DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is a vast literature on women's status. Different scholars have defined the term status in different ways. According to Mitchel (1979) status is the position occupied by a person in a family or kinship group in a social system. This determines rights, duties and other behaviors including the nature and extent of relationship with persons of other status.

Status, class and political power form three major dimensions of social stratification. Status, according to Weber (1978) is an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges. Weber wants to point out that every status has a relational base and status claimants receive different responses from audience. According to Ralph Linton (1936), status is primarily a position in a social structure involving rights, duties and reciprocal relation of behavior none of which depends on the personal characteristics of the status occupant. Davis (1948) has adopted the above ideas and Merton (1957) wants to postulate that individual has an array of social positions constituting a composite status set.

In short, then two major conceptualizations of status work have grown. Firstly, according to Weber and his followers, status is relational and intersubjective. Secondly, positional and highly structured concept of status has been explained by Linton.
Terms like status are classificatory devices; this is a term which refers to a category and is not identical with an individual person who occupies it. Even if a person might occupy a particular position at a given point of time, another person may also occupy it sometimes later. As a category it is defined in terms of certain attributes which the person occupying it will hold or should hold but the category is not defined in terms of certain attributes to the persons.

According to Vina Mazumder (1982), status in the pure sociological sense denotes only position vis-a-vis others in terms of rights and obligations. It means the extent of freedom and liberty enjoyed by women in the family vis-a-vis their husbands. This definition is acceptable for our findings.

Among the several bases for status, these have been enumerated by Secord and Buchman (1964) (Sachdeva 1991). These are (1) the capacity of person for rewarding more with whom he interacts, (2) the extent to which he is receiving awards and (3) the type of cost he incurs and his investment.

Saffillons Rothschild (1982:117) suggests a number of indicators on women's status. And the selection of the indicators is based on the notion that (i) the higher women's ability to control important events in their lives (i.e. age at marriage), the higher is their status and (ii) the more women have the same life option as men in the same age group and social class with respect to food, education, occupation, remuneration and
occupational advancements, the higher is their status. Thus participation in decision making power by women and its association with women’s participation in gainful employment have been considered an important indicator of women’s status and role in society. This has also been stressed by Blood and Wolf (1960) as well as Miza (1992).

The present thesis also takes decision making power in the family with regard to important events in women’s lives as an important criterion for determining women’s status in the family. It projects greater power of decision making inside the family as the indicator of higher status of the maidservant. It, therefore, tries to determine status with the help of two criterion, namely (a) Status of working wives (in this case of maidservants) both inside and outside the family and (b) whether there has been any status improvement of the maidservants by virtue of being an important earning member of the family.

Employing maidservant in a metropolitan city is indispensable for the lower and middle class family. For, women members of their families are also engaged themselves in jobs outside the family arena. They seldom have time to look after the family course for instance cooking, cleaning, washing and many other time consuming activities. Hence they are very much dependent on the domestic maids who also sometimes serve as surrogate mothers too. In the present study an attempt has been made to examine whether or not the domestic maids living in Calcutta slums have achieved any improvement in
their quality of life on and whether their status and power have any bearing on the
betterment in life. Traditionally women’s contribution to household work has not been
taken into account as a productive resource of nation’s economy. Recently there have
been movements even in the third world countries to raise a note of dissent and mark of
protest against this age old discrimination between men and women.

The study has brought into relief a major fact of occupational sociology that even the
poorly educated, economically distressed and socially backward women have been able
to improve their position and domestic status by exerting decision making power in the
field of household matters such as children’s education buying commodities, controlling
child birth and so on. Many of them frankly admitted that they had exercised their voting
right independently without the persuasion of their husbands.

Employment for the poor class women in middle class families has certainly improved
their social status so much so that they are not being addressed as just ‘servants’ but as
‘Kajerlok’ meaning persons of work.

