CHAPTER -2

METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

Research is a systematic investigation intended to add to available knowledge in a form that is communicable and verifiable. It is an attempt to discover answers to questions through application of scientific procedures. As traditionally defined, social research has been concerned with gathering data that can help us answering questions about various aspects of society and they can enable us to understand society (Bailey 1982 : 3) It is, however, impossible to make a socio-economic study by any particular method. The specific objectives of the present study requires an intensive enquiry into the role and social status of maidservants through their socio-economic conditions. Hence multiple methods have been used to collect data for the study.

2.2 Method of Research:

To minimize cost, time and resource utilization most of the socio-economic surveys use sample, survey techniques for securing data. These are widely used in different branches of research. A sample survey is opposite to a census where every unit of the universe is a subject of interview and observation. But in the former data are collected from purposively selected respondents. The present researcher has chosen the method of empirical research in order to get reliable information. She has used various techniques and methods of survey such as the Questionaire, interview. Case study, Observation and Genealogiocal method to collect first hand data.
2.3 Selection of the study Design:

The universe of the study is relatively small in size. Maidservants living in the slum area of Behala, Calcutta, constitute the universe of study. Total number of respondents is 150.

There are about 150 slum areas in Behala out of which only two slum areas were purposively selected because of operational convenience. They were selected in such a way that one would be very small in size and other fairly large. The rationale for selecting these slums were that there were heavy concentration of maidservants in these localities. Besides the distance of the researcher's residence to their abode was very close. This served an additional advantage for collection of research materials. She could easily approach them in their families without the sphere of influence of their employers.

The first sample slum is situated at Bustee No. 10 adjacent to old Dog Race Course, Calcutta-38, adjacent to Diamond Harbour Road. The Balananda brahmachari Hospital is situated within a walking distance from the slum which is mostly of cosmopolitan in nature. For people of different religions, caste and educational standard live in this slum. It is inhabited by nearly about ten thousand people. The Government of West Bengal has set up a primary school in this locality for imparting education to children. Tubewells were installed for supplying drinking water and providing bathing facilities to the inmates. A large majority of the houses/huts in the slum area have just one room structure. Only a few households have more than one room. It may be noted that while it is true that some of them are relatively larger in size, in most cases, extra room means
only small congested spaces made with the help of makeshift enclosure. During rainy season water pours into these rooms. The maidservants mostly share one single room with large number of family members and they use only living room for dining, kitchen and sleeping purposes. Their houses are made of brick with tiled roof; some houses have no windows. There is a Canal in a nearby slum through which sewage water passes. Road is made out of concrete materials.

Slum No. 2 is situated at Behala near Taratola Crossing and the address of the slum is 18/2, Jai Krishna Pal Road, Ward No. 118, Kolkata - 38. There is no adequate supply of drinking water in this area. The inhabitants of this locality have to carry water from distant places. About six thousand people live in this slum; majority of them have no education worth mentioning and vast majority of them are daily wage earners such as hawkers, daily labourers, Rickshaw pullers etc. An overwhelming majority of the slum supplement their family income by working as maidservants in nearby houses.

2.4 Data Collection:

The present study is based on two types of data. obtained from (i) Primary sources and (ii) Secondary sources.

**Primary Data:**

The strategies for collecting primary data are as follows:

a) Questionnaire, (b) Interview and observation, (c) Case study and (d) Genealogy.
a) **Questionnaire**:

Research has been called the art of asking the right questions. How to phrase the question, why asking, who should be working, where to ask and how to record the answer – these are all part of this act (Polansky 1975). A standard questionnaire was prepared and it consisted of a set of questions. It was prepared keeping in view the objectives of the study for collecting relevant information from the respondents. Before giving final shape to this, the researcher also conducted a pilot study among a handful of respondents for testing the efficacy of the questionnaire schedule. Three guidelines were followed for the construction of the schedule, viz.

1) The questions were framed in a simple language so that the respondents could clearly understand their meaning; 2) Clarity of questions has been maintained to avoid confusion on the part of respondents and to elicit from them exact and precise information; and (3) The questions were framed in an order of logical sequence so that the respondents could easily pass over from one question to the other.

b) **Interview and Observation**:

**Interview**:

The researcher herself conducted interview of a number of local people, members of the voluntary organisation, selected representative of the people and one hundred fifty respondents. All of these were taken down on a notebook of the researcher.

