CHAPTER-V
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
OF THE RESPONDENTS
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In order to make an evaluation of the extent of socialization, awareness and perception of the women elite towards the functioning of the PRIs and to estimate the extent and nature of their participation in such grass root level political institutions, it is necessary to know their socio-economic status. The socio-economic factors always have a determining effect on human behaviour. To a great extent, they condition human attitude, influence their orientation and shape the nature of their participation. Social, cultural and economic factors have been widely recognized for playing a significant role in determining the way in which people behave, act and react. Thus, in the present chapter, socio-economic and cultural values of the respondents are taken as explaining or describing variables.

Viewed from such a perspective, in this chapter an analysis has been made on the socio-economic status of the sample respondents. It is expected that this analysis will bring into limelight the factors that influence women’s awareness, articulation and perception about their democratic rights at the grass-root level and their participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

For analyzing the socio economic backgrounds of the women representatives, a well structured interview schedule was canvassed among all the 236 respondents and in filling the schedule questions they had disclosed their personal identity and backgrounds. The outcomes of the analysis is presented below.

Among the social variables, age constitutes an important component. Because variation in age brings not only differentiation in physical ability, but in the mental make-up of the individuals and as such brings corresponding difference in their attitude and response pattern. In some previous studies, it is observed that the elderly people are pessimist and they take less interest in politics which culminates in political apathy and alienation. Optimism, articulation, involvement and better participation in politics are the obvious nature of young-aged
individuals. Considering these repercussions of age, the age structure of the respondents is analysed in the present chapter. The age distribution of the respondents is projected in Table No. V:1

Table No. V:1
Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents under Different Age Group with Their Percentage</th>
<th>N=236</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>&gt;30-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td>68   (32.69)</td>
<td>96  (46.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarapanchas</td>
<td>8   (57.14)</td>
<td>5   (35.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>7   (50.00)</td>
<td>6   (42.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83   (35.17)</td>
<td>107 (45.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Figures in parenthesis show the percentage.

**Fig. V:A**
Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

As it becomes evident from the above table, the elite representatives do not belong to homogenous age group. Their share is highest in the people of >30-43 age group followed by 18-30, >43-56 and is the lowest in >56 and above age group. For the sake of analysis, the 18-30 age group can be designated as
young age group, >30-43 age group as the early middle age group, >43-56 as the late middle age group, >56 and above age group is the old age group.

The study notes that maximum women elite representatives come in the early middle age group. And they state that during this age group they become relatively free from the household burden and they have the courage and confidence to come to the political forum and get the support from the family members. But in the young age group only 35.17 per cent representatives are there in the sample, because of the domestic burdens and restrictions of the family. During this age, the family taboos, the restrictions of early marriage, family responsibilities prevent them to get assimilated in the political process.

However, a downward trend is marked in the post 43 age group because of the lack of education, conservatism, mental slackness among the women which become maximum in the post 56 age group. It is found that the young women in comparison to the elder women are more educated and politically conscious. So, in this study, it is found that women representatives are more in number of young age group than the elder ones.

A position-wise analysis in the Panchayati Raj Institutions indicates that more sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members emerge in the early age group. This shows that young age group women are gradually inducted into politics.

In order to know the socio-economic status and attitudes and orientation of the women elite, the nature of their belongingness to the village where they presently reside is one of the factors to be analysed. The women’s status to a great extent is conditioned by their affiliation to the village. Their belongingness can be of three types, (a) birth place (b) in-law’s place (c) place of migration. When they belong to a village by birth, it is considered as their native village. When they are affiliated to the village by marriage, it is their in-law’s place. But migration takes place only when, a woman has to leave her own village either by her birth or through her marriage and settle in another village because she herself or her husband needs a livelihood by working there. It is always assumed that the women have a better voice and a free choice in their native village where they are free to participate in the political process in comparison to a village to which their belongingness comes later through marriage or migration. The
following table shows the distribution of sample respondents on the basis of their nature of belongingness to the village.

