

CHAPTER-4

Socio-Economic And Political Background of The Respondents

Women empowerment through democracy and panchayati raj institutions and women empowerment are undivided and each of them give meaning and force each other. Politics do not run in vacuum, in this context socio-economic and political environment are played major role and panchayati raj institutions are not exception of it .¹Socio-economic and political status of women depend much upon their basic background, characteristics pertaining to their own personality and the society in which they live. The Socio-economic profile is fundamental to any study as it helps in building a comprehensive and complete picture of the respondents. Several socio-economic factors have been taken in to account, in this study that give a good idea about the background and the profile of the women PRIs members under study .²For drawing up a rational picture of the participation of women in political activities, a sample of 274 women members of PRIs was randomly drawn from the members list of 1348. Another sample of 100 male members and 25 officials was also randomly drawn from the same member's list to study the attitude of men towards women.³ The individual profile is derived by looking at factors such as age, caste, religion, marital status, type of the family, educational level, occupation and annual income of the respondents.⁴ The education and occupation level of the respondent's husband is also taken into account to gauge the economic status of the family.

4.1 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The profile of background characteristics of respondents covered by this study is presented here under:

Table No: 4.1
Showing educational status of representatives

Educational status	Number	Percent
Uneducated status	45	16.
Uneducated	94	34.3
Primary level	63	22.9
Junior high school level	32	11.6
High school level	30	10.9
Graduate level	07	2.5
Post graduate level	03	1.09
Total	274	100

Figure 4.1 Showing educational status of representatives

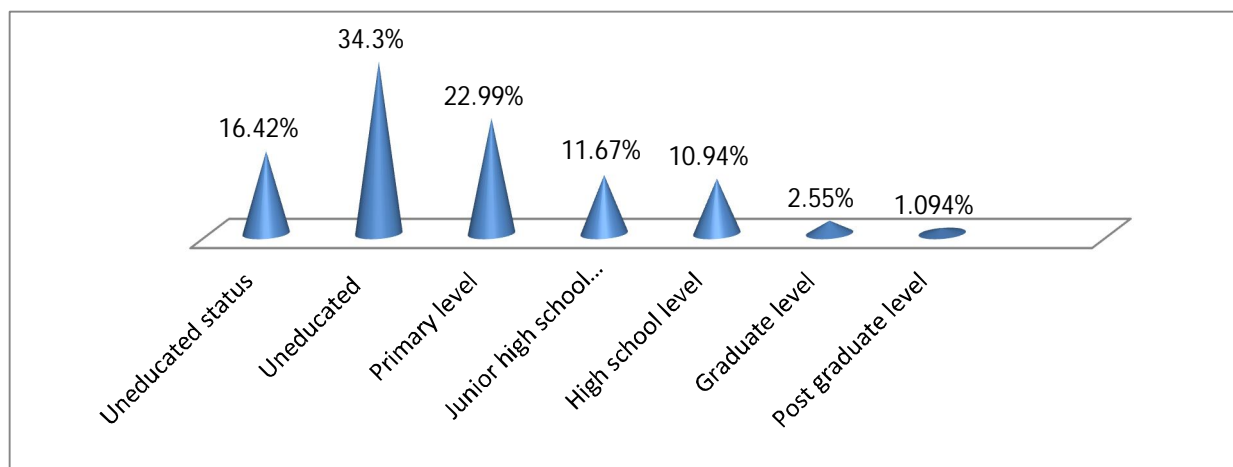
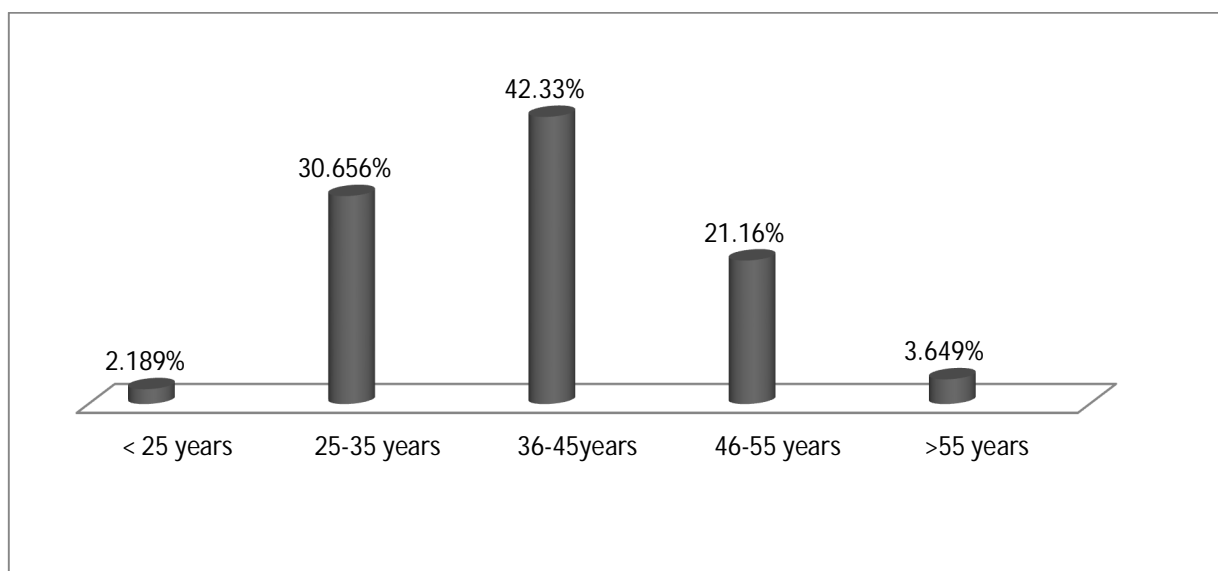