Inspite of the egalitarian clause of the Constitution of India and progressive legislation
passed subsequently, the status of Indian women, in general, has more or less remained
unchanged. Women are still treated as a weaker social category. Naturally, women workers
in many cases are found to be victims of inequality in the sphere of employment. What is
more pathetic is that the condition of women workers in the unorganised sector is much
worse than the above picture. They are invariably victims of social and economic injustice. The principle of equal pay for equal work does not apply in this case. Even when they work more than the male workers, they are denied of equal wages with that of male workers (Srivastava 1978).

It has been observed that women with economic power do not automatically wield power within the household because apart from gainful employment she has to perform all the household works including child rearing and child bearing. She does not enjoy any kind of bargaining power within the household. This is quite true with respect to powers to initiate, decide, veto decisions as also the power to exclude or regulate other decision makers in the family. As a result, women take decision when men allow them to do so (Mukherjee, Ishita, 2001). In fact, despite, increase in women’s employment occupational segregation and patriarchal attitude still remain to a considerable, if reduced, extent (Harriet Bradely 1999).

Work is necessary because without it the family may starve. But inspite of this material contribution that a women worker makes to the total income of family, she generally enjoys no status or respect or voice in the affairs of the family (Karnik 1974).

This picture of the status of women is not, however, corroborated by the findings of the present thesis because one important aspect of women’s paid employment is that it has brought about changes in relationship among members of the family. Thus, in general,
employed women have better image and get preferential treatment in the family because of the additional income they earn. The present study also corroborate this view.

II

In view of the above observations we shall now address ourselves to the proposed objectives of research. The present research has been conducted with certain objectives in view. These are broadly of three types. In the first place, we wanted to gather information about the socio-economic profile of the maidservants as well as to know why they take up this job. Secondly, We also wanted to know whether maidservants face any role conflict and if so, how they received them. Finally, our objective was to determine whether there has been any improvement in the social status of maidservants or not. Regarding, those objectives we can make the following observations.

First, regarding socio-economic profile of the maidservants under survey we can make the following observation:

a) The rural origin of the maidservants of Calcutta is quite apparent from our study which shows that as many as 62 percent of the working women hailed from rural areas in the district of South 24- parganas in West Bengal (See Table No. 3.9 Chapter-3).

Before coming to the metropolitan city of Calcutta they were engaged in agricultural activities.
b) It is apparent from our study that 24 percent working women have 1-3 family members while the number of families having 4-6 members is 70 percent (See Table No. 3,7, Chapter -3). Thus, the family structure of the respondents reflects the general picture of the predominance of the number of nuclear family in the society at large.

c) Economic compulsion among other factors seems to be the primary reason for their going outside the house in search of job (See Table 3,14, Chapter-3). Their husbands are either unemployed or are engaged in petty business or daily wage labour. They could hardly meet both ends meet with the meagre income of their husbands. They found it difficult to provide education to children, medical treatment for the sick, to purchase daily necessitites of life and to ensure a better standard of living. When they realised that all these things will ever remain beyond their reach they decided to supplement their husband's income by taking up some kind of job. But being illiterate or semi-literate, they found no other job than that of the maidservant. Hence, they took up the job primarily for economic reason and secondarily for achieving personal freedom.

d) The study reveals that employer's attitude towards the employees is not satisfactory. For a large number of the maidservants (82%) are not satisfied with their job, because they do not get any financial support from the employers in times of emergencies like disease and illness, their children's education and ceremonial occasions.
in their own families. Among other reasons one can mention the fact that they are not allowed to dine with their employers or their children and that they do not enjoy any leave with salary. They simply remain absent at their work places during illness of themselves as well as of other family members. For this, previously they were used to face the ordeal of pay cut. But now-a-days they resist tooth and nail such pay cut by using threat of leaving the job.

e) The Maidservants are the most neglected section of the society in the sense that they do not enjoy any kind of social security benefit like provident fund, medical allowance, gratuity etc. Their wages remain almost stagnant years after years because only minority of them is able to wrest from the employers, a marginal increase, and that too, depends on the amenable attitude of the employers. Since they do not have any trade union organisation to support their cause, they have to bear this type of negligence silently. It is obvious that they belong to the typical unorganised sector of occupation. However, one silver line of hope is that the number of maidservants (49,3) (Chapter-4 Table-4,9) who get some assistance from employers is not also negligible.