**Table No. V:2**

**Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Their Belongingness to the Present Village.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Birth place</th>
<th>In-laws place</th>
<th>Place of Migration</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td>9 (4.33)</td>
<td>199 (95.67)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>208 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarapanchas</td>
<td>2 (14.29)</td>
<td>12 (85.71)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>14 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>1 (7.14)</td>
<td>13 (92.86)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>14 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (5.08)</td>
<td>224 (94.92)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>236 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parenthesis show the percentage.

The following figure, i.e. V:B represents the percentages of respondents on the basis of their belongingness to the present village.

**Fig. V:B**

**Women Representatives on the Basis of Their Belongingness to the Present Village.**

As it becomes perceptible from the above table, maximum number of women elite i.e., 94.92 per cent are connected to the village which they are getting representation through marriage and as such they are elite in their inlaw’s villages.
Only 5.08 per cent elite give representation to the village of their birth. And none of the women representatives are migrants. Thus, it becomes quite suggestive that marriage instead of preventing women participation in politics promotes their active association with politics. As there is less variation in number of women elite under study, so far as this variable is concerned, this variable does not seem to be important for explaining the units for analysis.

Secondly, as more women are in the age group of 30 and above they are representing the villages to which they are affiliated by their marriage.

A position-wise analysis of women elite suggests that nine ward members, two Sarpanchas and one Panchayat Samiti member are representing to the village of their birthplace. All others belong to the village of their partners.

Caste has been taken as a variable for analysis. The caste system has conventionally been perceived by scholars as hierarchy based on the binary opposition of purity and pollution. The idea of difference, and not hierarchy, determines the tendency of each caste to keep alive its discrete nature and this is also seen to be true of the various castes which occupy the same rank in the hierarchy. It is, in fact, the mechanism of power, both economic and political, that set the ground rules for caste behaviour, which also explains how traditionally opposed caste groups find it possible to align in the contemporary political scenario. Dipankar Gupta with the help of empirical evidence from states like Bihar, Maharastra and Uttarpradesh illustrates any presumed correlation between caste affiliation and participation, which is in reality quite valid.

Thus, caste becomes the very foundation of the Indian society. As Prabhu defines “Caste is comparatively more rigid social class to which transition from another class becomes willy-nigh an impossibility”. However, due to the impact of urbanization and more specially due to the reservation, the mobility has increased in the caste system and different caste groups are accommodated in the local policy making body, i.e., Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, the general observation still records a higher caste groups have better share in politics. Their dominance in politics is a common phenomenon.

In order to testify this observation caste has been taken as a major variable in the present study. For the study purpose, the castes are divided into four categories Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Backward Class (BC) and General Caste (un-reserved) by following the reservation category in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The caste affiliation of the sample respondents have been presented in Table No. V:3.

Table No. V:3

Castes Affiliation of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation of women Respondents</th>
<th>Distribution of Respondent on the Basis of Their Respective Caste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward members</td>
<td>56 (26.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchas</td>
<td>3 (21.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>3 (21.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62 (26.27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parenthesis show the percentage.

The following figure represents the caste affiliation of respondents.
The caste-wise distribution of the respondents as presented in table no. V.3 provides an impression that the women representatives in the PRIs have different caste affiliations. The share of the general caste women is highest among the women representatives being 40.25 per cent. The share of the BCC women candidates is 32.63 per cent. And SC women representatives have a share of 26.27 per cent, while the ST women having the least representation being 0.85 per cent. The least representation of the ST candidate is due to the fact that the block has a very low tribal population. The low share of the SC women is due to the lack of proper education, political awareness and mobilization among women. The dominant share of general caste and BCC members indicates that the Panchayati Raj system is still dominated by the higher caste and the power structure is capitalized by higher caste people. The lower becomes their caste position, limited becomes the access to political power. Had there been no reservation system, it is not possible for the SCs/STs women to come to power at Panchayati Raj Institutions. Because, in past, women of this caste affiliation never represented the people in Panchayati Raj Institutions in this Block under study.