Table & figure No. 4.1 illustrate the education status of representatives. 16.42 percent representatives had uneducated, 34.30 percent had educated till primary level, 22.99 percent had acquired education up to high school level, 11.67 percent had educated till high school level, 10.94 percent had acquired up to intermediate level, 2.55 percent had educated till graduation level and only 1.094 percent representatives had educated till post graduate level. It can be said that 68.96 percent women representatives had educated till from primary level to high school level. It is alarming points for policy makers and PRIs, and it would create many hardness before women representatives. In addition, uneducated and educated below junior high school level representatives have been facing many hardness for years.

Table 4.2
Showing age wise division of the respondents

Age group	Number	Percent
< 25 years	06	2.189
25-35 years	84	30.656
36-45years	116	42.3357
46-55 years	58	21.167
>55 years	10	3.649
Total	274	100

Figure 4.2 Showing age wise division of the respondents



An analysis of the present age of women members as presented in Table & figure 4.2 reveals that about 42.3 percent of women were below 45 years of age, 21.167 per cent of women were above 45 years and 3.649 per cent of women were above 55 years of age. About 30.6 percent of women were below 35 years of age, and 2.18 per cent of women were less than 25 years of age. This shows that marriage and motherhood do not seem to inhibit women from seeking a political career .The mean age of women in PRIs is 39.78 years, It is being said that the majority of female realized the value of local political decentralization. They are more mobile in comparison with the older generation and have broken the traditional barriers.

Table No: 4.3

Table showing Religion-Wise categorization of Respondents

Name of Religion	Number	Percentage
Hindus	206	75.18
Muslims	58	21.16
Sikhs	10	3.64
Total	274	100