**Observation**: 

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Observation may take many forms and is at the same time, the most primitive and the most modern research technique. It includes the most cases uncontrolled experience as well as the most exact field records of laboratory experiment (Goode and Hatt 1952). She used to maintain a note book to record her personal observation about the maid-servants in their family set up.

c) Case Study:

Case study is an indepth study usually (longitudinally) of one or few cases, in contrast to a more superficial cross sectional study. The present work has also taken the help of research technique. In the present study altogether ten cases were recorded in two study areas—typical cases were sorted out from the questionnaire schedule and they were taken up for expressing their past and present life. The researcher felt very little difficulties or did not face any trouble during the collection of data relating to life history of maid-servants.

Primary data were collected through administering questionnaire. The reseacher herself made the entire work of data collection. It took about four months in the year 2000 to complete the field work.
d) **Genealogical Method:**

This is a method of collecting data on occupational mobility. The researcher took 5 genealogies from the selected maidservants to note down the changes in their parental official occupation.

### 2.5 Items of Information

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<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Socio Economic Profile of the Maideservants.</td>
<td>Age, Caste, Education and family structure social origin lives etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Condition of Working</td>
<td>Period of service and labour conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Domestic sphere and social structure, domestic sphere and work sphere. Role as wife, role as a mother and as a maidservant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Changes in the Status</td>
<td>Role of wife in decision making.</td>
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2.6 **Analysis:**

The foundation of this research work was the primary data. Face to face interview was conducted by administering questionnaire. The collected data have been analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantative data have been mainly presented in tabular forms requiring only the use of descriptive statistical treatment, classification and averages.

2.7 **Concepts and Definition:**

The researcher has used several concepts or categories like maidservants, slum, status, role and role conflict, gender inequality for her research purposes. Operational Definition of these terms are as follows:

**Maidservants:**

Maidservants are those full time or part time female workers who work in private houses of cities, towns and villages as private or domestic servants.

**Status:**

It refers to the amount of prestige, honour or reverence accorded to an individual by his or her role partner in the society specially in correspondence to the relative degree of decision making power of the concerned individual.

**Role:**
It refers to the behaviour expected of an individual occupying certain status by other members of Society.

**Role Conflict** :

It denotes the problem situation which crops up due to simultaneous occupancy of two or more positions by an actor and which arise as a result of incompatibilities.

**Slum** :

The term slum is used to describe squalid housing in a densely populated district of industrial societies. It consists of what the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English defines as court, street or ally of dirty crowded houses (Thakur 1987:8). In the present survey it refers to Bustee areas demarcated as such by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) for development works.

**Gender Inequality** :

It denotes a condition in which prevailing social norms, values and stereotypes ascribe to women an inferior status to that of men from taking an equal part in social, economic, political and cultural life of the community.

2.8. **Validity and Reliability of Data** :

The researcher believes that all sorts of data which were collected for the study are reliable, true and unbiased. Various strategies were used with utmost care as much as
possible when collecting information.

Quality control of data was used both in respect of data collecting and data processing. Nobody could influence the researcher for collecting data in favour of or against their interests. No laziness and weakness influenced the personality of the researcher in this regard. Sometimes, however, the respondents expressed unwillingness to answer question. In some cases other related questions not given in a schedule were asked to arrive at the exact answer of our original questions. For example, if a family refuses to disclose its proper income other related questions concerning expenditure, savings, loans taken from different sources, repayment of loans etc. were also asked to find out the appropriate income of the family.

Now rapport is the establishment and maintenance of the usual professional relationship which exists between the interviewer and interviewee. This relationship is based on mutual understanding, confidence and sympathy. Rapport manifests itself in the easy flow of communication between them. This researcher could establish good rapport with the selected maidservants as well as with the local people. It was felt during the initial phase of enquiry that no reliable information would come without building rapport and making frequent contact with men. Another important factor was the verification of answer replies given by the respondents in the interviews. In order to do this cross checking of answers was done in many cases.
2.9. **Limitations of study:**

Since the study is based on purposively selected area and purposively chosen respondents of two slum areas in South Calcutta, Behala the researcher claims no amount of generalisations from this study. It is a fact finding study and its results are strictly restricted to the sample respondents.