Secondly, role conflict takes place when a working woman has to perform two or more roles at a time. She faces the double burden of managing official duty as well as household work. It is revealed from our study that working women cannot give proper attention to their children as she has to remain outside the house for long hours. On her
returning home from work, she has to prepare meals for the entire family and often to feed her children. Nobody comes forward to help her in discharging household work which is considered her exclusive dominance. Some of them are even forced to carry their little children along with them in their working places as there is none to look after the children in their absence. Therein lies the sources of role conflict among the maidservants. In the present thesis, role conflicts have been classified into three categories on the basis of their intensity viz. a) severe, b) Moderate and c) Mild.

a) Severe role conflict arises in those cases where there are regular quarrels, disputes, disharmony and maladjustment between the respondent and her husband (b) Moderate conflict takes place when the respondents fail to serve food in proper time to the family members, specially husband. Because in the event of such failure she is rebuked with abusive words and even beaten. But as such altercation subsides very shortly. These have been counted as cases of moderate role conflict.

c) Mild role conflict which takes place occasionally, grows out of mild altercation between the respondent and her husband regarding family expenses or making contribution to the family budget. As far as the intensity of role conflict is concerned, those who experience role conflict because of difference of opinion with the husband suffer from severe (11.76%) moderate (26.47%) and mild (61.77%) role conflict.
The respondents face no severe role conflict with their children who become the source of moderate and mild role conflict (See Table 5.8).

Relation of role conflict with other variables like age, income, period of service, working hours and family size has been studied. We have also referred to several case studies. The general impression that emerges from this is that though the maidservants face role conflict as any other class of working women, they do not experience severe role conflict in all cases. Their role conflict can be broadly categorized as mild and moderate and that too they accept with a smiling face because they consider it as a part of normal course of life. That is why their role conflict does not spend in the way of managing two fronts - house front and the home of work.

Thirdly, contrary to the general picture of the status of women in India status of the maidservants in Calcutta has been somewhat improved as a result of employment because they can exert themselves in various decision making regarding number of children, education and marriage of the children, purchasing of essential things, entertainment of guests etc. In a large number of cases (60%) they have the final say in the family decision making process. In other cases where husbands are a party to the decision making process, they take decision in consultation with their wives. This is mainly due to the fact that wives are important earning members of the family. If maidservants had no job they certainly would have no say in their family matters.
Improvement of the status of the maidservants is thus contingent upon financial contribution made by them towards the family budget. Moreover, if by improvement of status we mean enhancement of one’s position in the social estimation of others, our maidservants can certainly be said to have enjoyed improved status inside the family. For, there has been a significant change in the attitude of senior family members including husbands, to the work done by these women for which they earn means of their livelihood.