Figure 4.3 showing Religion-Wise categorization of Respondents

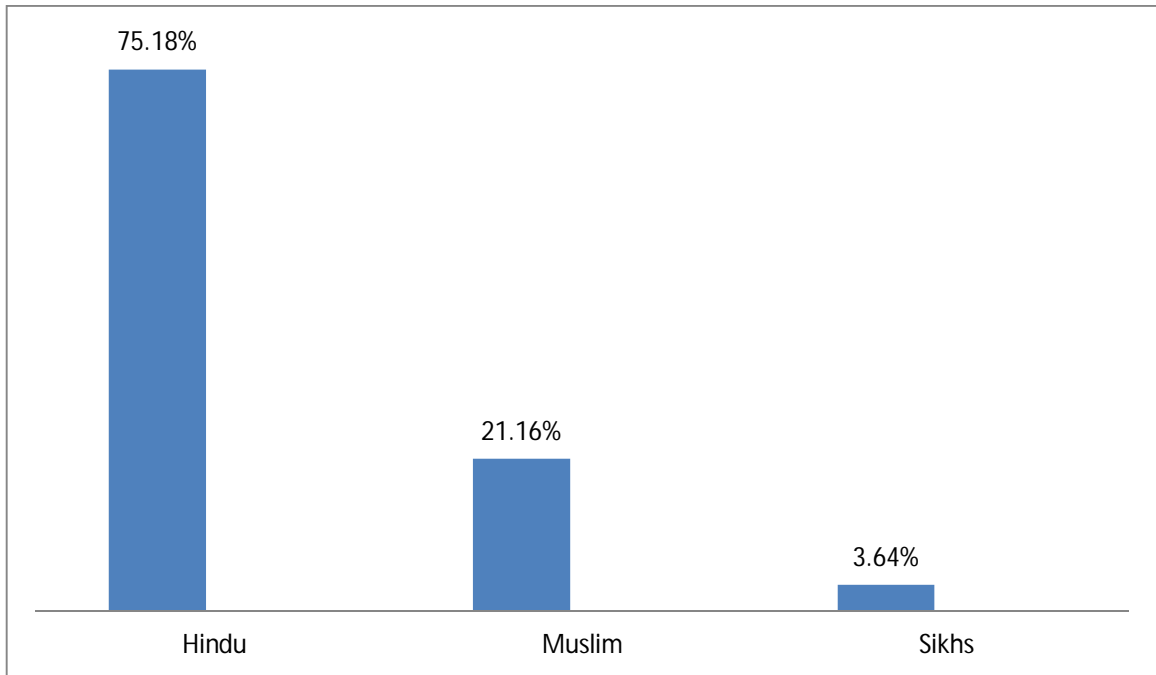


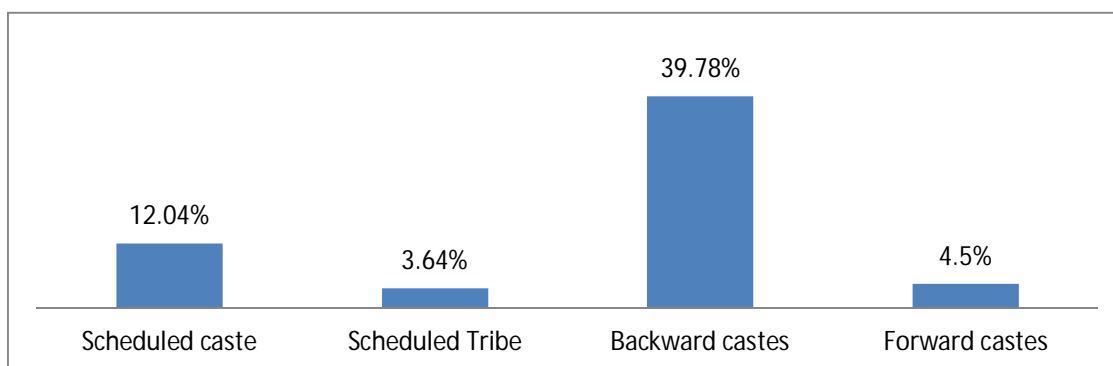
Table & figure No. 4.3 presents religion-wise categorization of representatives. Hindu had contributed 75.18 percent, Muslims had contributed 21.16 percent and Sikhs had contributed 3.64 percent. The religion-wise data had represented that a absolute majority of women members were Hindus, 21.16 percent women representatives were represented to Muslims and 3.64 percent were represented to Sikhs. It is clear result came out as to population of each religion and it is a good sign for democracy and PRIs. But other minorities can not got any representation in PRIs. It is not authentic feature for PRIs and democracy. In a mature democracy, voting pattern should not be based to religious attitude.

