

Chapter - 1

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study :

Tripura, is one of the seven sister states of North East region in India. It is a virgin land for scholars to study, specially, on the peoples of the state. Not only Tripura, but the entire north east is very little known to the people of mainland India, mainly because of its isolation in development and communication. The Muslim population of the region is 23.10 percent of total population. In Tripura they constitute 8.00 percent of the total state population and 2.8 percent of the regional Muslim population (Census: 2001). But they have got little attention of the scholars and researchers. Academic works on the economy, society, culture and religion of the people of north eastern states are concentrated mainly on the tribes of the region. Even the works on religion and culture of the northeast India 'have sidelined the Muslims'.

The historical background of the Muslims in Tripura shows that they are not original inhabitants of the land but settled in the early medieval period. One of the earlier kings of Tripura brought a number of Muslim families along with other Bengali castes of Hindu communities from the Muslim Sultan of Bengal and he arranged their permanent settlement in all over Tripura. According to *Rajmala*, the prince, Ratnafa took the military help of Tugral of Lakhnabati to defeat his brothers and conquer the throne of his father. He was the first king to introduce Muslims in Tripura (Singha: 1997). Since then from time to time, the Muslim Bengalis, like the major Hindu Bengali inhabitants, migrated from the adjacent plain lands. The Tripura was regarded as District of Tipperah or State of Hill Tipperah. Only in 1920, the British government agreed to regard the territory as 'Tripura' instead of Hill Tipperah. However, the early Muslim settlers did not come of higher strata of society with ambition of fortune-making; rather, they came from the down strata of society to be perpetuated in the next generation. During the Muslim invasion from Bengal and Delhi, some of them became landlords and zamindars too. History records their non-fanatic, non-aggressive

nature and conscious care for communal harmony. With their ambition-free life, they carried those socio-cultural values which were traditional and habit-oriented. History also records that Muslim men came forward to participate in modern or English education when it was initiated first by the kings of the state. At that time, though girls of other communities were sent to schools, the Muslims maintained reservation about the education of their girls and women. As a result, they have been lagging behind in all respects of participation in comparison to their own men and even S.C. and S.T. women of Tripura. In real situation, they may be called marginal of marginal groups.

Since the statehood of Tripura in 1971, women have been trying to utilize their rights and privileges conferred by the constitution of India. But Muslim women seem to be far away from this. Till 1980s, there was no special attention by the government or non-government organization to these vast womenfolk who belong to the general category in legal position but backward in real situation. Later in the late ninety, government attention is drawn to this womenfolk belonging to the largest religious minority of the state. Tripura is being a remote and border surrounding area, has its own peculiar problem which can not be solved without their conscious cooperation. The progress and development of this tiny north eastern state like Tripura will be stumbled frequently if the women lag behind. But unfortunately, the vast womenfolk of the Muslim community are not aware of their constitutional rights and status. A number of popular myths exist behind their backwardness. Popular impression is not high about them. The main reason behind this is the lack of sociological information about their religious and social institutions. Imtiaz Ahmed opines that there is little sociological information on the social framework within which Muslim groups operate (quoted in **Moinuddin**: 2000). Hence, this is an appropriate field for exploration with utmost importance. In other states of India like Kerala, Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow), Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar and West Bengal, scholars have taken attempt to account for the realities or constraints of Muslim women. The present study is a modest effort in this direction.

1.2. Theoretical Perspective on Women's Studies :

Theoretical approach to study the women is based on three major perspectives like: i) Structural functional, ii) Marxist and iii) feminist perspectives. The purpose of all these approaches to examine and analyze the status of women in the context of socio-cultural reality and to evaluate the contribution of women in family and society

i) Structural- Functional Perspective :

It is a kind of approach which highlights the inter-relation between women's status and the nature of social system. It views women as a social category and their activities as essentially cultural. Hence, women are to be studied in term of their roles and functions ascribed by the society. It advocates for equal harmonious relation between men and women to continue the social order. This perspective of women's study is mainly influenced by the structural-functional school of the British anthropologists. This theory is not enough to explain the causes of rapid changes in the role and status of women.

ii) Marxist Perspective :

The scholars of Marxian school have analyzed the position of women through the modes of economic production and class-structure of the society (Mondal:2004) According to this school, women's liberation lies in the fight against the capitalistic economic order and bourgeoisie class structure of society. But this perspective to view women as class in the light of class exploitation theory, can not explain sufficiently the reasons for different kinds of injustices against women based on gender relation. Though the issue has been sensitized in the Marxist writings but it could not give the solutions for the oppression of women who belong to all classes of human groups. The abolition of private property and establishment of collective ownership could not solve the problem of women's subordination to men's unilateral authority (Rai: 2004).

Feminist Perspective :

Feminist perspective means the application of gender study to a variety of social phenomena. It considers that men and women are constitutionally equal and potential for same human capability and the appeared differences are the outcome of social institution. Feminism has been divided into some sub orientations like Liberal Feminism, Socialist Feminism, Radical Feminism and Post modern Feminism. It may be mentioned that the Liberal Feminism seeks equality for women adjusting with the men's world in the existing social system. While the Radical Feminism demands independence of women with a total break from the man-made culture and society and views to analyze the Women's issue by the women and for the women. (Young: 1988, Bhadra: 1992, PRIA: 1993, Mondal: 2004, Sharma: 2003).

1.3. Some Conceptual Issues:

To make any research work systematic and meaningful, the important concepts involved with the study needs to be mentioned. The most important concepts used in the study are noted below:

Status and Role: The concept of position, status and role are highly central to any study on women. According to Marvin E. Shaw, 'Position refers to a person's place in the social structure and status refers to the group members' evaluation of that position' (quoted in **Jahangir:** 1991). In the words of Maclver and Page (1967), 'Status is the social position that determines for its possessors; a degree of respect, prestige and influence'. Status refers to the differences between social groups in the social honour and prestige they are given by others. Max Weber (1947) thinks that status divisions often vary independently of class divisions. To Linton (1945), status means the position of an individual—his rights and duties in relation to total society and a role represents the dynamic aspects of a status. When an individual puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into efforts, he is performing a role. Thus the two-status and role are inseparable. Parson (1951) concludes that Status and role are very much interlinked. A particular social status involves not a single associated role but an array of associated roles. Thus, he describes 'role set' and 'status set or

status sequences' for understanding the concepts of status and role meaningfully (quoted in **Bhattacharya: 2002**).

Status of women means, as said by B.N. Mukharjee, a set of expectations regarding the attributes pertaining to the duties and responsibility of women in their role as a daughter, student, wife, mother, worker, head of the household etc. and the actions, rewards or rights which they expect from others in these positions (quoted in **Jahangir:1991**). Women are to face role-conflict more than that of men in the mothering role (or house keeper role) and career- women role.

Gender Role: This refers to a social practice associated with masculinity and femininity - what an earlier generation termed 'sex role'. Gender as a system of social meaning ascribed to physical differences, is distinguished from sex which is only a natural attribute. Gender role is a social construction and useful for challenging discrimination which is not specifically sex-based. When roles are conceived of as static and unchanging then gender role suffers from the same problem that is for all role theory. One can cite an example of incompatible and conflicting statuses of women in our society which provides a 'notorious example' of this e.g. women have equal status with men but they are expected to achieve the status of a 'good house keeper' (**Bhattacharya : 2002**). The study of gender-relation is prerequisite for understanding the situation of women in different society and culture. The concept is linked with ethnic, religious and class identities and dynamic in nature as being always influenced by the change of socio-economic forces. The gender relation among the Muslims is to be treated in the light of historical factors associated with the patriarchal values in south East Asia.

