a village of Burdwan district, located almost in the central part of West Benga. In terms of location Chakmodhu is a fringe village, proximate to an industrial urban estate named Fort Gloster Industrial Limited. But Kochutia is a interior village, which is typical rural in character.

These villages are selected purposively taking into consideration of the size of Muslim population, presence of various muslim social groups, nature of economy and availability of educational facilities in them. The villages from industrial-urban, and rural settings were selected for getting a differential social position of muslim women.

(iii) Field work

The duration of field work was of twenty months. I started this research work since the beginning of 1989. During January to February, 1989, I made a basic enquiry in the village to get some preliminary information on the people. The census and interview schedule were prepared. The first intensive field work was conducted from June 1989. During June 1989 to December 1989, I did field work in Chakmodhu village and from January 1990 to June 1990 field work was done in Kochutia village. The villages were revisited for some subsidiary information and also for verification of some data from October to December 1990 and again from May to July 1991. The total period of regular field work thus covered twenty months. During the period of the field enquiry I observed the daily life of the village women. They took me either as their friend or daughter, or sister. All these helped me to collect more data and experience the field situation closely.

(iv) Selection of the Informants

It was pre-determined to conduct holistic study on every muslim household of the two villages. To gather necessary basic information the census was conducted in the two villages. The data were gathered from every household of the selected villages.

There are various social groups among the Muslims living in both the villages. The study is primarily focused on the women as a whole living in Chakmodhu and Kochutia, but an emphasis has been given to highlight the women of Shaikh category as it is

the numerically dominant social group in both the villages. It is to be mentioned here that, the Shaikh households in Chakmodhu and Kochutia were 163 and 209 respectively. All the Shaikh households of both the villages were interviewed from which bulk of the data were gathered. Out of the total households of the two villages a sample of fifty were selected for case studies. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the households as well as the informants to represent the every section of village population with particular reference to their socio-economic strata in village society. The samples were drawn through categorization of the households on the basis of employed, unemployed, educated and uneducated. Further in course of categorization the marital status of the women, i.e. unmarried, married, widow etc. were also taken into account.

During the house to house census interview the head of the household was taken as informant in most of the cases. In a few cases in the absence of the head the next persons in rank of the family were chosen. In this context the help of senior women of the household were also taken into account.

To obtain relevant information both female and male informants were selected from both the villages. To select the informant it was decided to depend on their sincerity and reliability for giving correct information. Informants were selected from every section of village population. They were of two types, viz. key informants and occasional helpers. The mullahas, maulvis, teachers, panchayat members, political leaders

and most respectable senior members were considered as key informants. The key informants were asked to furnish most of the data on the basis of set questions framed for this research. While the occasional helpers were mostly used for checking and verification of the collected data.

(v) Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

To collect primary data a long term field work was conducted. The data were collected through conventional anthropological tools and techniques, viz. census survey, interview, case study, collection of genealogy, group discussion and observation.

To obtain preliminary and comprehensive data standard census and interview schedules were prepared. The interview was with the heads of the families, and the senior women of the households. The required data were also obtained from the girl students, their parents and teachers through interview with the help of closed and open^{ed} questions. Information were also obtained through informal discussion with the women and girls who voluntarily took part in discussion in several occasions. Formal group discussions were also arranged for data collection, particularly from the girl students. The techniques of genealogy and case study were also used for collection of data. The data collected through various techniques were supplemented by participant and non-participant observation. At the initial stage bulk of the quantitative data on the demographic and socio-economic life of the people were obtained through census survey.

At the second stage data were collected through intensive study by interview schedule and case study. The case studies on some marriage, divorce, economy, education and Parda practices have been taken into consideration. A total of fifty case studies covering various aspects of women's life were conducted. In this context unique and un-usual cases were also taken into account.