Table No. 4.4

Caste-wise classification of the representatives

Caste level	Number	Percent
Scheduled caste	33	12.04
Scheduled Tribe	10	3.64
Backward castes	109	39.78
Forward castes	122	44.52
Total	274	100

Figure 4.4 Caste-wise classification of the representatives



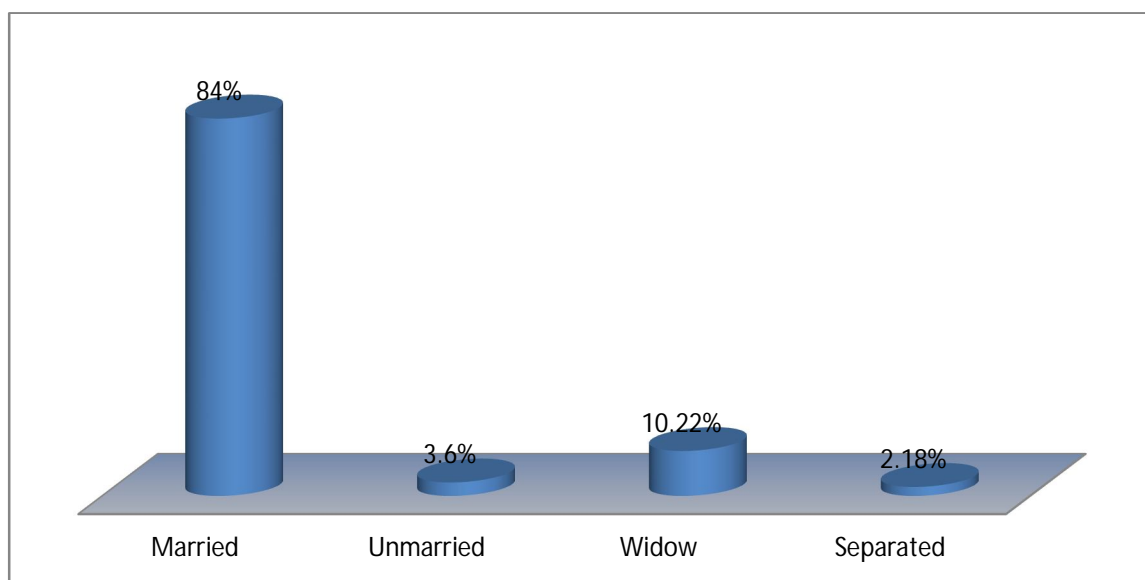
Caste structure of representatives has been depicted in Table & figure No. 4.3. It shows that about 44.52 per cent of the members belonged to the forward castes/communities. The representation for the scheduled caste is 12.04 percent, while scheduled tribe is 3.64 percent and 39.78 per cent for the backward castes. The one-third representation of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women in the PRIs clearly indicates that the reservation of seats for them in general and women in particular ensured the participation of women. It may be pointed out that 73rd constitutional amendment introduced reservation of seats for women in gram panchayats. This reservation was based on population of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes. It is instrumental in bringing the socially and economically backward sections of the people to the main stream of politics.

Table No. : 4.5

Table showing Marital Status of Representatives in PRIs

Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Married	229	84
Unmarried	10	3.6
Widow	29	10.22
Separated	06	2.18
Total	274	100

