SUMMARY

This study is a comparative sociological analysis to measure the status of farm women within the family and their role in the household division of labour and in the family decisions in relatively isolated and less isolated villages.

The investigation has analysed the relationship between residential place, farm size, income, family type, form of marriage, distance from natality, age, age disparity and education on the one hand, and the level of women's participation in work and decisions on the other. The relationship between form of marriage and distance from natality was examined after controlling one of them. Likewise the influence of age disparity was attempted after controlling for age.

This descriptive investigation was carried out with an interview schedule for data collection.

Major Findings

The two groups of women respondents are broadly similar with regard to their age, educational status, family structure, dwelling place, farm size and cropping pattern; age at marriage, forms of marriage; but marriage alliances are sought in a larger spacial social network in the less isolated villages. The mean distance of migration
from natality on marriage is about eight miles for this sample compared to six miles for the isolated sample. In both cases the distance is considerably greater in non-preferential than in preferential marriages. The age difference between the couples for less isolated and isolated groups is 7.22 years and 3.46 years respectively. The earlier the marriage for women, the greater is the age difference in both settings. The increasing age difference over time between spouses is a common feature for both groups and hence the young women are married to men much senior in age. This temporal rise of 61 percent in the isolated villages is much greater than 27 percent observed in less isolated villages. The largest age difference is found in case of uncle-niece marriages.

The growing gap in age between spouses is not in any case due to declining age of marriage for women; instead it is on the rise as for men. But the rise in case of men surpasses the rise for women. Key informants are of the view that farming is not a 'paying proposition' in general. Most farmers are in debts and this burden threatens to sink the very basis of their economic life. It is considered wise to marry their daughters off before taking up alliances for their sons. If a girl remains unmarried for long beyond 20 years it may be a loss of status
to the family and Kinsmen begin exercising some informal social pressure so as to make the parents concerned make some compromises to facilitate an early marriage. But the present economic conditions do not lend them for marriage of men even in their late twenties and in general gets postponed. Hence men in isolated villages are married much later than those in less isolated villages and this gap tends to widen further.

Female work Participation

The women in less isolated villages contribute about 30 percent more in crop farming than those in isolated villages, the respective femaleness indexes being 45.67 and 35.11 percent. This is accounted by their assuming a greater share in 15 out of 18 tasks enumerated, including chemical manuring and plant protection which are modern functions. The segregation indices for the isolated and less isolated village communities are 0.15 and 0.04.

Women in Animal Husbandry

The percentage of families having draft animals mirrors another aspect of the phenomenon. As described in Chapter V, 88.19 percent in isolated villages have work animals and only 47.65 percent in less isolated villages do so. There is an increasing reliance in the latter on hired services for ploughing and transport of
farmyard manure. It means withdrawal of family men from some traditional activities.

In animal care the participation index for the less isolated sample is not only larger than the one for the other, but also greater than their own men's. The femaleness index for all animal care activities is 53 compared to 42.75 for isolated village women, up by 24 percent. However, there is a decline in the extent of participation by women in the former group. The percentage of households which keep sheep and goats and poultry constitute 19.46 and 0.67 as against 51.39 and 17.36 in the isolated villages. Hence, while their involvement in this sphere is rising the opportunity is being withdrawn in a considerable proportion of households.

**Household Chores**

Though women partake significantly in crop farming and animal husbandry, household tasks remain totally segregated. The male participation index for isolated (7.14) and less isolated (5.71 percent) villages show that in family maintenance, as in economic functions, the latter woman have to assume a greater share. The segregation indices of .42 and .44 also reveal that in the latter it is closer to the total index of 0.5. Thus we find the changes are asymmetrical in the sense that women participate
in predominantly masculine occupations more than men do in feminine occupations. Interchangeability is thus limited. Segregation of feminine tasks is more pronounced in less isolated villages.

**Child Care**

Women are in charge of about two thirds of child care in each sample. However, basic child care which consumes more time and which demands continuous attention is totally women's responsibility.

**Income Disposal**

A marginally lower involvement of women in income disposing functions is noticed in the less isolated sample. The femaleness index is 17.4 against 17.8 for the isolated sample. Ignoring the difference in the decimal, there is no variation in the participation of women in financial transactions in the two samples.

Enhanced economic role has not brought about greater relief from the cumbersome domestic job, nor has it contributed to a correspondingly higher role in income disposal. To look at it from the point of view of opportunities for economic participation, women in less isolated communities have improved their status by entering into traditionally male domains. The same phenomenon may be
interpreted as greater subjugation of women as they are subject to 'over employment'. This is further substantiated by the difference in possession of household gadgets or time-saving devices. In this light there may be lesser time for leisure, for social calls and for sleep and rest, which is a loss in their status.

**Farming and Respondents' Participation**

The individual participation in crop farming is also significantly higher in less isolated villages than in isolated communities. The mean participation score for the former respondents is .47 compared to .36 for the latter.

Among the factors influencing the participation level of women in isolated villages farm size has a negative and significant association; family income, marriage distance and preferential marriages are positively and significantly related to economic participation by women.