For collection of concrete case studies I also sought the help of genealogical technique for ascertaining family composition, extension of kinties and marriage distance of the people. Genealogical technique was also used for accumulating the historical facts of past social events of the village people. This was basically adopted for understanding the intergenerational changes in status and roles of women in Muslim families. Five such genealogical charts of each villages were prepared with the help of age-old men and women of the village. Bulk of the data on economic activities, behaviour patterns, social relations and cultural expressions were collected through observational techniques.

(vi) Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

The data collected from the field were processed after necessary checking and editing. To process the data the completeness and accuracy of the facts were looked carefully. Tabulation was done manually. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Simple statistical methods consisting mostly

of percentages were calculated. The analysis of qualitative data were made through systematic but analytical description of the facts. In course of analysis method of comparison has been used. The data were finally organized and has been presented into seven chapters.

(vii) The Problems and Limitations

At the beginning of field study I encountered some difficulties. The main difficulty which I faced was to convince the people about the purpose of this research. To tackle the problem I had to convince the people by stating the fact that, the data obtained from them will not be disclosed to anybody and their secrecy shall be strictly maintained. They were also convinced that the objectives of this study were not to submit any report to the Government and political bodies but for the purpose of my own academic interest. With these assurance the people's resistance was diluted to a considerable extent and whole hearted co-operation was received from them.

The study has certain major limitations. Since the empirical studies on Muslim women in West Bengal is very negligible so benefits of earlier research studies were not much available. Hence as an initial study it has its own limitation. Secondly, the study was undertaken in two villages of two districts in West Bengal. Hence the observations drawn from this study can not be generalized too far covering the whole of the State, even though the study provides broad clues about the conditions of the Muslim women in the State and the country as well.

Research Setting:

Two Muslim villages of West Bengal, namely - Chakmodhu and Kochutia are selected for the present study. Chakmodhu is a village of Howrah district, while Kochutia is of Burdwan district. The two villages are selected purposively taking into consideration the size of Muslim population, nature of the village and availability of social groups in them.

Chakmodhu is a village proximate to an industrial and urban complex. It is situated just by the side of Fort Closter Industrial complex and its township. The village is under the jurisdiction of the Bauria Police Station of Howrah district. It is one of the village of Rameswarnagar gram panchayat in Uluberia block (II) under Chakmodhu mouza. The village is about 3 kilometres from railway station of Bauria and which is only 25 kilometres away from the city of Calcutta. While Kochutia is an interior village situated under the jurisdiction of Ketugram Police Station of Burdwan district. It is under Agardanga Gram Panchayat of Kandra Block (I). The village is about 10 kilometres from the railway station of Salar and which is about 175 kilometres from the city of Calcutta.

Chakmodhu has three distinct wards or Para namely Shaikh Para, Mollick Para and Khan Para. The settlement of Kochutia is divided into four wards. These are Shah Para, Mullah para, Shaikh para and Hindu para. The para division clearly shows the social categorization of the members residing in the village. Within the two villages the paras represent closely related families.

The paras of the two villages are separated from one another by agricultural canals, muddy paths, narrow drains, clusters of bamboo grooves etc. The houses are linearly arranged and the village settlement as a whole is of compact type.

Chakmodhu is a nucleated village, inhabited by Muslims only, who speak in Bengali. Thus the village is a homogeneous one and has a traditional agrarian background, but in recent years the people have been influenced by industrialization and urbanization. Whereas Kochutia is regarded as a very traditional village of the locality. It is a multi-ethnic village, inhabited by both the Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus have several caste groups. The people speak in Bengali with a mixture of some urdu terms.

Within the two villages the dwellings can be classified into two main groups, such as matir-ghar or the mud built houses and pucca-ghar or the brick built houses. In the two villages, houses are linearly arranged and these do not face the street. This is due to the fact that the Muslims follow the rules of Parda system. The windows of their houses are situated on the high of walls, the doors are covered by jute or cloth parda. The houses are compact in nature and are enclosed by another wall fencing. Whereas the houses of the Hindus at Kochutia are free and separate from one another. Their courtyard are open due to the fact that the parda system is not so rigid among them. Each of the Hindu houses contain tulshi mandap.