Figure 4.5 showing Marital Status of Representatives in PRIs



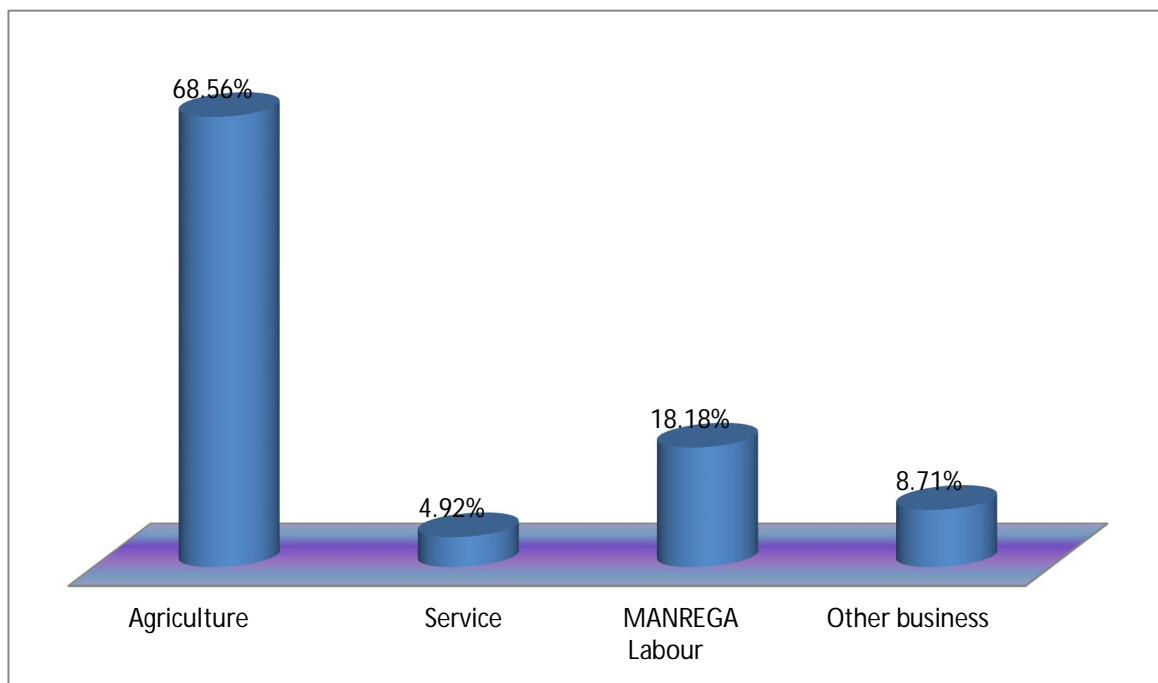
Data on the marital status of women members are given in Table & figure No. 4.5. It shows that 84 per cent of women members were married. Only 3.6 percent of the members were unmarried. Among the married respondents, 10.22 were widows. 2.18 members of the sample study were separated. The table reveals that majority is married women and they are able to balance their roles as gram panchayat members/vice presidents/presidents with their role in the family. The participation of more number of widows indicates their faith in the political empowerment of women through grass-roots level democratic institutions.

Table No. 4.6
Husband's Occupation of the female Respondents

Occupation	Number	Percent
Agriculture	181	68.56
Service	13	4.92
MANREGA Labour	48	18.18
Other business	23	8.71
Total	*264	100

***Note:** Total number of respondents was not equal to 274 as 10 respondents were unmarried.

Figure 4.6 Husband's Occupation of the female Respondents



The occupational status of the spouses of the women PRIs members illustrated in Table & figure No. 4.6 shows that the Primary occupation of the majority of them, i.e., 68.56 percent was agriculture, 18.18 per cent was labour work, 8.71 percent was other business and 4.92 per cent was private service. It revealed that a majority of PRIs members' spouses were engaged in the agricultural activities as cultivators.

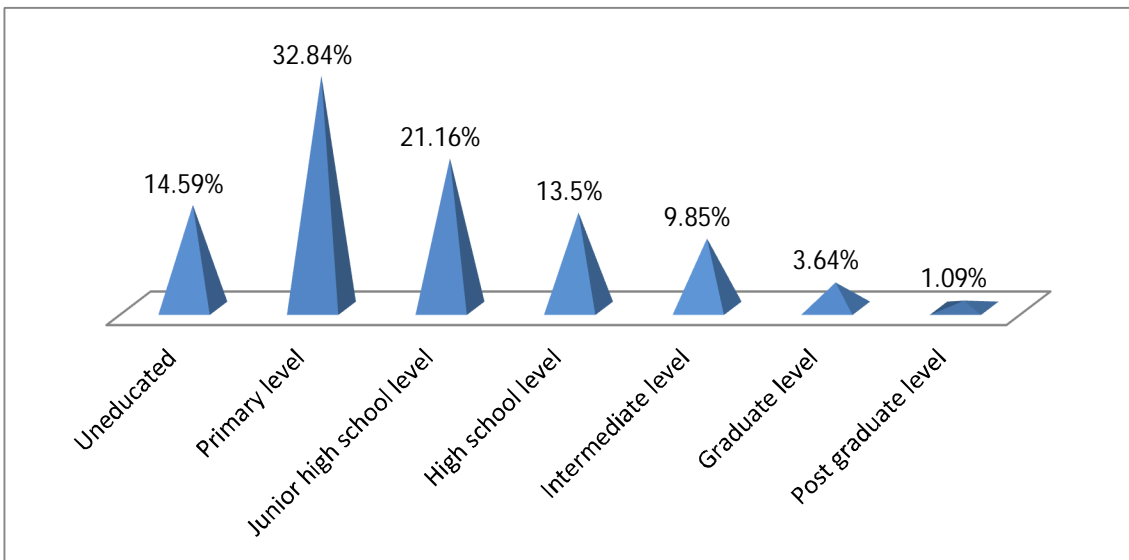
Table No. 4.7

Table showing the Educational Qualification of Spouses

Educational Level	Number	Percent
Uneducated	40	14.59
Primary level	90	32.84
Junior high school level	58	21.16
High school level	37	13.50
Intermediate level	27	9.85
Graduate level	10	3.64
Post graduate level	03	1.09
Total	*265	100