Patriarchy: The concept of patriarchy essentially means the rule of the father or the patriarch, i.e. the male member of the household and society. Women under patriarchy are obviously valued as sub-ordinate to men. Patriarchy is not only a ruling system of society but also a value regulating the ways of thinking and behavior of the people. Since the days of pre-history, patriarchy exists. It is perpetuated through the process of institutionalization and legitimization in the socio political and legal system

of the society. It leads women to internalize the patriarchal values and ways of thinking or behaving in society (Mondal: 2004).

In the Muslim history also, these dominant ideology of patriarchy was operative in society and its practice certainly displayed the feature of inequalities, asymmetry and domination. In this way, the role of Muslim women was definitely influenced by the pervading system of tradition with patriarchal values which ultimately determines the gender meaning in Islam. “As a result, the existence of sexually egalitarian concepts in religious beliefs and practices of Islam does not necessarily signify the existence of sexual inequality in social structure of Muslim society” (Mondal: 2004). Actually the law of the Text or law of the country is not necessarily the measurement of women status. Traditions and customs are more powerful than law or religion to determine the status of women. Hence any study on women status ‘must identify the cultural determinants and the processes through which a person becomes a woman in the cultural context of her own community’ (Patel and Behera: 1999). In a patriarchy ruled society, the ‘Muslim cultures prefer to consider men and women as distinct members of humanity’ and ‘how could the Islamic intellectual ethos develop without giving clear and responding attention to the female voice’ (Wadud:1999).

Empowerment: The concept of empowerment is a recent addition to the Women study. It is a means as well as goal of self development. It is a process of generating the capabilities in a person to exercise command over one’s resources. Women’s empowerment is a model of gender analysis to trace their increasing equality and access to development with all potentialities. Empowerment of women in the institutional form of structural change is introduced among the women of India in the grassroot levels after the 73rd amendment of the constitution.

Gender Development: This is a process for the balanced development of society on the basis of equitable distribution of national resources between men and women in an integrated partnership of power relations. It consists of two major approaches e.g. i) women in development (WID) — a welfare approach for women emerged, in 1970s. It focuses mainly on women as passive recipients to remove the discrimination

against them and ii) Gender and Development (GAD) — an approach of women's development emerged in 1980s. It views women as active participants in development empowering them against unequal relationship with men and their common sharing (Mondal: 2004).

1.4. Statement of the Problem:

There is very little information exclusively on the women of Tripura belonging to different communities of ethnic and religious groups. For general study or a comparative study between Muslim and Hindu women, tribal and non tribal women, it should have adequate statistical data on various aspects of women life e.g. state of education, drop out problem, legal status of women in family and society, marital status, employment, political participation and above all crimes against women. The dearth of reliable information on women study is not only true for Tripura but also for the whole north east region. This appears to be the cause of impediments towards detailed analysis in the present context and also the cause of backwardness. In this scenario, undoubtedly, the study on Muslim women in Tripura is a very new one and it requires a laborious and careful collection of data, closed scrutiny of those data, identifying the real identity of women community in the multi ethnic religious society. Although there is a little work on the plight of scheduled tribe women, there is no work done on scheduled caste women or any other forward and backward community women. The position of Muslim women by the side of the Bengali Hindu women and tribal women of neighboring communities is an interesting study area not only because of their socio economic backwardness but also religious prejudices inflicted on them.

1.5. Review of Literature:

Although there is existing a vast literature on women status in different societies of India, the theme of social status on Muslim women is a neglected field of study in Indian Sociology. The pertinent issues of their life are still unexplored. A brief analysis of existing literature on the status of women in India shows that such studies have lack of sufficient references to the real situation. Studies conducted so far on the status of Muslim women have not examined thoroughly the socio economic factors

responsible for their social backwardness. The problems which are considered as debating issues are usually avoided for various reasons. So the theme suffers from lack of serious study and dearth of comprehensive sociological knowledge. Most of the scholars choose only one or two aspects on the subject. The scholars of other branches of knowledge have partial or one sided view in scope, or historical and non sociological approach. (Ahmed: 2000) Here exists a research gap. The scope of women study has been widened by all branches of knowledge since 1975. Some studies on Indian Women like biography, auto biography, stories, articles, feature news etc. provides information to understand the situation of women in different aspects. But the empirical studies covering all aspects of Muslim women's life are very scanty. In the context of north east region, much is known about the tribal societies but a little is known about the non tribal societies and their women, specially the Muslim women. Books on this particular study are not easy available. However, literature consulted for present purpose may be classified in the following ways:

- i) Books and articles on Islam with particular reference to women's issues.
- ii) Books and articles on Indian women and women abroad;
- iii) Books, articles and references relating to Muslims and Muslim women of India.

Among the vast literature of Islam and Islamic culture, some selected books and journals were very helpful to understand the Histriology of Quran, the ideals of Quranic Ayats and the Articles of Faith in sociological background, the European views on Islam, the life and mission of the Prophet, different interpretations and misinterpretations of Ayats, difference between theory and practice in varieties and also the constraints of a minority community in the background of historical setback. Besides, an overview of some important studies of recent time, conducted on the Women of India, particularly among the Muslims, by different scholars will help us to high-light the major areas and evaluate the neglected areas for further exploration.

However, the review of some important works on the Islam, the Indian women including the Muslim women and the Muslims of India are noted below:

i). Literature on Islam and Women:

Ahmad (1990) published a book as “*Life of Muhammad*” which is a part of his great book “Introduction to the study of the holy Quran “. On popular demand, it was previously published in different countries for several times. The contents are divided into as many as 220 numbers in precise titles and stanzas. One can choose any of the contents for the time and can go on in this way till the book is finished. Each and every part is important to know the Great man Hazrat Muhammad full of vast human qualities like truthfulness, patience in adversity, frank and straight forward dealing, fond of good company, overlooking the fault of others and treatment of kindness and feeling. The life of Muhammad has been narrated in the historical background of many wars in Arab, Iran, Syria, Egypt and many countries of west Europe. Islam won the countries by its light of knowledge and love added with the sword. As an encounter of the European critics regarding the marriages of Muhammad, the author points out that the devotion and love of the wives to the prophet “which proved that his married life was pure, unselfish and spiritual”, and also high mindedness of his character.

Hameed (1980) has edited a book titled ‘*Islam at a Glance*’ which comprises of ten essays contributed by different scholars. The essays titled are General History of Islam, Tauhid- oneness of God; Prophet Muhammad –The Ideal Man, Beliefs and Practices of a Muslim, Islamic Ethics, Family Life in Islam, The Islamic Vision of Inner Life, Islam and Human Rights, Islamic concept of Human Equality and the caste system and Economics in the Islamic Framework. These acquaint us with the basic features of Islam.

Kausar (2001) contributes an article titled “*Debate on the Political Participation of Women and Interpretation of Islamic Text*” in Islam and the Modern Age. She observes that ‘many arguments that are put forward by the Muslim Scholars who are against the headship of women seem either debatable or rejectionable’. So she argues in assertion that there is not a single verse in the Quran which states that women is forbidden from the headship position, which means that Quran is silent over the issue. Moreover, the prophetic traditions cited against the participation of woman are weak and not authentic, as reported by other scholars. Kausar presents a comparative

approach to an old but relevant topic like right of Headship of women discussed by two groups of scholars in the community. The arguments of such religious-ethical justification of leadership of women in family as well as in society help to enrich the reasoning view of the readers.

Mustafa (1989), in her Bengali book '*Islam-e-Narir Adhikar*', has presented an illustrated account of women life in the light of the Quran and textual books. She has explained: the real meaning of *pardah* in Islam, mahr as an indispensable part of Muslim marriage and, polygyny in Indian society with a reference to the marriages of Hazrat Muhammad the author has also explained the provision of divorce for both men and women, divorce and provision of Iddat period, and maintenance, Education, Family peace and birth control in the light of Islam. The author criticizes the role of some social leaders of the community who misleads the ignorant people by misinterpreting the Islamic injunctions she asserts that true interpretation of Islam will save the people from so called civilization of the West.