On controlling for distance from natality there is a significant association between marriage and farm participation in the close space. Participation is higher in preferential marriages. On the other hand, level of participation declines in preferential marriages when the distance is longer.
When form of marriage was controlled, there is a positive as well as significant relationship between the two variables within non-preferential marriages only. In the case of less isolated villages farm size and depth of existing Kinship network have a significant negative relationship with farm participation by woman. Non-preferential marriages as against preferential characterize higher participation. Farm residence has a negative influence over participation.

Among the positive ones, only family income has a significant relationship. After controlling for distance from natality, preferential marriages have higher participation when the distance is short, but non-preferential marriages are associated with higher participation with greater distance. When marriage was controlled, farm participation decreases with increasing distance in the instance of preferential marriages whereas participation rises with distance in non-preferential marriages.

In terms of mean participation score, the highest score is found with greater distance and non-preferential marriages in both the samples, followed by smaller distance and preferential marriages. But with regard to the lowest participation it occurs with short distance and non-preferential marriages in isolated villages, while it
is obtained for preferential marriages along with longer
distance in the less isolated ones.

The local tradition puts greater emphasis
on economic gains and women are not excluded from economic
roles. The great tradition is oriented to formal role
segregation by sex.

Animal Husbandry

Age of women respondents, is the only variable
significantly associated with their participation in animal
husbandry in isolated villages. The relationship is negative
and hence young women are more active in this sphere.
Participation also declines with increasing farm size. But
rises with income. It also goes up in case of farm residence
and joint families.

In the less isolated villages farm size and
residence have significant association with female partici-
pation in the sphere of animal care. Participation declines
with increasing farm scale and farm residence. Though the
relationship is not found significant women's role declines
with increasing age, rise in family income and in joint
families.
Family Maintenance

The distribution of both the samples by level of participation in household maintenance gives a Chi Square significant at .05 level. Yet, the mean scores of .96 and .94 for the isolated and less isolated villages respectively do not reveal any substantial difference in the level of participation. Men's share in household is .04 in isolated and .06 in less isolated villages. Even this small difference is accounted by enhanced male participation in fetching drinking water in certain special circumstances.

No variable is significantly associated with family maintenance roles in the isolated villages. Dwelling place, family type, farm size, family income, marriage form and distance from natality were the variables analysed. Percentage variations, however, show that men play a lesser role when farm size is larger and income is higher.

When the influence of distance is controlled marriage and participation have a significant association in the 'wider space' (six or more miles of marriage distance) and for all categories but not for the category 'small space' (0-5 miles). Likewise after controlling for form of marriage participation seems to have some variation by distance. For all categories we obtain a Chi Square statistically significant, but not for 'preferential' and 'non-preferential'
marriages categories separately. This is because distance operates in opposite directions in the small and wide spaces. Among preferential marriages the greater the distance the higher the share of men, but among other marriages male participation is found higher with less distance.

The analyses for less isolated villages show that with increasing farm size women's contribution rises and that of men falls. Hence there is a greater segregation when the scale of farming goes up. Though no other factor is found to have any significant relationship to participation, men tend to assume a relatively greater share when they dwell in the farm, have a higher income and in non-preferential marriages.

Child Care

Women in the less isolated villages have a marginally higher participation (mean score=.63) in child care than in isolated villages (mean score .59). The value of the Chi Square shows some significant association between type of sample and participation in Child care.

Village-resident women assume more responsibility for caring young children while on the farm men tend to lend a helping hand in isolated villages. In nuclear families there is less segregation and the association is
also statistically significant. Household size has no bearing on the division of labour in this sphere. When they have large farms men's involvement is more, but when income rises men's role declines.

Among these variables family type and farm size have statistically significant association with role participation. Village residence promotes greater sharing of child care tasks between the sexes. In this sample also less segregation is observed in nuclear families and in small households. More segregation is found with small farms and high income. Family income is the only factor having a significant association with the level of participation.

**Income Disposal**

Women have the least involvement in income disposing tasks and in managing the family finance. There is no difference between the samples in female participation.

In the isolated group, farm size does not affect the distribution of these tasks between men and women, but in high income families women have a higher participation. Joint family is found to involve women in income disposal more than nuclear family. Medium-aged women have the highest involvement followed by old women, and the least participation
is noted for young women. Illiterate women are found to have more involvement than literates. Yet none of these variables has a significant association.

In the case of less isolated villages female participation declines with increasing farm size as well as income. A comparatively higher participation is noticed for women in joint families. Among the age groups, middle-aged women are involved more than others, while the old women have the least involvement.

**Innovation-Decisions**

Women in less isolated villages exercise more power in innovation decisions than women in isolated villages. Work participation in farming, family type, form of marriage and distance from her natality are the variables which have significant association with women's involvement in innovation decisions in isolated villages. Labour force participation level is positively related. They have greater access to decision-making in nuclear families, in non-preferential marriages and when they are away from their natality.

Among other variables, family income has a curvilinear association as middle-income women have greater say in such decisions, and so does age. Probably young women take time to establish their equations and hence low
participation. Old women have less involvement as grown up sons, along with their father, decide mostly. As to the age difference between spouses, participation rises with increasing difference, but when controlled for present age, participation declines with increasing age gap among young women, but among others it rises.