***Note:** Total number of respondents was note equal to 274 as 9 respondents were unmarried.

Figure 4.7 showing the Educational Qualification of Spouses

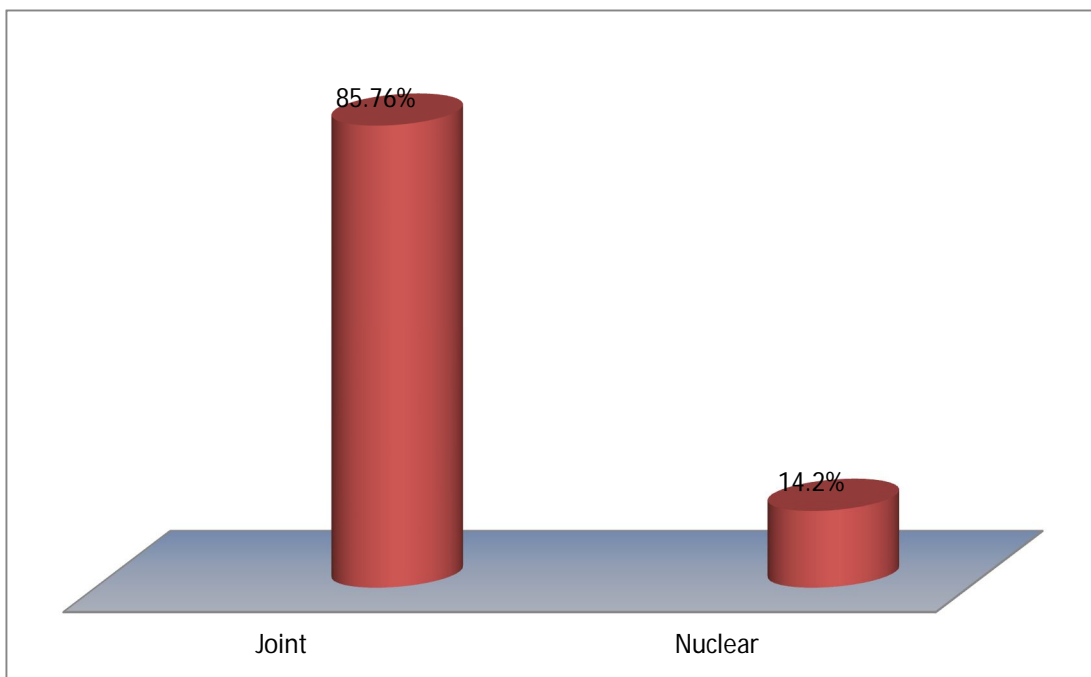


The educational characteristics of the spouses of respondent are illustrated in Table & figure 4.7. 14.59 percent spouse had uneducated, 32.84percent had educated till primary level, 21.16 percent had acquired education up to junior high school level, 13.50 percent had educated till high school level, 9.85 percent had acquired up to intermediate level, 3.64 percent had educated till graduation level and only 1.09 percent representatives had educated till post graduate level. It can be said that 82.09 percent spouse had educated till from primary level to high school level.