Raj and Sharma (1995) edited a volume '*Islam and women*'— *An Encyclopedia of Women Society and Culture Series*. This book comprises of eight chapters as an attempt to collect information on Islam, Modernization in India and the role of Muslim women in Indian society. In the second chapter — the Life of Muhammad, the authors have high lighted on the prophet's unique conquest over the hearts of the followers and his victorious march as a leader of mankind which cannot be denied. His marriages in the late age has been defended by two standpoints : i) rulers have special privileges supported by many examples from the history of European monarchy and others; ii) all marriages were forced upon him due to different circumstantial reasons, mainly the cause of service to God and for 'the preservation of the morality of his people'. European views on Islam is an important chapter which has extracts and excerpts from European writers including the writing of a most learned Christian author named Dr. Henry Stubbe who died on 12th July, 1676. His manuscript was copied later and published in 1911 under the name of "An account of the Rise and Progress of Mahomedanism with the life of Mahomed" A chapter is there on the details view of

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on Islam. The chapter- Islamic Modernisation entertains the different approaches of Sir Syed Ali, Iqbal and Azad. The last chapter –Islam and Women in India presents mainly the legal status of Muslim Women in marriage, divorce and pardah along with the cruel stories of Mughal Harem.

Ranganathananda (1940) delivered a lecture on the prophet's birthday in Rangoon, capital of Burma, now Myanmar on April 21, 1940. The content was about the Universal Element of the Prophet's Message. "*The Message of Prophet Muhammad*" is published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995, including this lecture in chapter 3, on the occasion of 47th Martyrdom day of Mahatma Gandhi. The book emphasizes on the eternal principles of tolerance and respect for all religious Faiths— Sarva Dharma Samabhava and highlights those verses of the Quran which says that God is one or 'let there be no compulsion in religion'.

Sahay (1996) has contributed an article, titled "Dowry and Dower in Muslim Society" in '*Indian Anthropologist*'. It is a study among the Muslim Telis of Delhi. The author observes that dower being a compulsory part of Muslim marriage is now replaced by dowry. In her another article "Divorce in Muslim Society, Laws and Reality" in *Indian Anthropologist*, 1998, she has focused on the gap between the theoretical aspect of Law and its practice in reality. The truth revealed in this article is not only limited within the Teli community, it has a wide campus to be referred in other sections of the Muslims in India.

Sen (1936) did a Bengali version of the Quran named *Quran Sharif*. For this splendid works, he was regarded as Maulavi Bhai Girish Chandra Sen. Being inspired by Acharya Keshab Chandra Sen, Girish Chandra wrote this book which was published first in 1936 with an introduction of Sri Sati Chandra Chattapadhaya. Many other editions of this version were followed later on. Girish Chandra joined in the group of 'Samannoy Dharma' (union of all religions) in 1874 and started to write the version in 1879. A commenting letter on this full version was sent to the author by Ahmad Ulla and other Arabic teachers, just after the publication, deserves to be mentioned: 'As

we are Mohadans by faith and birth our best and hearty thanks are due to the author for his disinterested and patriotic effort and great troubles he has taken to diffuse the meaning of our Holy and Sacred religious book the Koran, to the public'. This splendid work for its true meaning of the Text is elaborate with notes, interpretations and comments with reference to the historical wars, (wars of Badar and Ohawd etc) and the anti propaganda of opponent groups and many incidents and happenings of the time. The Quran was revealed to the prophet as a result of his twenty three years' devotion to God. The present form is possible through the preservation of many followers since before his death. One meaning of Quran is 'Do Read' and another meaning is 'Message of God.' It has 114 surahs (divisions) and each surah consists of several *Ayats*. Woman is dealt especially by the 4th chapter named *Surah Nesa* and also by *surah Bakra* (2nd chapter), and also in other *ayats*. Each *ayat* has its reference to the contemporary facts, problems, stories and incidents. For example, the ayat 220 of 2nd chapter prohibits a Muslim to marry an idolatress until she is converted to Islam. This has a reference to the love story of Enac (idolatress) and Masvod (converted) as well as the story of Abdulla and his female slave who was a Kafri. Another ayat of this surah, 225, prohibits the man to go to his wife at least four months, as a punishment of his unrestrained talaq to wife and this has a reference to the frequent talaq to the same wife or wives in the pre-Islamic days. These *notes* are very helpful to enrich a researcher of sociological approach.

Subbamma (1987) writes a book '*Atrocities on Women*' which consists of three chapters namely Human Rights: Women's Rights, Personal Laws and Women and Atrocities on Women. The second chapter deals with the position of women in different Personal Laws like Hindu, Muslim, Christian and *Parsi*. No doubt that personal laws pertaining to different religions determine their position in different ways on basic issues of life viz. right of succession, adoption and guardianship and all matrimonial matters. The author has a comparative approach to deal every issue related with woman. According to the author, Prophet Muhammad had contributed a lot toward the betterment of women in a patriarchal society. At that time he counseled men to have

a respectable attitude to women (e.g. Muslim men address their wives as 'ji' with due respect). Undoubtedly he categorized the women as human beings of second order and admitted "men are the guardians of the women", as he sanctioned special rights for husbands and always looked at the issue from the viewpoint of men. Thus Subbamma compares it with Hinduism and says that, women are not entitled to individuality and independence. In the thought process of the Hindu, it is the husband that is entitled to think independently and act on his own, and it is the duty of the wife to follow him without demur. Christianity assigned high place to the superiority of man. The author mentions that a Christian husband treats his wife with compassion and conducts in a charitable manner, but would not give up his supremacy. The Parsi women are accorded some sort of respect in the amended Personal Laws of 1936. In the old Zorastrain life it might have been different. She recommends that personal laws (viz, Islamic Law of 641 A.D., Christian Marriage Law dates back to 1872) which are discriminatory should be changed.

Wadud (1999) calls for a re-reading the sacred Text from a woman's perspective in her book, *Qur'an and Women*. What concerns the author most to write the book is that the traditional interpretation of the Holy Text is always inclusion of male experiences, vision, desires and needs of women either directly or indirectly. While woman's experience, vision, desire are excluded from the area of interpretation. According to her, though there is voiceless ness of women during the critical period of developing Quran- interpretation, it should not be equated with voiceless ness in the Text itself. This assertion of the author's non-traditional interpretation, particularly on the issue of woman helps to understand a distinct approach. Her next concern is the shortcomings of exiting studies. She points out that usually the issue of woman in Islam dealt by the scholars is mainly the reaction to the severe handicaps of woman as an individual member and a member of society but they failed to draw a distinction between the interpretation and the text. So she tries to overcome this shortcoming in her comprehensive analysis of the Quran

ii). Literature on Indian Women and Women Abroad :

Chakraborty (1998) in her Ph.D thesis titled "*Economic Participation of Rural Tribal Women—A Case*" described the socio-economic condition of tribal working women in Tripura ^{engaged} in the traditional and non traditional ^{mode of} production . The study focuses on the economic aspects of tribal women in the change of the community life

