

## CHAPTER - III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF LEADERS

The behaviour of the leaders at any level can fully be explained by making a close investigation of the environment in which they grow and develop. It is argued that socially influential leaders emerge from those sections of the community which are accorded upper socio-economic status. Community studies made in India in recent years have used age, sex, caste, income, land holdings, education, family size, occupation etc., as the main variables that constitute the index of socio-economic status. Certainly these demographic variables give some insight into the social and economic background of the rural leadership. In this chapter an effort is being made to describe these basic variables of rural leadership.

## Demographic Features of the Respondents under study :

In Table No. 1 the information regarding age of the respondents is given.

Table No. 1

## Age-wise Distribution of the Respondents.

| Sr. No.  | Age Group     | Number | % to the Total |
|----------|---------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.       | 25 - 30 years | 01     | 2.22           |
| 2.       | 31 - 40 years | 08     | 17.77          |
| 3.       | 41 - 50 years | 10     | 22.23          |
| 4.       | 51 - 60 years | 13     | 28.89          |
| 5.       | Over 61 years | 13     | 28.89          |
| Total :- |               | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected with personal interviews.

We have classified age in five categories for our sample. Out of total sample of 45, 22.23 % respondents are between 41 and 50, 28.89 % are between 51 and 60 and 28.89 % are over 60 years of age. This age distribution of rural leaders also suggests that age is not an decisive factor in dotormining loadorship. The loadorship

is not controlled by either young or old, but can be seen among all age groups. On the basis of this it can be argued that leadership is no longer based on seniority by age alone, but also related to one's own capacity to deliver services and lead the masses.

Sex Composition :

Table No. 2

Sex Composition of Respondents.

| Sr. No. | Sex      | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|----------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Male     | 38     | 84.45          |
| 2.      | Female   | 07     | 15.55          |
|         | Total :- | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

In a total sample of 45, we have only 07 female respondents. We note that 84.45 percent of our leaders are male and just 15.55 percent of our leaders are female. This shows that even

today women in India, particularly in rural areas, still occupy traditional roles and in only a few cases have they taken on the role of leadership.

Religion :

Religion plays an important role in determining leadership. The area under study is having majority of Hindus, hence it is seen that all the leaders under study have come from Hindu religion only. The term Hindu includes Jain, Lingayat and others except Muslims and Christians.

Table No. 3 given below shows that the leadership has come from Hindu religion.

Table No. 3

Religion-wise Distribution of the Respondents.

| Sr. No.  | Religions    | Number | % to the Total |
|----------|--------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.       | <u>Hindu</u> | 45     | 100 %          |
| 2.       | Muslim       | Nil    | -              |
| 3.       | Other        | Nil    | -              |
| Total :- |              | 45     | 100 .00        |

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Source : Information collected with personal interviews.

It is obvious that the overwhelming majority of our respondents are Hindus by religion. It is clear that leadership is closely related to the size of the population of various religions in respected area.

Caste :

The relationship between caste superiority and power has been demonstrated in a number of village studies in India. Sociologists have found in their studies that socially influential actors often stem from higher castes who are ritually superior and economically better off than the vast majority of middle and lower classes.

Table No. 4

Caste-wise Distribution of the Respondents.

| Sr.No.  | Name of the Caste       | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|-------------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Maratha                 | 24     | 53.34          |
| 2.      | Lingayat                | 13     | 28.89          |
| 3.      | <u>Scheduled Castes</u> | 03     | 06.66          |
| 4.      | Others                  | 05     | 11.11          |
| Total : |                         | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected with personal interviews.

We find that a majority of our leaders come from Maratha castes. Marathas are dominant in this part of Maharashtra in terms of M. N. Srinivas.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that power in Indian rural society tends to be vested in the hands of higher castes who dominate key decisions in any society.

Education :

Education and leadership are related together. Leaders having better educational qualification can ably guide their followers, because they can understand the plans and programmes launched by Panchayat Raj and Governmental agencies.

In Table No. 5, the educational qualifications of respondents is summarised.