The position-wise classification of the caste affiliation of the women representatives provides an impression that the incumbents of the higher
position in the Panchayati Raj Institution that is the Sarpanehas is still monopolized by the general caste women and BCC representatives. In the entire block fifty per cent of women Sarpanehas belong to general caste, 28.57 per cent belong to BCC category and only 21.43 per cent belong to SC community. No ST women find their representation as Sarpanch. Similarly, the caste affiliation of women Panchayat Samiti members projects the idea that the higher share goes to general caste and BCC representatives being 40.86 per cent and 28.57 per cent respectively and the SC, ST women have a very limited representation as Panchayat Samiti members having a share of only 21.43 per cent and 7.14 per cent respectively. So far as the Ward Members are concerned, the gap is still visible and the maximum share is hijacked by the BCC and general caste members whose share is 33.17 per cent and 39.43 per cent in comparison to 26.92 per cent SC women and 48 per cent ST women.

Religion has been playing a dominant role through all ages in the process of socialization and maintenance of social stability in any society. According to P.B. Kar, “Religion is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment affected by the people in terms of their conception of supernatural”. Such attitude give rise to a coherent system of beliefs and practices concerning supernatural order. According to Malinowski, “Religion is a body of self contained acts being themselves the fulfillment of their purpose”. The role of religion thus assumes paramount significance in different societies whether primitive or modern.

Religion is a very important basis of social identity. In the politics of identity, the division of religion – and to some extent also those of language – tend to operate in the same way as those of tribe and caste. But religion is not just a matter of social identity, it is also a matter of faith. India is a land of different religious faiths, which manifest themselves in different modes of worship. Although religious beliefs and practices are of great importance in the lives of most Indians, but India is a secular state and has secular legal order.

This secular concept excites to study the religious composition of the respondent group and the relative position of the religion in the respondent profile. So, in the present study, religion has been taken as an independent variable and the respondent's affiliation to various religion is analysed. Further, women's affiliation to a particular religion decides her attitude, perception, opinion and orientation because of the ideological mechanism and the normative condition that operate within a particular religion. To quote Deb. "Religion exhibits certain cultural universal and variations and performs functions relative to personalities and societies".

For the purpose of this socio-political analysis, the study tries to record the religion of the respondents which has been presented in Table No. V:4.

Table No. V:4
Religion-wise Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions of women respondents</th>
<th>Religion-wise Distribution of Respondents with percentage</th>
<th>Hindu</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td></td>
<td>202</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(97.12)</td>
<td>(2.88)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchas</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>230</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(97.46)</td>
<td>(2.54)</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parenthesis show the percentage

The distribution of the elected women representatives on the basis of their religion provides the impression that the block is very much Hindu dominated in character as 97.46 per cent of women representatives belong to Hindu religion while 2.54 per cent belong to is Islamic religion. Christianity

as a religion does not find representation through the representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions under the present study.

The position-wise analysis of elected women representatives indicates that cent per cent Sarpanchas and all the Panchayat Samiti members are Hindu while only 2.88 percent Muslim women have got representation as wardmembers in the panchayat under study. Thus, the women representatives reflect the dominance of Hinduism as a religion in democratic institutions and this is very natural as India is a country of Hindu-dominated people. As this Block is habitated mostly by people belonging to Hindu religion and the respondents in this study are mostly Hindu women except a few belonging to Muslim religion, religion here is not considered as a significant explaining variable.

Another indicator of the socio-economic profile of the respondent is their marital status. It plays a very crucial role in the participation of women in political activities and it also determines the awareness, attitude, perception and involvement of women in political activities. In determining the attitude, awareness, behaviour, perception and involvement of women in political activities, marital status of women becomes an explaining variable. Marriage is the very foundation of civil society, and as an institution it admits men and women to family life. In this context, Naidu says that marriage is not a mere social contract, it is essentially a religious sacrament. Its aim is not only to secure physical pleasure for the individual but also to advance his spiritual development. Marriage as an institution casts its pervasive influence on the individual. Sometimes, it casts a positive and sometimes a negative impact. Particularly for the women, it sets taboos, restricts the freedom of choice, prevents them from raising their voices. But at the same time marriage sometimes provides them a passport to join the public sphere. For studying the marital status of the respondent, the researcher divided it into four categories namely; unmarried girls, married women, widows and divorcee women. Divorce is a rare institution in the Indian village. Hence, in the sample respondents, the divorcee category of women is totally absent. The marital status of the respondents has been analysed and presented in Table No. V:5.