Harish (1993) presents a unique collection of twenty four autobiographies entitled *Indian Women's Autobiographies* with a deep analytical approach founded on the theoretical framework of Women Study. It includes successful and unsuccessful women of royal dynasty, upper middle and middle class families of India till 1947. Except a few persons like Durgabai Deshmukh and Kamaladevi Chattapadhaya "whose mothers and grand mothers were earliest feminists and hence backed them in everything" and women like Vijoya Laksmi, Nayantara, Tara Ali Baig and Renuka Roy who hailed from highly educated and advanced families, seventy percent of these autobiographies tells the life of Indian women. They 'were born 'parai' and hence to be discriminated'] 'Only some self conscious women' have noticed the silent sufferings, agonies or forbearance before the husband's power fixation and protested against the torments of daily subservience's, in the hang down look, the lowered eyes or tears before the loud voice of their men (**Muluk Raj Anand** : 1993). Childhood of these women is marked by the marginality of existence with rigorous training to cultivate the so called womanish qualities. They lived under the domination of patriarchal values which are carried on not only by their 'pitha' and 'pathi' but also by the women themselves like Isvani's step mother, grand mother in law, and her sister Lita who could never imagine the 'freedom' so abstract. The story of Isvani being one of the autobiographies is a story of a girl in Bombay, born in 1920 in a famous Shia Khoja family. She was "exceptionally rebellious individual, very different from her mother, sister and other women of her times and "still she is very much a part of women's tradition." When she was pressurized to give up her religion and to accept the in-laws religion, she felt that her Oxford educated husband, apparently modern, "has same ideas his grandfather and his father have about women.....he would never change —I must divorce him"

Indira and Deepak Kumar Behera (1999) have edited an important work on women study entitled *Gender and Society in India* by two volumes. The first volume concentrates on Theme Papers and Urban Studies while the second on the Rural and Tribal Studies. Vol.1. presents the contents divided into vii sections which enlightens on the Gender and Knowledge system in India, Women and Religion (e.g. 'Women In Religious Cult: the Baul Sadhikas' by R.N.Sarkar), the Status of Widow among the Veerasaivas of Karnataka Pradesh (referring to a pro-women movement of 12th century A.D), Women and Work providing information on the conditions of female workers of unorganized sector, Household Industry (e.g. Jari, Embroidery), marginalized position of casual laborers and entrepreneurs; most of the jari workers are Muslim women; section iv deals with Women and Education in the perspective of gender-biased socialization through the primary school curriculum in Karnataka, sections v and vi devote on Women population, Health, Marriage and Fertility, the Working Mother and Home Management. The last section deals with Women and Oppression—a study in a slum, violence and women in Kerala, Sex workers in Bangalore (a socio-economic profile), the impact of Feminist Ideology and the care of Elderly. *Gender and Society in India* (Vol.II) deals with some articles like Women in Rural Assam, working women in rural Orissa, Crab Fisher women of Sundarban in West Bengal, Goa, women coffee plantation workers of Chikmagalur district of Karnataka ; some articles are on Early Marriage and Reproductive Health Status of Women in Rural Karnataka, Panchayat Raj, Women and the Problematic Empowerment with some case- data from Gujrat and Madhaya Pradesh ; Socio-economic profile of women leaders in Panchayat Raj Institution of Karnataka etc. Section 2 deals with the Tribal Women - the linguist minority groups, their status, role and impact of Development Initiatives. It includes the study of women among selected tribes of Orissa, Madhaya Pradesh, Himaloyans, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh and at last Manipur of north east region. However, this voluminous study shows that women though contributing to the survival and sustenance of their society are not well placed and recognized in proper evaluation; they are vulnerable, subject of harassment and exploitation of different types by their men or society. It can not go un- noticed that

there is no study on religious minority or any tribal groups of Tripura. In other words, study on Muslim women has been bypassed by the scholars.

Mondal (1997) in his Ph.D. Thesis titled "*An Enquiry into Economic and Social Dimension of Divorce: An Empirical Study*", has investigated on the socio-economic reasons behind the break off marital relation among the women of West Bengal and Tripura. Researcher has selected his respondents mainly from the Howra district of west Bengal. For Tripura, he used mostly the census data of both national and state governments. This is a micro level study concentrated on the family disorganization—formal or informal, desertion and divorces and the after effects problems among the Hindu women of lower social strata. This study helps to realize the problem of divorce as it reflects the unexpected pattern of behavior of an individual. Though it is itself not a deviance but it invites some consequent social problems which may bring deviance. The right of divorce of Indian women has been accepted as a part of normal value system but not obtained easily for the complex legal and social system.

Sahu (2000) has authored a book entitled *Women's Liberation and Human Rights*. It is an interesting account of the Women's liberation movement into a chronological sequence of events. The book deals with the History of Human Rights, Women's Rights Today, Women's Rights in Russia and other socialist countries. These help to learn the background of the circumstances that have brought about the women's movement in the world. The other important contents of the book are Women in Government and Politics, Women and Social Progress, Women in Developing Countries (Asia, Africa and Latin America) and in India. It is learnt that in North Africa and many countries in Asia which are predominantly Muslim populated, women remain there outside the public life.

Sogra (1994) has edited a book entitled *Women in Management: Champions of Change*. The book is a documentary evidence of the significant increase in the participation of women in the organized sector of production in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Malaysia and Canada during the two decades of 1970—1990. The book is actually

the record of the papers presented in a workshop of AMDISA (Association of Management and Development Institution in South Asia.) held in Dhakha, Bangladesh, 1994 and divided into two themes: Women as Managers—the attitudinal study, and Women as Entrepreneurs—the study on the transitional period when the women, especially in South Asian context, have dared to break the tradition of one dimensional role of housewife and reached to the multidimensional roles—from the status of burden of the family to the economic productive member of family.

Statkova (1974) presented First-hand information on “*Women under Socialism*” enriched with facts, figures on equal rights in the G D R. There was a great success in work participation among women within a short historical period of time. Behind their success, there was cooperation from all sides e.g. husband’s co-operation to relieve her from the household chores, chairman’s co-operation to help her intellectually so that she can make the work easier and can sharpen the sense of what is essential. The best dowry to them was education and vocation. Taboo-free selection of vocation and further training schemes helped them not to avoid the great responsibility. The book had a Documentation- part which highlighted the socialistic measures for the welfare of the female workers in the country.

iii). Literature on Indian Muslims and Muslim Women in India:

Ahmed (1976) has edited a series of four volumes in the late twentieth century, namely, *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India (1973)*, *Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India (1976)*, *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India (1981)* and *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India (1983)*. The scholars of the series in their various studies attempt for sociological relocation of the Indian Muslims in the backdrop of partition episode and critical assessment of the empirical validity of the ‘Islamicists’ definition of Indian Muslims. The study repudiates the popular notion that treats the Muslims as monolith. The book—*Family, Kinship and Marriage* has contained essays on Khojas of Bombay, Meos of Rajasthan



and Haryana, Mopals of South west coast of India, Muslims of Tamil, U.P, Laccadives and Rural West Bengal from which one can learn about the varieties of tradition, culture and ethnicity among the people under same anchor of Islam.

Ahméd (1981) has provided a comprehensive account of the situation of the Muslims in Bengal during the last part of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century in his book "*The Bengal Muslims (1871-1906) : A Quest for Identity*". He has brought out the differences between the upper class Muslims of Bengal and those of North India or between the elites and rural of Bengal in the plea of caste distinction. He points out the complexities of social structure of Muslim community in West Bengal and holds the opinion that homogeneity of the Muslims is rather a myth. Another truth is revealed by the author that Muslims were not exploited or deprived in everywhere. Though the Muslims are not a homogeneous group, all the upper class Muslims (Mughal Ashrafs and lesser Ashrafs or mullahs and pirs) were organized only for political reasons. The author points out the impact of Reform Movement on the Muslims of Bengal for establishing identity consciousness. He concludes that the main reason behind the Muslim Separatism lies not in religion or political institution but in the attempt of Islamizing the community. Certain Hindu extremist postures in addition to the policy of colony rulers gave birth of a favourable atmosphere to the growth of a separate Islamic Ideology or separatism. This book helps to understand the Bengali Muslims in a historical perspective.

