CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The understanding of status of women in Delhi is our fundamental concern in the present study. Based on the data collected through interviews, we have analysed consciousness and subjective dimensions of status of women. Our study unfolds the experiential dimension of womanhood and status ramifications of women who belong to different religions, castes, classes, and come from various occupational and educational background in Delhi. We have made an attempt to examine the various perspectives on status of women in the light of our observations and analysis.

Our approach incorporates an understanding of the status of the women in terms of their socio-psychological make-up and existential realities. The social placement of women in their objective conditions is seen through their different social background, role empowerment and participatory status in the decision-making process, etc. This calls for a multi-paradigmatic perspective in understanding women's situation.
We are, however, aware of the limitations from which research in the field of urban areas suffers. These limitations refer to the diversity and complexity of the urban social structure on the one hand, and the reliability of the psychological expressions and their transformation into our analytic frame on the other. Despite these limitations we have studied social and psychological dimensions of the status of women in Delhi as there are a very few comparative and analytical studies available at present.

In the introduction we have raised the issue of status-abstraction. Status has generally been used as a static concept devoid of its behavioural aspect. A lot of data have been collected in the earlier studies. For instance, Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India highlights the objective dimensions of women's status. We have, however, emphasised the dynamics of women's status by including the subjective sub-structure that determines the status-fluctuation in a significant way at the level of reality, and this can be seen in terms of place, context and person under investigation. Shifts in age, marriage, family, sexuality, education caste, class or religion and the
meaning attached to it may lead to change in the self-perception of status among women. Hence, elements of situationality define the relative value inherent in the dynamics of status.

In Chapter two, we have discussed the relationship between women and society. Cultural norms shape the roles called "feminine" and "masculine". Today emphasis is laid more on achievement rather than ascriptive standards to evaluate performance. Women are demanding "real" and not "theoretical" equality in modern societies, which are hierarchical in practice but egalitarian in theory.

"Functional" sex differences are seen as a complex phenomenon. The patterns of sex differences are manifested through a conglomeration of factors such as culture, biology, history, individual psychology and inter-personal relations at any given time and place. They are integrated into meaningful configurations by the interplay of these dimensions. Finally, the nexus between woman's psyche and society has been discussed along with the traditional notions about the vacillation of the feminine principle.
Chapter three deals with the specificity of women's status in India, especially as seen in the sociological literature. A historical sketch has been drawn regarding the position of women in India. However, it has been noted that a nationalistic or communal idealisation of the historical past, which depicts uniformly women having a higher or a lower status, is simply a fallacy. For instance, women's education and access to it have been seen as an indication of high status. If it were really so, then the question of its historical discontinuity would not have arisen. Moreover, in the present context, education does not necessarily enhance a woman's status absolutely because high economic or maternal status may not necessarily result from an increase in the educational status. Thus, what is true of the contemporary period in terms of different positions of women is equally true about the various periods in Indian history.

Chapter four provides a description about the present study, its orientation and the multi-paradigmatic approach applied in understanding the life experiences of women. The respondents consisting of
two hundred women, for this study, were mostly selected from the southern part of Delhi, although, some industrial areas and Jama Masjid locality were visited for selecting industrial women workers and Muslim women. Respondents were selected on the basis of the variables such as literacy and education, occupation and nature of employment, family background, age, marital status and religion. The main techniques used for the collection of data were interview schedule and non-participant observation.

We have applied a socio-psychological approach and tried to understand and explain the paradoxical position of women with the help of a multi-paradigmatic perspective. The analytical framework rooted in functional, dialectical and psycho-analytical traditions of thought may sound contradictory, yet it enabled us to identify the women's problem in its totality. Basically, our study remains an exploratory one. We have discussed the viability of the semblance of these theoretic constructs for studying status of women in Indian society.
In Chapter five, six and seven we have presented and discussed data regarding the ramifications of women's status in conjunction with variables such as income, occupation, education, family, religion and sexuality. Our data focus on what can be measured rather than the precise measurement of the status of women. Objective factors of status such as education, income, privileges and rights, etc., cannot be divorced from their subjective context of the experiential realm, consciousness and the meaning that is assigned to them.

The consciousness of present day world makes us delve into the paradoxical perceptions about the status of women in India. Based on objective data, 56.5 percent of women, in our study, have a high status and 43.5 percent a low status. However, based on the responses, only 10 percent of women, expressed of experiencing a high status, whereas, 90 percent of women experienced a low status. Which means that 46.5 percent of women who actually had a high status, based on the objective dimension, could not enjoy their high status as their subjective perception coloured their reality.
The discrepancy score between the objective and the subjective dimension points to the various aspects of status-dynamism. Thus status becomes a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept which has been exemplified by various case studies.

The following status-situations emerge from our study:

(i) An objectively high status synchronizes with a subjectively high status experience;

(ii) An objectively high status coincides with a subjectively low status experience;

(iii) An objectively low status synchronizes with a subjectively low status experience;

(iv) An objectively low status coincides with a subjectively high status experience;

(v) The notion of internal and external status comes into being: gain in the external status could imply a loss in the internal realm and the gain in the internal status could mean a loss in the external realm;
(vi) Status cannot be viewed in absolute terms. For instance, an overall high status does not necessarily imply a high status in all spheres or an overall low status does not necessarily mean a low status in all spheres.

(vii) Status compensation principle occurs by virtue of the fact that a low status in one sphere is compensated by a high status in another sphere.

(viii) Fluctuation of status is perceived as situational in terms of time and space both at an individual and societal level.

In any historical era, therefore, one cannot think of a place where status either increases or decreases in absolute terms. The internal and external aspects of status are extracted from the status-repertoire in chapter seven. For example, a woman, while going through the transitional phases of her life-cycle may initiate status-changes internally as is shown in the duality of sexuality/spirituality that changes her role. Whereas, any external deprivation or reception may give rise to the acceptance or rejection of
certain roles. For instance, in chapter five, women's work and education are seen as a consequence of chance, compulsion or choice.

Status-compensation is another phenomenon visible on the variation scale. The low status of a woman in one sphere is invariably compensated by a high status in another area. In the seventh chapter, for example, a low socio-economic status is related to a high fertility status or in chapter five, a low educational status is compensated by a high economic or spiritual status.

Hence, high or low status of a woman cannot be seen in absolute terms. In chapter five, for instance, a high employment status of a woman does not necessarily mean a high maternal status. Thereupon, status transference takes place, in the sense that gain in the status of one woman could imply the loss of status for another, especially as seen in the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law syndrome.

Thus, status dynamism has enabled us to locate the woman's problem in totality, mainly in terms of her consciousness about her existence in relation to wider society.