### Table No. V :5
**Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Their Martial Status with Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Un-Married</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Widow</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td>9 (4.33)</td>
<td>198 (95.19)</td>
<td>1 (0.48)</td>
<td>208 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchhas</td>
<td>2 (14.29)</td>
<td>12 (85.71)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>14 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>1 (7.14)</td>
<td>13 (92.86)</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>14 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (5.08)</td>
<td>223 (94.49)</td>
<td>1 (0.43)</td>
<td>236 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: Figures in parenthesis show the percentage

The following chart represents the marital status of respondents.

**Fig. V : D**

**Marital Status of Sample Respondents**

The foregoing table clearly exhibits that married women elite being 94.49 percent over shadow and the other categories of women representatives that is unmarried and widows. The share of unmarried women is 5.08 per cent while the widow women have got the least representation of 0.43 per cent. Thus, the study comes to a conclusion that marriage seems to be a promoter of the active political participation for women. As the married women get the support of their family members particularly they become the proxy representatives.
of their male partners, their share is higher in the forum of Panchayats. The share of unmarried girls is very low because of their young age people do not want to accommodate them in politics and sometimes they think that by marriage they have to leave the village for which they do not accept them in the political body. For the widows, family support is least. Sometimes their age factor prevents them to join the political body. Thus, the married women have a greater advantage in getting representation to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. As the number of unmarried and divorcee women is very less, marital status of the respondents cannot be taken as an explaining variable.

Education has long been considered as one of the most decisive factors of an individual’s life chances, key to equal opportunity and the ladder for advancement. Without education and especially without equal educational experiences or skills and qualifications, men and women alike of certain classes and social groups have over the years been condemned to inferior lives in their personal development, in their choice of work as citizens and their power to influence government, leadership and the national decision making process which affect their local lives. Not only education has got impact for the development of the individual but its pervasive ramifications find manifestation in the society as well. Education is a means of social change and development.

Moreover, it has been rightly said that by educating a woman we educate the whole family. The assumption behind women's education is to equip her with potentialities to discharge multiple roles as citizens, housewives, mothers and contributors to family income and builders of the new society. In realization of the importance of education in general, and the need for equality in opportunities for the intellectual development of men and women, successive Five-Year Plans have placed emphasis on the spread of women's education.

Education is expected to improve the quality of life and to remove ignorance of the people in the society. It would provide the women their power

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to explore their potentials and would minimize their internal stress that they are among the neglected lot. Once they become free from the feeling of unwantedness, they will be able to incur new ideas into their active mental process. It is only when they will be given their due share of human dignity and opportunity, they will gain confidence to develop their analytical decision-making ability. As education becomes a pre-condition and a potential condition to stir political awareness and participation, in the present study, education has been taken as a major variable of analysis.

In order to know the educational qualification of the sample respondents, the researcher divided the level of education into four categories – very low level of education (just literate), low level education (under-matric), middle level of education (matric to graduate) and higher level of education (post graduate qualification and technical qualification). The educational qualification of the respondents has been presented in Table No. V:6

Table No. V:6
Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Their Educational Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation of Respondents</th>
<th>Level of Education of Respondents along with percentage in each Group.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very low (Just literate)</td>
<td>Low (Under-matric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward members</td>
<td>9 (4.33)</td>
<td>172 (82.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchas</td>
<td>1 (7.14)</td>
<td>3 (21.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
<td>4 (28.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (4.24)</td>
<td>179 (75.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figure in parenthesis shows the percentage.

The following figure represents the educational qualification of women representatives.
So far as, education based classification of the sample is concerned, it is observed that out of total number of 236 respondents 75.85 per cent respondents have low level of education and their qualification is under – matric. The level of education varies form Matric to Graduate among 18.64 percent of the respondents. A very small amount of respondent are highly educated, their percentage is only 1.27 percent. 4.24 percent of the respondent have very low level of education. They are in the category of just literate group and they only know the Oriya alphabets. However, there is no illiterate persons among the women elite in block under study.