Ahmed (2002) in an article titled A Demographic Profile of the Muslims in Northeast India in *Islam and the Mordern Age*, has presented a demographic account of the seven sisters like Assam, Manipur, Meghaloya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh which are surrounded by China, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The region is connected to the rest of India by an 18 miles corridor like Siliguri neck and it constitutes 3.5% of the total population of the country. Assam is a most populous state and Tripura is a state where Bengalis outnumber the tribes. The region holds a considerable number of Muslim populations but they have no proportionate representation in the Assembly Houses (e.g. Tripura or Manipur), and also in other fields. Though the Muslims of Assam have contributed their share of

prominent figures to the nation, 'many of them have been forgotten'. Sociological information about the Muslims of the region is very scanty, not only because of the lack of academic works but also because of the Muslim politicians and intellectuals who fail to address the real concern of the community. As a result of all these, the author comments, "Muslim identity is jeopardized through deliberate human manipulation or negligence".

Ahmed (2002) has contributed an article "Status of Women in Manipur" in *Islam and the Modern Age*. The theme reminds the old but yet relevant idea that "Woman's cause is man's," quoted from Alfred Tennyson. The article first serves some demographic and socio-economic information about the Manipuri women in general and the Muslim community in Manipur. Manipuri women participated in political agitation against the British economic policies and atrocities on women. They are very industrious as opposite of their men. They do all the work of buying and selling in public and carrying all the articles to be sold. In the house they are engaged in weaving and spinning and hence the mainstay of the family circles. The Muslim women being focus of this article are found as "having shared a common and unique bond with their non-Muslim sisters of the state" and they play a great role in the economic sphere. Like their non Muslim sisters they possess a good sense of business. They assemble in the market place in morning and evening. They maintain an age-old indigenous economic institution, called 'marup'—a cooperative credit and saving organization. But despite their important economic role, Muslim women have not obtained correction. In the tradition bound Muslim community, they have been denied their meaningful role in family and society. As traditions are often accepted as a matter of religious belief, author rightly points out that the reason behind their disadvantageous position in all respects lies not in Islam but in lack of correct information and knowledge about the injunctions of the Quran. The changes taking place in securing the rights and privileges for the Muslim women in Manipur are regarded by the author as positive development. The article is concluded suggesting a 'need to evolve a mechanism to tap women's resource'. At last, the author hints about some changes in the Manipuri Muslim society of very recent time.

Ahmad (2003) has authored a book titled *Muslim Attitude Towards Family Planning*. This is an enlarged form of his M. Phil thesis — Social Resistance to Family Planning among the Muslims. He has concentrated his study on the dynamics and resistance to family planning in a Muslim cultural setup, with the background of population explosion or over- population growth rate. The fertility behavior of the community people holding largest minority in India is very important for study. Being associated with certain norms and values, fertility behavior shapes the higher or lower fertility rate. The author has pointed out the variables – quantitative or qualitative, related with this behavior (e.g. age of marriage level of educational attainment, urbanization, income religious beliefs etc.) with the purpose of finding out the groups and their ‘differential predisposition’ towards family planning and ‘the role played by different socio-economic variables in the receptivity of each groups’. The objectives of study as the author says, are to: ascertain the extent of knowledge of family planning among Muslim women; their attitude towards family planning; extent of adoption of the means; causes of social resistance to family planning or to reveal the social values that makes for higher fertility among them; and at last, to correlate the variables e.g. better socio-economic achievement and better planned parenthood and awareness of the problem of the country. The study is conducted in Araria district located in North East Bihar, ‘characterized by mainly agricultural economy’ which is the mainstay of the Muslims and 55 percent of the town population is concentrated in a few segregated wards.

The contributors point out the immense diversities existing among them. They observe that marriages are conducted without signing in the Nikahnama : that arbitrary divorce is not rampant among the Muslims as received beliefs and understandings; that tripple talaq in one sitting is not common and frequent as it is assumed in popular saying. Some papers have contributed to the comparative study between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Ahmad, in the introductory chapter, confined his discussion on the law and then shifted to the social reality i.e. actual status of Muslim women. He advocates not for any side of the debates but for the need to explore the possibilities

within Islamic tradition. It is not denied in the papers of the contributors that there is remarked difference between the theoretical position of Muslim women and the actual status. Ahmad pleads for the efforts to improve the socio-economic and educational conditions of Muslim women and ultimately it will reduce the atrocities on Muslim women in actual life.

Begum (1992) has conducted an empirical study on the Muslim women of two villages in Howra district of west Bengal, entitled '*Women in Muslim Society of West Bengal: A Study in Aspects of Their Status and Role*'. The work including some case study is an attempt to analyze the socio-cultural, religious and economic aspects of women life. Examining the role of Muslim women in different social context, she concludes that the major socio- economic factors are responsible for the backwardness of women and the uplift of their social position through dynamic roles.

Engineer (1987) has edited a volume of book titled '*Status of Women in Islam*'. This is an important issue of the present time, especially after the historic judgment of the Supreme Court in the Shah Bano case in 1986. The volume is a collection of four articles from noted scholars including the editor himself. The articles throw light on the position of women from theological point of view, examine the Muslim Personal Law from historical –political point of view and argue in favor of change for enhanced status of women. Engineer has drawn attention, in his article, to the dynamics of change as well as sociological explanation of the sources of laws of the Quran during the pre-Islamic and post- Islamic days of prophet's time. Engineer holds the view that "the progress is never unilinear as the study of the social dynamics show" and "the Islamic society became feudalized soon after the death of the prophet and end of Caliphate and women came to be subjugated more and more. She gradually lost even that status which she had won through Quran." The purpose of this volume is to reach the first step of broad consensus among the people of the society.

Guha (1992) has studied on Maria Muslims of Assam in his Thesis titled *The Habitat, Economy and Society*. The Marias is one of the ethnic groups of north east India who are Muslims by Faith. Though it is a Socio- geographical study and limited

in application from sociological viewpoint, it has enlightened about the growth and development of a Muslim tribe related with the history of Assam.

Hasan and Menon (2005) edited a volume titled *In a Minority: Essays on Muslim Women in India*. This has emerged out of a project work supported by the Ford foundation of India. A survey namely Muslim Women's Survey (MWS) was conducted to map the diversity of Muslim women in India. The various issues raised by this survey have been discussed by the invited authors of India and abroad in this volume. This volume is a pioneer-work to establish the fact that Muslim women in India is not a separate 'species' rather she has some traits or characteristics and situations like other woman of other communities. The essays have focused on the gap between legal discourse and actual situation. It is pointed out that the Muslim Personal Law (MPL), codified law and case law, acts in favor of male partners in divorce and it holds the paternalistic view.

With the experience and observance, the contributors like to prove that a Muslim woman suffers in the same way as their sisters in other communities because of piratical value system. Though Islam has legal sanction to the property right of women but it is not easy for her to avail as it happens in case of Hindu woman. So the real situation for both is same. A Muslim woman has legal right to have harmonious conjugal life but she has to bear all hardship to maintain marriage or to obtain divorce or to get remarried. As in case of Hindus, Muslim girls of affluent families in western U.P. have got enrolment at increased number in the formal schools. While the rural poor girls have no alternative but to be enrolled only into the Madrasa schools which involves low cost and Islamic education available. The essays in this volume have also dealt with politically un representation of women, the role of media and ineffectiveness of religious laws for women in life. So the volume focuses on the fact that poverty affects women more than religious laws. The main thing of this book is to bring into light that Muslim women are in disadvantaged position from three sides: as member of the minority community, as women and as poor despite the various regional and ethnic diversities among the Muslim and Hindu women, they stand in the same footing of social injustices.