Table No. 4.8
Showing Type of Family structure of Respondents

Type of family	Number	Percentage
Nuclear	39	14.2
Joint	235	85.76
Total	274	100

Figure 4.8 Showing Type of Family structure of Respondents

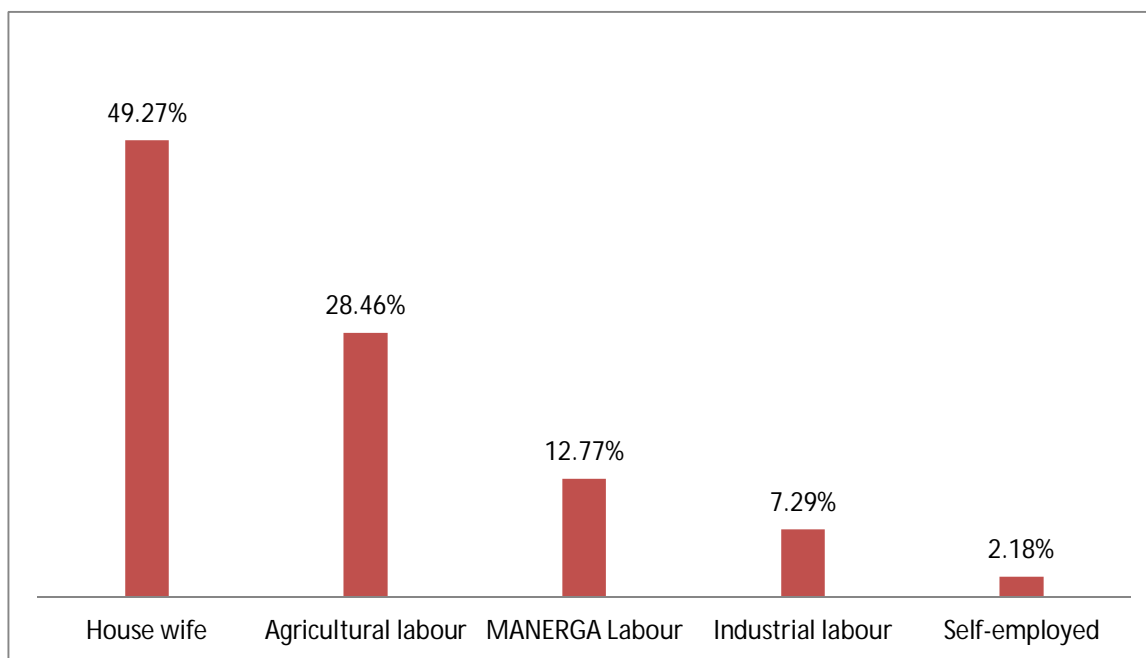


Classification of respondents according to the type of family has been shown in Table & figure No. 4.8. It is observed that 85.76 per cent of families were joint families, while remaining 14.2 per cent were nuclear families. An overwhelming majority of the respondents is from Joint family system. Therefore it can be concluded that respondents have other members in the family to look after the members in the family and other affairs of the family such as education, welfare of children etc.

Table No. 4.9
Occupational –wise classification of the Respondents

Occupation	Number	Percentage
House wife	135	49.27
Agricultural labour	78	28.46
MANERGA Labour	35	12.77
Industrial labour	20	7.29
Self-employed	06	2.18
Total	274	100

Figure 4.9 Occupational –wise classification of the Respondents



The occupational status of the respondent presented in Table & figure No.4.9. The majority 49.27 percent of them were engaged in the Household related non-economic activities as house wives, 28.46 percent of the PRIs two men members were working as agricultural labourers. 7.29 per cent of them were working as (factory) industrial workers. 12.7 per cent of members were working as MANERGA Labour and 2.18 per cent of them were engaged in self employment. The occupational skills of respondents in all selected PRIs are also uniformly low. This is also reflected in the income levels of the respondents.

Table No. 4.10

Income- Wise classification of the Respondents

Annual income	Number	Percent
Less thanRs.11,000/-	123	44.89
11,000/- to 25,000/-	71	25.9
26,000/- to 50,000/-	38	13.86
51,000/ to 75,000/	23	8.39
76,000/ to 1,00,000/-	13	4.7
Above 1,00,000/-	06	2.18
Total	274	100