A position-wise analysis of the educational qualification of the women representatives clearly indicates that among the ward members none have very high educational qualifications. While 82.69 per cent of women wardmember have undermatric qualification, only 12.98 per cent have middle level of educational qualification that ranges from matriculation to graduation. 4.33 per cent of ward members have a very low educational qualification being just literate. So far as the Sarpanchas are concerned, their educational scenario seems to be little better. 21.43 per cent have a high educational qualification and they have either a post-graduate degree or B.Ed degree. Fifty per cent of the Sarpanchas have graduate level qualifications. 21.43 per cent are undermatric while, only 7.14 per cent are just literate. So far as the
Panchayat Samiti members are concerned, their educational qualification hovers round middle and low levels of educational qualifications. 71.43 per cent of the Panchayat Samiti members have the qualification of matric to graduate level while 28.57 per cent are undermatriculates.

Thus, the study notes that the bulk of the women representatives have still very low level of educational qualifications. The higher the qualification better is their ranking. And most of the representatives lack adequate educational background to perform their role adequately and effectively in Panchayats.

Society is a conglomeration of families. The institution regulating the personal life of the individual is family. In rural households, the nature of the family has an important correlation with the participation of people in political activities especially, it determines the level of awareness and participation of the women. In Indian society there are mainly two types of families, the nuclear and the joint family. In rural society, mostly families are larger in size in which the members of two or more generations live together sharing a common life. Such a family system may be termed as joint family. Particularly, the members of a joint family have very little or no freedom. They are guided and often suppressed by the male authority known as patriarchy and worse is the condition of the new brides in the joint families.

The traditional joint family system is patriarchal in form. The head of the family or "Karta" is all in all under the joint family system. He is the sole authority to take any decision in family affairs. This decision is usually thrust on other members. The women cannot but go by this under the patriarchal family system. Thus, dependency grows at the expense of independence of thought. There is no scope for full development of women's personality under patriarchal system. So, their participation in political activities is very low. The taboos, conservatism, patriarchy and the overall workload, of a joint family always is thrust upon the women as the studies of Katherin Gough suggests. The restricted environment prevents her from participation in the decision-

making process at home. So, it has a negative impact on the political socialization of the woman. The polar extreme of joint family is the nuclear family.

The nuclear family is an adaptation to the requirements of industrial society. The family consists of only father, mother and their children. They are attracted by the western type of small family based on love, equality and freedom. In this type of family both husband and wife confront each other in terms of equality.\textsuperscript{10} Leadership is well fostered in this type of modern family. Hence, political socialization of the women takes place in a healthier manner.

So, considering from this angle, the present study tries to document the nature of household of the respondents which is presented in Table No. V:7.

\textbf{Table No. V:7}

\textbf{Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Their Nature of Families}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Name of the positions} & \textbf{Nature of Families of the Respondents} & \textbf{Nature of Families of the Respondents} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
& \textbf{Nuclear} & \textbf{Joint} & \textbf{Total} & \\
\hline
Ward Members & 104 & 104 & 208 & \\
& (50.00) & (50.00) & (100.00) & \\
Sarpanchas & 9 & 5 & 14 & \\
& (64.29) & (35.71) & (100.00) & \\
Panchayat Samiti Members & 10 & 4 & 14 & \\
& (71.43) & (28.57) & (100.00) & \\
Total & 123 & 113 & 236 & \\
& (52.12) & (47.88) & (100.00) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textbf{Note}: Figures in parenthesis show the percentage.

The following figure indicates the nature of families of the sample respondents.

As it becomes perceptible from the above table, the women representatives have their nuclear and joint family affiliations. 52.12 per cent women representatives claim themselves to be hailing from nuclear families while 47.88 per cent women respondents still belong to joint family structure. This gives a clear impression that till now the women representatives are not fully away from the clutches of the joint family structure which becomes a dominant syndrome of rural social structure. Secondly, the patriarchal influence is in the process of decline as a good share that is 47.88 per cent women from the joint families have appeared in the decision making forum of the Panchayats. Thus, representation for the women in Panchayati Raj Institutions is creating a pathway for ensuring a greater freedom for women in joint family structure.