Hussain (1989) has presented an analytical discussion regarding the situation of Indian Muslims in his book titled *The Muslim Question in India*. The various dimensions of the theme e.g. demographic, socio-political etc. have been discussed by the author penetrating into the sensitive issues like secular and non secular articulation. He has pointed out the bankruptcy of the Indian Muslims in different aspects of socio-political life.

Jahangir (1991) in his empirical research work titled '*Muslim Women in West Bengal : Socio-Economic and political Status*' has attempted to find out the problems of Muslim women, the 'most underprivileged group' in the society. Both financial and cultural reasons are found as hindrances to their educational and economic backwardness. Chapter VI deals with Political Orientation of Muslim Women. The author has formulated a status scale to measure political awareness and attitudes to politics among the Muslim women e.g. political participation and its relation with education, employment, marital status, place of residence etc. It is found that the level of political orientation of the women is not encouraging at all. The data is collected from a district of west Bengal, i.e. Murshidabad 'which is unique in composition and background'. The low position of Muslim women is revealed by their negligible role in taking decision of marriage, family relation, family planning, education and employment..

Menon (1974): *Status of Muslim Women in India* by Indu Menon is a study of early seventies, conducted in four districts of Kerala in south India. Her study area is divided into two major comparative set-ups: rural and urban. By a method of simple Random Sampling, she has chosen 450 Muslim women and 150 men as her respondents. The main objective of the study is to examine whether education has any significant role in determining or raising the status of Muslim women in the context of social change in India. Education is chosen as the only important criteria to measure high and low status of women related with other factors also. She attempts to identify some demographic factors influencing the attainment of education like age, income, education of parents, especially mother's education and some socio-religious or

attitudinal factors which hinder the lift of women's status despite their educational attainment. The impact of education is measured on securing job facility, economic rights, independent participation in family administration through budgeting, buying property and taking decision in children's carrier and marriage, maintaining good relation with the husband, controlling the size of family, participating in politics or casting of vote in election, moving freely, coming out of veil, reading newspapers etc.

Some of her important findings are: a) the custom of *pardah* and the traditional role of wife and mother are two main obstacles to the attainment of education and improvement of status; b) Muslim society in general underestimate the education of women as they lack of knowledge about the meaningful role of women; c) education of mother has more impact on children specially girl children ; d) girls can continue education only because of the father's initiative but not of their own.; e) regarding the objective of girls' education, parents are not very clear. Some aims at getting a job, some for improving the family status and some to acquire knowledge. Lastly she proves her hypothesis that education is a determining factor in every sphere of women's life.

Mondal (1997) has in his credit an extensive empirical work titled '*Educational Status of Muslims: Problems, Prospects and Priorities*'. The data is collected from six villages of six districts in west Bengal (covering southern and northern parts of the state) e.g Digholtali-Minaguri village of Coochbihar district, Sihale of Dinajpur, Kastore of Malda, Nagar of Murshidabad, Bansjore of Birbhum and Boersing of 24 parganas. The study is an analysis of both subjective and objective reasons responsible for the backwardness of the Muslim in education. It provides much information on religious or informal education along with the different levels of formal education. A separate chapter deals with the education of Muslim women adding an investigation of Parent's perception towards the education of daughters and also the objectives of Women's education. One of the important findings of the author is that "Higher Education is significantly lacking among the women of six villages under investigation." However, the author is convinced that 'the stigma of educational

backwardness among the Muslim women is a situational emergence aggravated by the behavior of the people.

Mondal (2005) has analysed the traditional role of Muslim women with the forces of change and the effects on their life, in one of his recent publications, namely, '*Rural Muslim Women: Role and Status*'. It is an empirical work conducted in a village of Darjeeling district of north Bengal in west Bengal. The name of village is Kawakhali situated under Matigara Gram Panchayat in Siliguri subdivision of the district of Darjeeling. It is a Muslim dominated village with 358 Muslim populations (4.00%) distributed in scattered way in the Terai plains. The percentage of female population is 47.20 percent and the sex ratio is 894. This is an economically backward village where agriculture is the main occupation. Some important findings of the study are as follows: As regards participation in public life, the representation of Muslim women is almost non-existence. No priority for the education of girls though a few girls of present generation are going for education. Though there is lower age at marriage for girls, it does not affect much their fertility rate. Age at marriage for present generation is changing slowly. Practice of dowry is increasing. Pardah practice is there but not so rigid. They are poor in political awareness though participation in voting is quite popular among them. Social situation is not satisfactory. Economically they are dependent on men. They are hindered by their illiteracy and heavy work load. They do only the inside works. Apparently they seem to be in lower status, but the author finds out the 'concealed power and position of women in the functioning of Muslim society. 'Their invisible role and functions help to sustain the society and heritage of culture'. They enjoy autonomy in the sphere of ascribed roles and they are yet to reach the achieved roles in the society.

Mondal (1997) has added a new contribution to the study on the Muslims of Eastern, particularly North-eastern part of India in his book entitled, *Muslims of Siliguri Aspects of Their Society, Culture and Relationship with the Metropolis*. Siliguri, as a Gateway to North-east India and second most important commercial centre of West Bengal is no doubt a place of study for its cosmopolitan nature contributed by the

multiethnic group of people. Author of the book concentrates his study on the Muslims of Siliguri who belong to one of these ethnic groups constituting four percent of the city's population. The author informs us that the structure of the organizations of the Muslim society in the metropolis of Siliguri is not a monolithic type. The Muslims of Siliguri are combination of various groups and subgroups at both macro and micro levels on the basis of their place of origin ethnic history, nature of occupation etc. Mondal has given information about fifteen distinct ethnic and occupational Muslim groups inhabited in Siliguri. He has evaluated their contribution for the growth of the city through their participation in occupational specialization of diverse categories. Due to their poor educational attainment and poor economic background, they have failed to develop their social position in Siliguri. Majority Muslim habitant are Hindustani or Urdu speaking people, though many of them can speak in Bengali for adapting and functional purposes. In a Bengali dominated area like Siliguri, they live in cultural isolation; language problem is a serious obstacle for their education in lower and higher levels. However, the author has noted the changes in their socio-cultural life due to the impact of dynamic socio-cultural environment of the city.

Moinuddin (2000) has authored a monograph entitled *Divorce and Muslim Women*. This is an empirical research work from sociological approach instead of legal or any ideal viewpoint. The study tries to explore the factors contributing the practice of divorce and separation, the manner in which the stability of marriage is threatened, the causes due to which it persists, what role the kinsmen and social relations play in trying to recon ciliate between the spouses and lastly, the consequences or after-effects of the spouses, specially the position of these women in the society where negative attitude to women prevails. It attempts to ascertain the empirical situation on the divorce rates examining the provision of triple Talaque, operation of 'Khula' divorce- (a unique right of Muslim women) and the 'gender unjust' Muslim Personal Law. The complicacies involved with the exercise of the right of Khula for poor women are bypassed by the scholar. However the data collected from two gram panchayats of two districts of West Bengal, suggests for a larger framework to understand the social phenomenon like divorce.

Roy (1989): "*Status of Muslim women in North India*" is an empirical study on women of two big cities like Delhi and Lucknow. The main thrust of this study conducted in seventies is to find out the reasons behind the pardah system in the social structural of the Muslim families and the effects of pardah on education, employment and social participation in understanding the changes occurring in the status of Muslim women in urban social environment. She points that though the prophet himself was in favor of positive changes in the status of woman, the *maulanas* of India do not. By the ideological misinterpretation, they misguide the people. She finds out that the women having very limited rights and roles are the main key of the household administration. In the observance of religious rituals, there is a gap between older and younger generation, mother and daughter and also men and women. Men care very little to the religious rituals it is interesting to note from this study that the respondents of the author belong to two different sects of Islam - Shia and Sunni, but no difference is there in the question of women. The study has focused on several areas of status ambiguity of Muslim women. However only two pockets of urban settlements can not represent the entire Muslim community.