The village land is covered by palm (*Barassus flabelliger*), Mango (*Mangifera-indica*), Bel (*Aegle marmelos*), Neem (*Melia azadirachta*), Kul (*Zizyphus jujuba*), bamboo (*bambusa arundinica*), Babla (*Acacia-arabica*) and other common big trees.

Within the two villages there is no proper sanitation, so villagers used paddy field for excretion. But the well-to-do families having their own latrine. Absence of proper drainage system is also noticed in both the villages.

There are no sufficient water sources at Chakmodhu and Kochutia. The villagers depend on ponds for clean water which is used for cooking and bathing. In Chakmodhu there are six tube-wells and these serves the needs of drinking water of the villagers. While in Kochutia there are nin tube-wells for providing drinking water to the village people.

In Chakmodhu there are two burial grounds or Kabarsthan and in Kochutia there are four burial grounds for the Muslims. The burial grounds are locally known as Kabursthan in both the villages.

In Chakmodhu there is only one primary school named Chakmodhu Free Primary School. For secondary education the boys and girls usually take admission in high schools of the locality. The name of these schools are: Rughudev bati Sadharaner Vidyalay (2 miles north), Burikhali Khetramohan Institution (1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles west) and Khajuri High School. But girls students prefer to take admission in Bauria Girls High School. For the sake of higher

education the students of the village normally goes to Uluberia College, Andul College and the colleges around Howrah and Calcutta. In Kochutia there is only one primary school called Kochutia Primary School. Due to the poor economic condition most of the families do not send their children to this school. For secondary education the students of well to do families go to the high schools of Simulia, Agardanga and Salar. For further studies the students usually move to the colleges situated at Katwa, Burdwan and Calcutta.

There are few associations and public places in Chakmodhu and Kochutia. In Chakmodhu there are two clubs, namely- Madhursree Sangha and Chetnavikash Kendra. These clubs are organized by the village youths and mainly functioning the recreational activities. Sometimes these clubs are also extending some social and political services to the villagers. There are a few grocery shops, tea stalls, and ration shops from where the villagers purchase their necessary commodities. There is no library in the village. In Kochutia on the other hand there are two clubs constituted by the Hindu and the Muslim youths respectively.

In Chakmodhu there are two mosques or masjids, where daily and occasional prayers as well as other religious activities are performed. There is a large open ground in the village which is known as Idd-gaha, where Idd prayers are held. The villagers jointly bear the maintenance cost of these religious places. By

contrast in Kochutia there are two mosques or masjid (one in Mullah para and the other in Shaikh para). There are also two Idgahas in the village. There are some Shrines (astana), where the villagers perform occasional prayers and rituals during their necessities. In Kochutia two temples are there for the Hindus.

There is only a single dispensary at Chakmodhu. Only two quack doctors live in the village and the villagers depend on them for their treatment. The village has a health centre but which has not yet started to function. The patients suffering from complicated diseases are admitted to Uluberia Sub-divisional hospital or to any other hospital of Howrah or Calcutta. The factory workers living in the village receiving help from physicians of Employees' State Insurance Medical Benefit Scheme. They also get free treatment from the medical unit of Fort Gloster Industries Ltd. The other village, i.e. Kochutia is still backward with regard to the modern medical facilities. There are only two quack medical practitioners in the village. Due to lack of health centre the villagers depend on Ketugram Health Clinic which is about six kilometres away from the village. In serious cases the patients are admitted to the neighbouring hospital of Salar, Katwa, Burdwan and Calcutta.

The panchayat of Chakmodhu has three members including the Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan. The entire village is divided into three wards (Para) and the election of the panchayat is held wardwise. All members of the present Panchayat are Muslims, as

the village is inhabited by the Muslims only. In contrast the panchayat of Kochutia has ten members including Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan. The members of the Panchayat are both the Muslims and the Hindus because the village is inhabited by both the Muslim and the Hindu communities.