The position-wise analysis indicates that the women wardmembers are equally distributed between the nuclear and joint family structure, their share being 50 per cent from each type of household. But so far as the Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members are concerned, the women from the nuclear families dominate the scenario, their share being 64.29 and 71.43 per cent respectively. In these two key positions the participation of women from joint family set up is perceptibly low being 35.71 and 28.57 per cent respectively.

Thus, it emerges from the study that in higher political position, more women are represented from the nuclear families because of their greater
freedom, higher education and modern outlook which are still absent with 
the women in the joint families.

Not only the social factors, but also the economic forces play a catalyst 
role in determining an individual’s access to the life chances. So from this 
perspective, the economic profile of the respondents have also been analysed. 
The economic profile basically consists of two interrelated aspects. They are 
the occupation and the income of the individual. Occupation means gainful 
economic engagement which provides an engagement to the person along 
with some monitory yield. The monitory yield is the income. So the sociologists 
like Donaldlight and Keller define income as “What a person earns and 
property as what a person owns”11. Normally it is observed that poor economy 
of a family brings the woman to the forefront for engagement in gainful 
economic pursuit. The better the economy, the less is the stress on women’s 
employment. Among the life chances, participation in grassroot political 
activities is quite significant. Even if there is a world wide sensitization that 
women’s participation in politics is a fundamental human right, yet women 
ignore it due to their poor economic condition. So, the concept of family 
economy, occupation, women’s employment, women’s participation and their 
familial support for participation are interlinked with each other.

So, women’s economic empowerment is absolutely essential for raising 
their status in society and bringing them to the political forum12. It is viewed 
by the sociologists like Kausik and Heptullah that there is a necessary forward 
linkage between economy of a woman and the level of her participation. A 
starving woman has neither a choice nor a voice, so political participation 
cannot be expected from her.

The occupation of a woman also determines her socio-economic status. 
For the purpose of analysis, the study has divided the household occupation 
into five main categories. The five categories of occupation are, (i) 
Government job (ii) Private job (iii) Private business (iv) Cultivation and (v)

Newyork.
Ltd. New Delhi, p.189.
Daily wage work. In our study, we try to codify only the primary occupation because it is the main occupation of a woman. So, the women representative's occupation has been presented in Table No. V:8.

**Table No. V:8**

Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Their Household Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Distribution of Respondents on The Basis of their Household occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td>0 (1.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchas</td>
<td>0 (1.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>0 (1.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0 (0.21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**: Figures in parenthesis shows the percentage.

Out of the 236 women representatives in Block, 73 (30.93%) women are simple housewives and they have no occupation for self. 8.48 percent of women are doing job in various private organisations and 11.44 percent of women representatives are working in private business like handicrafts, selling of milk, eggs, chicken etc. 12.29 percent of women representatives are wage earners and they are represented as ward members.

The position-wise analysis of the occupation of the women representatives shows that cultivation is the dominant occupation of the women representatives of all categories followed by housewife without any job, daily wage working. 13.94 per cent of the ward members depend on wage earning, while none of the Sarpanchas or Panchayat Samiti members claim it to be their occupation.

Thus, the study notes that while women from cultivating class, and simple housewives are dominant as Sarpanchas and housewives followed by
cultivating class are dominant as Panchayat Samiti members. So when none of the Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members represent the wage earning class, it clearly indicates that these women prefer cultivation or private business more than the daily wage earners.

Income can be treated as a major index of an individual’s economic position. Income is what a person earns to maintain himself and his family. So in the present study, income has been taken as an indicator of the economic conditions of the households that from which respondents have been selected for the study. In the present study, each respondent is asked to furnish the total household income. On the basis of annual family income, the researcher has categorised the women respondents into four groups, namely, poor (less than 18,000/-) above the poverty line between (18,001 – 30,000/-), middle income group (between 30,001– 60,000/-) and rich (60,001 & above). The declaration of the household income of the respondents has been codified in Table No. V:9.