Zakaria (2001) has contributed a thought provoking article entitled 'Wither Indian Muslims?' in *Islam and the Modern Age*. The main thrust of this article is on the future of 'co-religionists' in the perspective of the 'terrible decline' of Muslim population in India at present. In British India, they had one third population and five provinces out of eleven having decisive role at the center. The Muslims of undivided India have been divided into Indian Muslims, Pakistani Muslims and Bangladeshi Muslims having hardly any contact with each other. The plight of the Muslims is worse than they faced in the time of partition. "The Widening Divide" is another book of the author which has recorded his experiences in 1980. He was then appointed a member-secretary of the High Power Panel for Minorities, S.C., S.T. and Weaker sections. The findings of the panel show that Muslims were at the bottom in every department. Their conditions in education or economic were worse than those of the scheduled caste. The Report was not placed in the parliament apprehending the uproar;

it was tabled but hardly noticed due to the disturbances caused by the acceptance of Mondal Commission. This shows, as the author says, the unsympathetic attitude of the Hindus about the fate of the Muslims. Zakaria has mentioned some leading names in India and abroad, who have spoken against the “rise of intolerance among the Hindu Youths and their unapologetic attitude about such inhuman acts in Gujrat” The author has not missed to admit that many Hindus are deeply upset and their hearts bleed, but they are ‘hopeless minority’ as he comments. The author has obviously pointed out the apathetic attitude of the Muslims to come out of the situation. Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan is to be followed as their path-finder for co-existence.

The above review of literatures makes it distinctly clear that there is a gap of study on the Muslims and Muslim women specially in Tripura. There is no such study in state level or local level. The sociological research works in Tripura are primarily concentrated on the tribes of the state.

1.6. Significance of the Study:

In recent times, Muslims of India have drawn the attention of scholars like social anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists. It is not only because they form the largest minority group of India and not only because they have distinct religion and culture but also because of their position as a balancing factor in Indian polity and development of the country. For various reasons, Muslims have occupied a significant position in society of Indian polity. Unfortunately, this largest minority community is backward in almost all respects of national life. In this background, the suffering of the women in the community can be easily assumed. The sociologists and anthropologists of India agree in one point that one of the reasons of their backwardness lies in the insignificant and low position of women. Hence the study on Muslim women is added to the studies of India with great weight and gravity. In the micro level of study, as regards Tripura, the social scientists are mainly concerned with the research on the tribes and tribal women of the state. They have shown least interest on the study of the situation of the Muslims. The fact is that though the Muslims are not included in the OBC group, they belong to the backward communities of the state.

Although a number of Muslim men are participating in the main stream of socio-economic life of the state, the women are still far behind.

The importance of the present study relates to the issue stated above. Hence, the study on Muslim women has been chosen as it is totally an unexplored area for study especially in Tripura. This is a right venture for a researcher to explore this neglected area of study. Considering its significance, the present study has been conducted through field studies. Thus the study is an empirical one.

1.7. Aims and Objectives of the Present Study :

The basic objectives of the present study are as follows.

- i) To examine the position of women in Islamic scriptures as well as in Muslim society, especially in India and more specifically in Tripura.
- ii) To know the nature and extent of economic participation of Muslim women.
- iii) To examine the marital life of Muslim women and to assess their status.
- iv) To explore the role of women in family and to examine their position therein.
- v) To examine the state of literacy and education among Muslim women and the problems they have been facing to acquire education and knowledge for their empowerment.
- vi) To examine political participation of the Muslim women and assess their position in organizational and administrative bodies.
- vii) Lastly, to find out the social constraints of Muslim women towards modern education, employment, politics and organizational activities.

Thus the main objective of the study is to have a comprehensive knowledge about the status and role of Muslim women of Tripura in different social settings i.e. the rural and urban areas.

1.8. Research Questions:

On the basis of aims and objectives of the present study, some research questions have been formulated. These are as follows:–

1. What is the position of women in the philosophy of Islam? Is it in conformity with the real position of women in Muslim society?
2. Is the notion of Islam as a socio-cultural system congenial to the progress and status up gradation of the Muslim women?
3. How does that notion of Islam interpret and characterize the Muslim society in Tripura?
4. How is the position of Muslim women determining their roles and vice versa?
5. What is the Economic status of women? What is the impact of economic activities of women on their status?
6. What are the social forces behind the low status of women in the Muslim community and what are the specific problems witnessed by the Muslim women of Tripura?
7. What is the response of the Muslim girls and women towards higher education and employment?
8. What is the level of their political participation? How much cooperation they receive from the male counterpart and the other members of the society?
9. What is the response of Muslim women to the welfare activities of the Government? What are the changes going to affect the status and role of Muslim women in Tripura?

1.9. Methodology:

1.9.1. Research Design:

Being an exploratory study with a diagnostic outlook, its purpose is to gain an insight into the social situation of Muslim women. So, the approach is used primarily structure-functional along with the women's perspective to understand the problem

of women in role structure. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used for the purpose. The facts are presented in descriptive way, but in analytical manner. The comparative method has been adopted in the context of understanding the gap between male and female, Muslim and non-Muslim women, rural and urban as well as past and present situations as far as practicable.

1.9.2. Locales of the Study:

The present empirical study relates to the women in the Muslim community of Tripura. Tripura, one of the north eastern states, consists of mainly three districts viz, west, south and north. In 2001, the north district was divided into Uttar Tripura and Dhalai district. On the basis of census data it was not difficult for the researcher to select the sub divisions where Muslims are living in large number. The census report of 1901 and 1961 helps to determine the places. According to the reports, Muslims are largely concentrated in the sub divisions of Sadar (highest in west), Sonamura (second highest in west), Udaipur (highest in south), Belonia (second highest in south), Kailashahar (highest in north) and Dharmanagar (second highest in north). Secondly, these places are very much related to the history of Tripura for the expansion of Muslim population through the invasion of ruling Muslims from Bengal as well as Delhi. Yet still those villages are memorable for the people of Tripura. Many villages are Muslim dominated. It is not possible to cover all these villages for a single researcher. So, it was decided to select three villages and three corresponding district towns from three districts on the basis of convenience of the research work. In Tripura, communication is not well developed and hence, one place is badly isolated from others. Ignoring all these troubles, three villages and three towns were selected for the study. These are :

- Nabadweep Chandra Nagar (N.C. Nagar) under Sonamura subdivision; the corresponding district town is Agartala in the West;
- Khilpara under Udaipur subdivision; the corresponding district town is Udaipur in the South;

- Yeajekhowra (east) under Kailashahar subdivision; the corresponding district town is Kailasahar in the North.

The two selected villages – N.C. Nagar and Yeajekhowra are Muslim dominated but Khilpara holds fifty percent ratio of both Hindu and Muslim population. N.C. Nagar is proposed to be a ‘model village’; Khilpara is recognized as a ‘village of educated Muslims’ and Yeajekhowra is regarded as ‘typical Muslim village’ in the state. Agartala Municipality is the only municipal town under Sadar Subdivision. Besides, Agartala municipality area covers 46 percent urban Muslim population of Tripura (Census 2001). Other two towns are Nagar Panchayat towns (formerly Notified Area) under Udaipur and Kailashahar sub divisions. The towns are inhabited by a number of Muslims of the state. Each town is divided into several wards viz, Agarlala MC into 17 wards, Udaipur into 13 wards and Kailashahar into 11 wards. Out of these, the following wards were selected under the present study: Ward No. 1, 13, 15 of Agartala Municipal Corporation; Ward No. 7, 8, 9 of Udaipur Nagar Panchayat; Ward No. 2, 11 of Kailashahar Nagar Panchayat.