The village of Chakmodhu is governed both by the statutory panchayat as well as by the informal Council of village elders, called malat-majlis or Soloana majlis. At Kochutia the elders Council is commonly called as Grami-majlis. It has been enjoying a long tradition in the village. The villagers depend on elder's council for various social reasons, particularly for marriage, funeral and other socio-religious ceremonies. The headman or moral of the majlis controls the overall social matters of the villagers. The Soloana majlis or Grami majlis is not only a village Council, but it also has a larger organization when Soloana or Grami constituted a bigger Council for settling the inter-village disputes.

In Chakmodhu internal communication is mainly maintained by rickshaw and bicycle. Outward communication is maintained by train, bus and ferry boat services. These are easily available to the villagers. While at Kochutia the inward and outward communication is maintained by bicycle, rickshaw, bullock cart, train and bus services.

The People:

Chakmodhu is a nucleated village, inhabited only by the Muslims. Thus the village is homogeneous in nature. Whereas Kochutia is a multi-ethnic village inhabited both by the people of Muslim and Hindu communities. All the Muslims of Chakmodhu and Kochutia are the followers of Nanafi school and belonging to Sunni sect.

Census data reveals that Chakmodhu has a total population of 1159, distributed in 185 households. There are 612 (52.81%) males and 547 (47.19%) females in the village. The total Muslim population of Kochutia is 1226, of which 652 (53.18%) are males and 574 (46.82%) are females. The total number of households in Kochutia is 227. The most notable demographic feature is that, in the two villages the male population is higher than that of the female population.

The population has been divided into 17th standard age groups. The first age group starts from the day of birth upto the termination of the 5th year and the last age group holds individuals of ages above 85 years. The age grouping has been made for both the sexes. The age and sex distribution of the villagers is shown in the table 1.

Table - 1

The Male and Female Population of Chakmodhu and Kochutia

Age group	Chakmodhu						Kochutia					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1-5	108	17.65	90	16.45	198	17.08	102	8.32	109	8.90	211	17.21
5-10	85	13.89	97	17.73	182	15.70	99	8.08	83	6.77	182	14.85
11-15	77	12.58	73	13.35	150	12.94	71	5.79	57	4.65	128	10.44
16-20	71	11.60	59	10.79	130	11.22	66	5.38	55	4.49	121	9.87
21-25	55	8.99	39	7.13	94	8.11	63	5.14	66	5.38	129	10.52
26-30	57	9.31	48	8.78	105	9.06	65	5.30	42	3.43	107	8.73
31-35	29	4.74	35	6.40	64	5.52	45	3.67	28	2.28	73	5.95
36-40	35	5.73	24	4.38	59	5.10	34	2.77	28	2.28	62	5.06
41-45	23	3.76	16	2.93	39	3.37	18	1.47	35	2.85	53	4.32
46-50	19	3.10	26	2.93	45	3.89	29	2.37	27	2.20	56	4.57
51-55	20	3.27	14	2.56	34	2.93	25	2.04	7	0.57	32	2.61
56-60	14	2.28	13	2.38	27	2.33	15	1.22	16	1.32	31	2.54
61-65	6	0.98	7	1.28	13	1.12	13	1.06	7	0.57	20	1.63

Contd..

Table - 1 (Contd..)