Labour force participation, family income, and age difference are significantly related to involvement in innovation decisions in less isolated villages. Their power in decisions rises with their economic role participation, but declines with increasing income and age difference. It also falls when farm size increases and it is low in joint families. Female participation is higher in non-preferential marriage and when the distance from natality is greater. As in the other sample, among young women their power declines but among the old it rises with age difference.

The mean participation by marriage and distance clearly reveals a pattern: participation is higher in non-preferential than in preferential marriage and in case of larger distance than in smaller. The highest participation naturally is found when both conditions are favourable.
Regular Farm Decisions

As in innovation decisions, women in less isolated villages assume greater responsibility in decisions governing the cropping pattern, application of manure and pesticide, weeding, harvesting and marketing the farm produces. The mean participation score is 1.11 against 0.69 for isolated villages. We also obtain a statistically very significant association for the distribution by type of sample.

Farm residence is favourable to women's participation in regular decisions, but the relationship is not significant in both the samples. Nuclear families are conducive to sharing decision-power by women and the relationship also is significant in both cases. Farm size has a negative and significant association. When income rises female power falls wherein the association is significant in the less isolated sample. Work participation has a positive as well as significant relationship in isolated and less isolated villages.

The relationship between age of respondents and their participation level is significant and it is curvilinear in both groups. Women in 30-44 age have a greater share in decision-making than young and old women. The lowest score obtained for old women may be due to
consolidation of the segregation when sons become active participants. Greater disparity in age between spouses means lesser say for women. However the relationship between the variables is not significant for both samples.

The mean score table brings out an easily discernible relationship. Among young women greater age disparity deprives them while among old women it adds to their family power in isolated villages. In the other sample young women lose with increasing disparity; but the pattern is not very clear among the old. Yet when the age difference is more than 10 years women gain during the old age.

**Child care Decisions**

There is a significant difference in the level of participation by women in child care decisions between the two samples. It is higher in the less isolated villages \( (\bar{X}=1.81) \) than in the isolated group \( (\bar{X}=1.48) \).

No variable is found to be significantly associated with participation in isolated as well as less isolated villages. However, the mean scores a higher share for women in joint families than in nuclear ones. They have a greater say among high income group in the isolated and among the low income segment in the less isolated villages.
Age has a curvilinear association in both groups; middle-aged respondents have greater power than the rest. Educational attainment again is associated in a curvilinear fashion, but primary educated women have the lowest involvement in the isolated and the highest role in less isolated villages.

**Family Expenditure Decisions**

Women have a total power in deciding on the requirements of provisions. Hence this item was not clubbed with others for analysis. So also with purchases during festivals. There is some sharing of power only in decisions relating to buying clothes, and hence the data analysed for possible associations.

Among the variables that have a significant association with participation in family expenditure decisions, age of women is relevant in both groups. The relationship is curvilinear. Economic role participation is positively related (also significant) in the isolated sample, but it is negatively related in the less isolated villages. Age disparity between spouses is found significantly and negatively related in the less isolated villages but the relationship is not significant in isolated communities.
Age difference as well as present age of women have a very significant association with role in family expenditure decisions in less isolated villages. Middle-aged women have the highest and young women the lowest participation. Age disparity has a negative association.

Farm size has a positive association, but it is significant only in case of less isolated villages. Income too has a positive association but significant in the less isolated sample.

Form of marriage and distance from natality have no significant relationship in the two samples. The mean scores for the isolated villages show that the highest involvement comes about when the distance is small in preferential marriages, and the lowest when the distance is greater in the same marriages. In the case of the less isolated sample, the highest participation is found in preferential marriages but when the distance is greater, and the least involvement in non-preferential marriages with greater distance.

The convergence of preferential forms of marriage and less physical distance (or proximity) on the one hand, and non-preferential marriages and greater physical distance on the other hand in bringing about certain patterns
of interpersonal relationships is an interesting phenomenon.

The distance a young girl may travel from her parental to her new home and the degree of familiarity of her surroundings and people play a large part in the degree of dislocation and disorientation these may produce in the early years of marriage and even latter. Their sense of security and self-confidence may be drawn from the condition of being close to her parents and the fact of entering into a family known from her childhood. The frequency of visits by her parents would be greater with lesser distance and they may stay for many days when they visit her in case of preferential alliances. Both the factors tend to reinforce each other. Likewise greater physical distance and social distance involved in new alliances work in the same direction.

The increased work participation with less physical and social distance may be due to the 'little tradition' which has a sway over the cultural elements of the community studied. There is a lesser emphasis on sexual division of labour in the local tradition; but this applies to only farm sphere. In the domestic domain it adds to further segregation.

"Similar findings have not been reported by empirical studies or theoretical approaches."
With greater social and physical distance the 'great tradition' begins to guide the behaviour. Under the impact of industrial and urban influences the 'great tradition' is absorbing new values placing greater emphasis on standards of material life, lesser boundaries between sexes. Therefore, participation rises but under different aegis.