Since the religious breakup of the population is not available, the researcher has to rely on the report of the nagar panchayats, municipality, party office, prominent citizens and above all, the personal visits to the wards. The selection of rural areas was not easy.. Feasibility or practical view point was emphasised within the limited resources. In consideration of the above statements, these villages and towns are ideal places for the kind of research the present study aims at.

1.9.3. Sources of Data and Field Studies:

The relevant data used for the present study are collected from the following sources :

- i) Secondary Sources i.e. materials available from published books, journals, articles, monographs research reports, census and other government documents.

- ii) Household Census and Survey in the prescribed schedule.
- iii) Empirical and in-depth field studies in study areas.

1.9.4. Selection of Informants/ Respondents:

To obtain relevant and correct information, all the household heads, both male and female were considered as informants. In cases where the heads were not found present, then the next persons in rank or the person seeming eligible and reliable were chosen as informants. The senior family members were supplemented by the key informants. The key informants were chosen from the senior males and females of the area for verification of data and also for additional information. Responsible citizens, knowledgeable senior persons like MLA, lawyer, teacher, student, religious leaders and various officials of the locality were also selected for the collection of reliable data for this study.

1.9.5. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection:

The primary data for the present research were collected through field investigation with the help of standard anthropological tools and techniques. Before selection of study areas in three districts of Tripura, a pilot survey was done on the Muslim-inhabited villages and towns and basic information was collected from the local party office, the influential persons of society, as well as from the common people. At the initial stage, a formal application for permission was submitted to the offices of Nagar Panchayat and Gram Panchayat and Municipality of Agartala. After receiving directions of the officers, the office concerned provided the basic information. Sometimes they answered negatively due to their inability and busy schedule of work load for the panchayat election. However, these offices including the party offices helped a lot to have detail information about the wards and localities. With the help of that information, the Muslim concentrated villages and towns were selected for in-depth study.

At the second stage of field study, the house to house survey was made with the help of Census Schedule to obtain the basic demographic and socio economic data.

At this stage, the local persons either spontaneously or sent by the offices accompanied me long hours, sometimes even whole day in door to door survey works. In a remote village, surrounded by forests like Yeajekhowra in the north district, this kind of survey was impossible without the help of those local guides. For data collection, I had to stay for days in the Government Bungalow in Udaipur, Sonamura and Kailashahar, and in the houses of local residents in villages. To collect data in the municipal wards of Agaratala, I went out from my residence at 10 a.m. and came back at 5:30 p.m, sometimes even later. In this large scale data collection from three districts of Tripura, I had to take the help of a few student-assistants of the locality. The in-depth socio cultural data were collected through personal interview, case study, group discussion with both men and women. For conducting interview both open and close ended questions were asked to the informants. The close ended questions were designed to get objective data about social situation of women, while open ended questions were asked to collect their own experiences, observations and views about the role and status of women were also noted. Free dialogue was encouraged to supplement the information collected through census schedule and interviews. Women's voice was recorded with great emphasis. In addition to these, intensive study was conducted in all the six villages and towns with a number of case studies of different categories related very much to the purpose of the study. Sometimes data were collected also through the postal correspondence and over telephone by personal contacts.

This is a micro study but covers an extended area of a good number of populations. For the purpose, the door to door census survey was conducted to the entire Muslim household in villages and towns under study. However, approximate 60 percent of the total households of each study villages and towns were selected for detail study as per objective of the present research. Thus, demographic and socio economic information were collected from 1,235 Muslim households consisting of 6,654 population of Tripura. A number of case studies among the Muslim girls and women were recorded to realize the real situation of women life for drawing a meaningful generalization. Sometimes, for the purpose of verification of the observational experiences, some

study areas like municipal wards of Agartala, Udaipur NP and N.C.Nagar village, were re-visited by the present researcher and thus, current information was also added.. The secondary information was gathered by analyzing the textual materials, all available sorts of published materials like newspapers, magazines, books and journals, articles and election reports, governmental statistics and census reports and unpublished materials like dissertation and thesis papers, etc. In addition to all these, data was also collected from the educational institutions, technical institutions, party offices and NGOs.

1.9.6. Data processing and Analysis:

Data processing and analysis of data was the next step after data collection. This was necessary for checking and editing of the collected data, keeping in mind about their completeness and accuracy. The data schedules were examined and analyzed systematically, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Tabulation was done manually as well as by computer. Simple statistical method comprising mainly of frequency table with calculation of percentage were used. Diagrams and figure were also used to present data more vividly. Comparative method was followed through cross tabulation. The qualitative data obtained through case study, interview, discussion and observation were presented in systematic, descriptive and analytic manner. Finally, the data were organized and presented in the relevant chapters. The entire course of data processing was done very carefully.

1.9.7. Presentation of Data and Contents:

The materials of this study are presented into ten chapters. Chapter one is the introduction with the background of the study, theoretical perspectives and the concepts used, the statement of problems of the social status of Muslim women and the methodology adapted for the study. Chapter two is on the ideal position of women in Islam and their real position in the Muslim society of some South Asian countries. Chapter three is a discussion with society, culture, and some demographic attributes of the Muslims in Tripura. It is stated from the background of a princely state and its journey towards a demographic state. Chapter four is the Research Setting of the

present empirical work elaborating a profile of the Muslim settlements with their physical and demographic attributes. The economic status of Muslim women, patterns of occupation, economic activities and their contribution to family economy has been stated in the chapter five.. Chapter six is an attempt to a detailed discussion on the marital status of Muslim women i.e. the patterns, types and forms of Muslim marriages in Tripura. The Chapter seven deals with the position of women in family on the background of type, composition and characteristic feature of Muslim family in Tripura. Chapter eight is on the state of Muslim women's education, their poor representation in Higher and Technical education, drop out and stagnation. The political participation of Muslim women in recent times, their position in the local governance and party structure in Tripura has been dealt by the chapter nine. Chapter ten is a brief summary of the findings and analytical discussions and recommendations on the basis of present research experiences. This chapter recapitulates the original research questions and the empirical findings.

1.9.8. Limitations:

Like other sociological and social anthropological studies on Muslim women, the present one has also some limitations. Since the empirical study on Muslim women is under taken for the first time, the benefit of any earlier study is not available. The dearth of women study in Tripura contributes to its limitation. Secondly, there is non-availability of secondary data on the Muslims as there is no office record on the basis of religious break-up. Thirdly, limitation lies in the nature of data collections. At the time of data collection, the present researcher has to face the problem of suspicion of the people who live in the border area of the state. It was seemed to be the outcome of minority fear-psychosis and political violence. They thought the present researcher as a person of Intelligence Department, gathering information about the local Muslims and about their citizenship. Some even asked the researcher that whether the government has any plan to send the Muslims to Bangladesh. Some people showed reluctance and irritation to answer and expressed frustration about the surveys as it was no direct benefit for them. For interview, a few women refused to talk as their

men instructed them so. It was also noticed that women were scolded by the men as they were let loose to talk or ignorant to talk in proper manner with 'Didimani' and thus the men took responsibility of talking. In few cases the researcher has to exercise a kind of influence on the men by refusing them and insisting on to talk with women. Male persons were also found not free. They also hesitated to talk about their communities. Fourthly, though the study covers three villages and three towns which are found not much different with other villages and towns, it has its limitation of micro-level study. It may not be generalized for whole Tripura.

Lastly the field study was initially started in 1997 and completed in 2001. Besides, the field places were revisited for the purpose of verification of field data at the time of writing the thesis. In spite of that, the changes occurred very recently might not be reflected in the present study.