66-70	6	0.98	2	0.37	8	0.69	4	0.33	8	0.65	12	0.98
71-75	6	0.98	2	0.37	8	0.69	1	0.08	3	0.24	4	0.32
76-85	-		2	0.37	2	0.17	1	0.08	2	0.16	3	0.24
86 and above	1	0.16			1	0.08	1	0.08	1	0.08	2	0.16
Total	612		547		1159	100.00	652		574		1226	100.00
%	52.81		47.19				53.18		46.82			

In the two villages there are certain hierarchical arrangements among the people of Chakmodhu and Kochutia in terms of their so called ethnic identity and social status. Firstly, in Chakmodhu they are differentiated into five distinct social groups called jats viz. Shaikh, Khan, Mollick, Jamadar and Purkait. Further the village population is broadly divided into three segments (status groups), viz. Boroloke, Goribloke and Chhotoloke or Itar, in terms of their economic, social and ritual status in the village. The people who are economically well to do and socially recognized as superior belong to Boroloke category, while the poor and socio-educationally backward people are known as Garibloke. The Chhotoloke or Itar are the people who have lowest social status in the village due to some of their un-Islamic behaviours, viz., habit of gambling, drinking of wine, money lending, and breaking of essential parda rules by the women of the family.

In Kochutia there are three categories of social groups viz, Shah, Mollah Saikh. Moreover they can be broadly divided into three groups namely, Miya, Chhasa and Itar. The people of Miya category are also called as Bhadralok i.e. the respectable and honourable persons. They belonging to the traditional Asraf or Sharif or Khas section. Miyas are mostly land owners, educated and economically well-to-do. They do not till their land personally but cultivate it by employing share-croppers and day labourers. They control most of the village lands and thus they dominate in

village politics. As a result the Miyas enjoying a superior position in social hierarchy even in contemporary situation. The category of Chhasa are constituted by the persons who are directly involved with the tilling and cultivation of land. They are mostly illiterate or having low education. They are totally depending on the Miyas for their livelihood. The Miyas and the Chhasas are functionally related with each other. Thus the Chhasas are enjoying an intermediate position in the status hierarchy. Itars are commonly called chhotolok, i.e., the degraded persons due to their un-Islamic activities. They are placed at the bottom of status hierarchy among the Muslims of this place.

The distribution of social groups of Chakmodhu and Kochutia villages are shown in the table-2.

Table - 2
Distribution of social groups in Chakmodhu and Kochutia

Ethnic groups	Religious Sects	Name of the village			
		A		B	
		Chakmodhu		Kochutia	
		No. of households	%	No. of households	%
Shaikh	Hanifi	163	88.11	209	92.07
Khan	"	5	2.70	-	-
Mollick	"	11	5.95	-	-
Shah	"	-	-	11	4.85
Mollah	"	-	-	7	3.08
Jamadar	"	4	2.16	-	-
Purkait	"	2	1.08	-	-

The economic condition of the inhabitants of Chakmodhu reveal that there are 310 (26.75%) earners, 97 (8.37%) partial earners, and 849 (73.25%) dependants. Only the men folk of the village were engaged in earning. While women, with a few exceptions are engaged in various domestic works. The economic activities of the male folk of the village shows that most of them are engaged in factory work, because the village is adjacent to an industrial and urban complex. While the economic condition of Kochutia reveals that there are 413 (33.69%) earners and 713 (58.16%) dependants . The people of Kochutia mostly engaged themselves in cultivation. In this village the proportion of total earners as well as male earners is slightly higher than that of the Chakmodhu village. This is mainly due to the fact that due to poor economic condition of the interior village the people generally prefer to engage their sons as agricultural labourers and in other occupations at their early age. Table 3 represents the economic condition of the two villages. For calculating the percentage of earner and non-earner i.e. dependant, the total population has been taken into account.

Table - 3

Economic Status of the people of Chakmodhu
and Kochutia

	Name of the villages			
	A		B	
	Chakmodhu		Kochutia	
	No.	%	No.	%
(a) Total Earner	310	26.75	413	33.69
(i) Total male Earner	274	44.77	376	57.67
(ii) Total female Earner	36	6.58	37	6.45
(b) Total Dependand	849	73.25	713	58.16
(i) Total male dependand	338	55.22	276	42.33
(ii) Total female dependand	511	93.42	437	76.13

The majority of the Chakmodhu villagers primarily engaged themselves as skilled or semi-skilled labourers in large scale industries. While in Kochutia the majority of the villagers are mainly engaged themselves in agricultural activities either as self-cultivators, or as share-croppers and day labourers because it is an agrarian village. The occupational patterns of the two villages has been shown in table 4.