In this study we find that husband and other family members gladly agree to the employment of these women as maidservants in other houses. They are not opposed to this. In fact, 72 percent respondent’s husbands do not show any negative attitude towards their wives. On the contrary, husbands and other family members share positive attitude to their employment. They are proud of their employment. This is undoubtedly a hopeful sign of the upgrading of the status of these women in their own families. It has been observed in the national Sample Survey held in the year 2002 for India as a whole that in the rural areas 31 percent husbands and in urban areas 14 percent husbands take decision regarding spending of their wives’ earning. This is nothing but a demonstration of male dominance in the family. But employment is found to contribute a new set of attitudes which are not seen among the unemployed. (Agarwal 1988). In this respect the present study agrees with observations made by Lalita Devi (1982) and Reddy, C. Raghunadha (1986). In their studies it was found that working
wives had enjoyed power in taking decisions regarding the purchase of goods and schooling of children. Kapur (1974) has expressed the view that urban women have not begun to realise that job can ensure their self-confidence and can give them social security and freedom. Gulati (1985), on the other hand, observes that the great majority of working women are not allowed to spend even their own income as they like and that they have to give all their earnings to their husbands. An important indicator of status enhancement is the extent to which they can establish total or partial control over their income. For despite their employment and personal income, they generally cannot take exclusive decision regarding disbursement of the income. But in this respect also maidservants of Calcutta can claim themselves to be in a better position than their pairs in other fields both in rural and urban areas. For it is revealed from our study that only 7 percent husbands enjoy the right to take final decision regarding spending of their maidservant wives’ earning. Hence, as many as 93 percent maidservants in our survey are lucky enough to have a say either exclusively or jointly with husbands on the expenses to be made out of their income. It is, of course, true that they do not enjoy equal power and authority with their husbands. On the contrary, whatever power and authority they enjoy is the result of adjustment to new circumstances arising continuously in the family. Ill-treatment of wives at the hands of husbands is quite a common feature in these families. Thus it has been reported that the husbands often ask for money from their wives for buying alcohol or any other kinds of drugs and if the
latter refuse to concede to the unjust demand they are beaten by their husbands. In fact, wife beating by drunk or drug addicted husbands is a part of the everyday affair of the maidservants in our study. However, though displeased, the maidservant wives have become habituated to this sort of treatment. Many of them consider this as a mark of providence and bear all this humiliation and tortures silently without making any protest. The irony is that they are not psychologically aware that this kind of male dominance goes against the status they earn through their personal income. Hence in a traditional society like India status upgrading of weaker section, particularly women, is to a large extent a cultural issue. It needs rational transformation and the cultural orientation of the people to give due recognition to the dignity of every individual.

There is no doubt need for further research in the field. However, on the basis of our findings we can formulate two hypotheses which can be tested in any future research. The hypotheses are :-

1) The more a woman faces economic compulsion the more will she opt for paid job outside the home.

2) Since status of a woman inside the family depends on the share of her contribution to the income of family, the more a woman contributes to the income of family the more will she enjoy higher status in the family.
It is a recognised fact that in the adoption of fair policy towards labour it is necessary to improve labour legislation in this regard because household employers would be antagonistic if any labour laws are passed against them. But reduced hours of professional work of the maidservants would recoup her energy and in the long run would be able to do justice to her work role. Being satisfied with her work and free from personal worries, she would certainly devote whole heartedly to her work. As Myrdal and Viola (1968 : 7-8) observe “Among those concerned with the welfare of the population the view has increasingly gained ground that not only in the home but also in the organisation of work and leisure pursuits more account should be taken of the fact that working women are not isolated individuals but members of families.”

In the unorganised sector employment opportunity is irregular. The workers do not get social security such as provident fund, gratuity etc. They have to bear all pains and sufferings silently. There is no clear cut direction or instruction as to what to do or not to do for this category of people in old age. So, employers will have to consider their problem with a humanitarian approach but in this regard their power is limited. Hence, the govt. will have to come forward and assist them. The Govt. can implement various programmes for this category of people.
In view of the above discussion we can recommend the following policy measures to the
Government and Society.

1) Minimum Wages Act should be implement to bring parity in wage structure.

2) Social Security Measures like old age benefit, provident fund, gratuity, pension, life
insurance etc. should be implemented.

3) They should be provided with leave facilities including casual leave and maternity
leave with pay.

4) Govt. or municipal authority should come forward for the improvement of slums, con
struction of road, supply of pure drinking water and supply of electricity.

5) The slum dwellers including the maidservants should keep both their children and
environment clean.

6) The Government and the society should see to it that these under-privileged women get due recognition of them from the society at large.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>: Married / Unmarried / Widow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10.  | Name of the Family Members           | : Relation / Age / Educational               
|      |                                      | Qualification / Earning / Non-earning / Occupation / |
Monthly Income.

11. House Pattern : Own House/ Rented/ Pucca/ Kutcha

12. How many rooms are there in your house? 1, 2, 3, 4

13. Are you satisfied with your dwelling place? Yes/ No

14. When did you come to this Bustee?

15. How long are you residing here?

16. Place of origin : Rural/ Urban/ Sub-urban

17. Educational Qualification : Illiterate/ Primary/ Secondary

18. Level of education of son : Illiterate / Primary/ Secondary

19. Level of education of Daughter : Illiterate / Primary/ Secondary

20. Which stratum of society have you come from?

21. Land owning Peasant/ Landless Peasant/ Share Croppers/ Village Artisan/
22. What is your father’s occupation?

23. What is your husband’s occupation?

24. Reasons for doing work outside the family, Economic compulsion to supplement family income / To raise the standard of living / To satisfy demand for freedom and autonomy / others.