**Table No. V:9**

Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Their Annual Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Annual Household Income of the Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor (Below 18,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Members</td>
<td>62 (29.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpanchas</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Members</td>
<td>0 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62 (26.27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parenthesis shows the percentage.
The following figure indicates the annual household income of the respondents

**Fig. V:G**

**Annual Household Income of the Respondents**

As it becomes discernible from the above table, 32.63 per cent women respondents have an annual household income which is above poverty line that is Rs. 18,001 – 30,000. The share of respondents within the middle income group is 29.66 per cent. 26.27 per cent women representatives belong to below poverty line households while 11.44 per cent representatives reflect their rich household income.

The position-wise analysis of the women representatives spells out that 29.81 per cent wardmembers represent the below poverty line households while none of the Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members do belong to this category. It clearly reflects higher position in the Panchayats is monopolized by women from higher income group. The Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members primarily belong to middle income group. Their share being 50 per cent and 78.57 per cent respectively. In some cases, they represent the household above poverty line and their share being 35.71 per cent and 14.28 per cent as Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members respectively. And rarely they belong to a rich category when 14.29 per cent and 7.14 per cent women leaders emerge from this background. The
wardmembers are differentially distributed in all the income groups. The highest is 33.65 per cent in the above poverty line, 29.81 per cent below poverty line, 25 per cent in the middle income group and 11.54 per cent in the rich category.

Summary

The present chapter makes an analysis of the socio-economic profile of the respondents under study. The socio-economic profile includes or delves into age structure of women respondents, nature of belongingness to the present village, their caste affiliation, religious background, marital status, level of education, nature of family, occupation and income. Each of these aspects of the respondent is independently studied and the outcome is documented as follows.

• So far as the age structure is concerned, maximum women representatives belong to 31-43 age group and their share is 45.34 per cent. This age group is termed as early middle age group which finds women in the relax stage from the domestic burden and prompts them to enter into politics. However, the younger women that is between 18-30 age group emerge more as Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members. Their education and modern outlook seem to be factors that take them to such positions.

• Maximum women elite that is 94.92 per cent represent the village to which they belong as daughter in-laws. So, marriage seems to provide a leverage to the women to join in the politics.

• The caste affiliations of the women representatives indicate that 40.25 per cent women representatives come from the general caste background (un-reserved) followed by the BCC who are 32.63 per cent in the Panchayats of the block. The higher positions like Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members are still monopolized by the general caste women (un-reserved category) which shows that still higher caste dominance is reflected in the Panchayats.

• The religious background of the women representatives is quite indicative that the women belonging to Hindu religion dominate the
Panchayati Raj Institutions. Their share being 97.46 per cent. As the Block is dominated by Hindu majority this is also reflected in respondent structure.

- 94.49 per cent women representatives are married and they overshadow the un-married and widows whose share is 5.08 and 0.43 percent respectively. The married women have greater vitality, vigour and support from their male partners which help them to strengthen the root in the politics.

- The reflection on educational qualification of the representatives indicates that the bulk of them, i.e., 75.85 per cent have a very low educational status and to be more specific they are undermatric so far as the qualification is concerned.

- The women representatives represent both the nuclear and joint family association. While 52.12 per cent have a nuclear family background and 47.88 per cent represent their joint families affiliation. So far as the positions of Sarpanchas and Panchayat Samiti members are concerned, women from nuclear families seem to dominate these two key positions. This brings an impression that nuclear families propel the women to reach at the height of decision-making process.

- Cultivation emerged as the dominant occupation of the women representatives. Many of the women representatives are housewives without any job.

- So far as the income analysis is concerned, 26.27 per cent women representatives still represent below the poverty line households while only 11.44 per cent women representatives reflect that the rich household income 32.63 per cent women claim to be having the annual income between Rs. 18,001 – 30,000 which is also quite meager. Thus, the women representatives are not economically sound and empowered and that seems to be making them timid in the political sphere. The higher positions in the Panchayati Raj hierarchy are capitalized by women from middle income group and rich income group.