The data on state of education of the people of Chakmodhu reveals that there are 32.68% illiterate, 6.45% literate, 32.57% primary, 25.08% middle, 2.39% School Final and 0.83% Graduate and Master degree holders. But in Kochutia the corresponding figures are 61.28% illiterate, 8.77% literate, 12.02% primary, 12.32% middle, 4.24% school final and 1.37% high degree holders.

Table - 4

Occupational pattern of the People of Chakmodhu
and Kochutia

	Name of the villages			
	Chakmodhu		Kochutia	
	No.	%	No.	%
(A) Male				
(i) Primarily engaged in factory industry	127	46.35	-	-
(ii) Engaged as daily labourer in various occupation (other than industry)	26	9.49	119	31.65
(iii) Engaged in petty business	27	9.85	24	6.38
(iv) Engaged in craft making (embroidary)	82	29.93	-	-
(v) Engaged in white colour occupation	12	4.38	16	4.26
(vi) Engaged in tailoring	-	-	2	0.53
(vii.) Engaged in cultivation	-	-	170	45.21
(viii) Engaged as cow harder	-	-	43	11.44
(ix) Engaged in begging	-	-	2	0.53
(B) Female				
(i) Engaged in making craft (embroidary)	33	91.67	-	-
(ii) Engaged in begging	1	2.78	-	-
(iii) Engaged in tailoring	-	-	1	2.70
(iv) Engaged in rice and paddy processing	-	-	11	29.73
(v) Engaged as maid servant	-	-	24	64.87
(vi) Engaged in white colour job	2	5.56	1	2.70

The details of educational status of the two villages shall be discussed in a separate chapter.

The conomic structure of the people of Chakmodhu reveals that the majority of the village population depend on industry and urban market for their livelihood. Thus the practice of agriculture is negligible in the village. White in Kochutia the village population is exclusively depend on agriculture as the means of their subsistence.

Chakmodhu is a fringe village situated under Bauria police station of the district of Howrah in West Bengal. It is only 25 kms away from the city of Calcutta. There are 185 households in the village and comprising of 1159 population. It is an uniethnic village in the sense that the village is populated by one religious group i.e. the Muslims. In this sense it is homogeneous in nature. But Kochutia is an interior village. It is situated under the jurisdiction of Ketugram police station of Burdwan district in West Bengal. It is a multi-ethnic village as it populated by Hindu castes and the Muslims. Thus Kochutia is heterogeneous in nature. In Kochutia there are 227 Muslim households with 1226 population.

In both the villages the households are arranged according to the physical division of the village occupied by particular khandan or lineage groups. The people who are close to each other in the social system or kin ties tend to live side by side but the people whose social position and kin ties are different live apart. The village Chakmodhu have traditional agrarian background marked

by the impact of subsequent industrial and urban feature. Most of the people of Chakmodhu are depends on industry, though there are also a good number of people who engaged in business, service and other occupations. Majority of the Chakmodhu women are engaged in domestic works and only a few are engaged in craft making i.e. in jori work. Only a single lady of Chakmodhu is attached in teaching profession. By contrast Kochutia is an agrarian village and exclusively depends on agriculture. Only a few women of this village are engaged in paddy processing, business, service and other occupations. As like as Chakmodhu only a single lady is engaged in teaching profession. The data reveals that the economic condition of Chakmodhu is better than Kochutia. Chakmodhu has facilities of electricity, urban market, and better systems of communication with the external world. But Kochutia lacks the mentioned privileges and facilities.

The state of education is very poor in both the villages. Most of the women are illiterate or simply literate. In respect to literacy and education females are more backward than males. Educational facilities of both the villages are also not so adequate.