25. Number of Earning members in the family.

26. How many members are solely dependent on you?

27. How many families do you serve?

28. How many hours do you spend on outside work?

29. What is the attitude of the employers towards you?

Very favourable/Favourable/Indifferent/Unfavourable.

30. Are you satisfied with this kind of job?
Extremely satisfied / just satisfied / not satisfied / dissatisfied.

31. Do you get any financial support from the employers in times of emergency like disease, children's education, ceremonial occasion etc? Yes / No.

32. Who decides terms and conditions of your services?

33. Do you get pay in due time or is it delayed?

34. Do the employers invite you in their household ceremonies?

35. Do you attend these ceremonies as mere invites?

36. Do the employers allow you to dine with them?

37. Do the employers allow their children to freely mix with your children?

38. Are you manhandled by employer? Yes / No

39. What is your reaction to it? Whether you promptly resign from job or bear with it?
40. Is there any system of annual increment on your wage? If not, do you get it on request?

41. For how many years have you been engaged in this job?

42. Have you been employed since premarital days?

43. Do you frequently change your employer?

44. Are you attached to any women's organisation?

45. If so, name the organisation in which you participate in their activities like meetings, processions or demonstration?

46. Do you take any moral or material help from women's organisation?

47. Do you feel any role constraint for your work? Yes / No

48. What type of constraint do you face?

49. What kind of activities do your husband expect from you?

   a) Cooking and serving food in proper time.
b) Nursing husband and family members during illness.

c) Regular cleaning of the house.

d) Attending relatives and guests.

50. Do you perform all these activities with all seriousness?

51. Do you quarrel with your husband on these issues?

   If yes, for what reason?

52. Who takes care of your children when you are off from the house?

53. Do you face any conflict in this respect?

54. Does your children quarrel with you? If yes, for what reason?

55. Who manages the family budget?

   Self/ Husband/Father-in-law/ Mother-in-law

   (Daughter/Both - Husband and wife)

56. Do you have any control over your husband’s income?
Does your husband submit his entire earning / part income to you?

57. What is your personal monthly income?

58. Do you consider it sufficient to meet your family expenditure?

If not, how do you meet your family expenditure?

59. What is your husband's attitude towards your job?

Very favourable/Favourable/Indifferent/Unfavourable.

60. Did you take up this job on your own or on request from your husband?

61. Is your husband addicted to alcohol or any other drugs?

Does this addiction become a cause of tension on you?

Does he beat you when addicted?

62. Does your husband always show authoritarian attitude and dictate his terms to you?

If not, is there any mutual understanding between you and your husband?
63. Does any strained relationship grow up with your husband concerning other members of family or family matters?

64. Who is the first to come forward to meet the situation?

Yourself / Husband / Any other members of family.

65. Do you appoint any private tutor for education of your children?

If so, how do you manage tuition fees of private tutor.

66. Does your children show respect to you regarding:

a) Purchasing clothes.

b) Fashionable goods and c) Means of entertainment.

67. When do you get up in the morning and go to bed?

68. When does your husband get up in the morning and go to bed?

69. When do you take rest and how long?

70. How many children do you have? 1, 2, 3, 4
71. Who took the decision regarding the number of children?

72. Who decided in which school your children will be admitted?
   Husband / Wife / both / others.

73. Who takes care of your children?

74. Who takes the decision for calling a doctor?

75. Who does incur daily shopping expense?

76. Who does incur expenditure on children's items such as cloths?

77. Who buys things for other family members or cloths for self and sundry articles for the husbands?

78. Who takes decision regarding children's marriage?

79. Do you cast your vote independently or consult your husband in casting vote?

80. Do you think that there has been any improvement in your status as a result of employment?
   a) If yes, why?
   b) If no, why?

127