Figure No. 4.10 Income- Wise classification of the Respondents

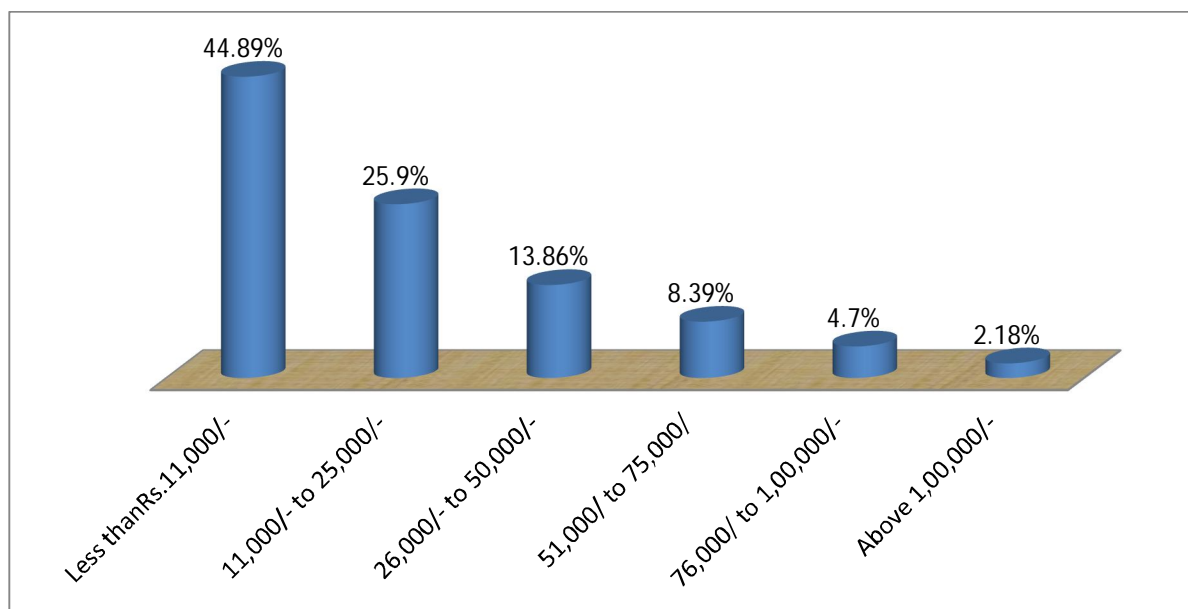


Table & figure No. 4.10 presents income distribution across members. The majority 44.89 per cent of the respondents has annual income of less than Rs.11, 000/-This is due to the higher number of respondents engaged as agricultural labourers and House Wives. Income groups Rs.11,000/ -to Rs.25,000/- covered 25.9 percent and Rs.25,000/- to Rs.50,000/ covered 13.86 percent and Rs.50,000 to 75,000/- covered 8.39 per cent and Rs.75,000/- to 1,00,000/- covered 4.7 per cent and remaining 2.18 percent families had in come above Rs.1,00,000/- .This is because many seem to be engaged in home-based occupations, which are not perceived as profession. It was found that large number of respondents fell in the low income group.

It was well visualized that very little opportunities and freedom have been provide to women to participate in educational systems, social and cultural activities and in seeking employment in rural areas of selected 1348 respondents of PRIs, due to traditionally developed and prevailing backward social and cultural system.⁵ Inequalities in work participation were highly prevalent among the women of different castes and income groups. The women among the upper castes and those belonging to economically sound households were hardly participating in different economic activities even in the family enterprises and agricultural operations. The existence of some strict practices in Muslim communities restricts the ladies to participate in different social and religious functions. However, the unmarried girls had little more opportunities than the married women to participate in different activities and to move outside households.⁶ The proportion of literate women representatives was significantly higher than in the previous years.

The economic activities of different categories of respondents show that agricultural operations were generally performed by the women members belonging to low-income group's .⁷ The women members belonging to upper castes and higher economic background participated more in other economic activities apart agricultural work. By and large some women members of PRIs had relatively higher level of freedom to move outside households and to participate indifferent economic, social, cultural and political activities.⁸ At the same time, various studies also postulate the fact that poverty is not the sole cause; other socio-cultural factors also influence the phenomena of women respondents' participation in work.

The intervention of government to secure the representation of women in local level panchayati raj institutions in rural areas through introducing the reservation policy for women could be an important planning initiative for maximizing the role and participation of women in different socio-economic, cultural, political and decision-making processes of the family affairs and to bring out significant change in their socio-economic status and empowerment. However, the level of success of the concerned motives would mainly depend upon the socio-economic and political background and related basic characteristics of women elected as the representatives of different panchayats.⁹ The advantages of introducing reservation policy have gone largely in favor of women belonging to socio-economically and politically sound background.

4.11-References:

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