Table No. 5  
Educational Composition of Leaders.

| Sr. No. | Education        | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Illiterate       | 02     | 04.44          |
| 2.      | Primary School   | 16     | 35.54          |
| 3.      | High School      | 14     | 31.10          |
| 4.      | Higher Secondary | 01     | 02.22          |
| 5.      | Graduation       | 12     | 26.70          |
| Total : |                  | 45     | 100.00         |

It is seen that 4.44 % percent of the respondents are illiterate, 33.54% percent have some primary school level education, 31.10 % percent have high school level education and 26.70 % percent have completed college. In recent years with the extension of educational facilities the new leadership is being imparted with higher education which helps them in better understanding of the plans and problems concerned with people.

Land Ownership :

Rural leadership comes from farmers' group. Generally farmers having sufficient landed property can devote time and money for social and political activities.

Table No. 6 gives the details about land owned by the respondents under study.

Table No. 6  
Land Owned by the Respondents.

| Sr. No. | Land           | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Land less      | 01     | 2.22           |
| 2.      | Below 01 Acre  | 03     | 6.66           |
| 3.      | 01 to 10 Acre  | 18     | 40.00          |
| 4.      | 11 to 20 Acre  | 12     | 26.67          |
| 5.      | 21 to 30 Acre  | 06     | 13.35          |
| 6.      | 31 to 40 Acre  | 02     | 4.44           |
| 7.      | 41 to 50 Acre  | 01     | 2.22           |
| 8.      | Over 50 Acres. | 02     | 4.44           |
| Total : |                | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

Ownership of land is generally considered to be the principle source of power and prestige in Indian village community. We note that 40 per cent of our leaders have 1 to 10 acres of land 26.67 percent of our leaders have 11 to 20 acres of land, 13.35 percent of our leaders have 21 to 30 acres of land and 4.44 percent of our leaders have over 50 acres land and just 2.22 percent of our leaders are land less.

Occupation :

Occupation of leaders is also important, in the rural area most of the laders come from farming class. Information regarding the occupation of leaders under study is given in Table No. 7.

Table No. 7

Occupational Distribution of the Reespondents.

| Sr. No. | Occupation       | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|------------------|--------|----------------|
| --1.    | Agriculturist    | 36     | 80.00          |
| 2.      | Teaching         | 01     | 2.22           |
| 3.      | Other occupation | 04     | 8.89           |
| 4.      | No occupation    | 04     | 8.89           |
| Total : |                  | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.



It is seen that the largest number 80 percent of our respondents are engaged in agriculture, i.e., they own and farm agricultural land; more specifically, they are also proprietors of land. This may be indicative of the fact that land ownership is a significant factor of leadership in rural area.

Income :

Economically sound position of a leader is important because it helps him to work freely and honestly. The following table No. 8 provides us an information about the annual income of the respondents understudy.

Table No. 8  
Income Distributio of the Respondents.

| Sr. No. | Annual Income        | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|----------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Rs. 2500 to 10,000   | 7      | 15.55          |
| 2.      | Rs. 10,001 to 20,000 | 4      | 8.88           |
| 3.      | Rs. 20,001 to 30,000 | 5      | 11.11          |
| 4.      | Rs. 30,001 to 40,000 | 6      | 13.35          |
| 5.      | Over Rs. 40,000      | 23     | 51.11          |
| Total : |                      | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

Earlier it has been seen that 80 percent of our respondents are cultivators having their own land; We find that a (23) 51.11 percent of the respondents come from higher level income group. It means that 51.11 percent are economically sound.

On the whole we can say that, money, land and wealth have remained important factors for leadership position in rural area.

Family Composition :

Table No. 9

Family Type of the Respondents

| Sr. No. | Type of Family | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Joint family   | 18     | 40.00          |
| 2.      | Nuclear family | 27     | 60.00          |
| Total : |                | 45     | 100 .00        |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

Sociologists have defined family structure in terms of nuclear and joint families. Several studies have demonstrated a correlation between the size of the family and leadership.

No doubt, a member of a joint family has an advantage over others as he gets support of a large group from his own family. Moreover, in a joint family some members get enough time for participation in village affairs.

But we find that, majority, i.e., 60 % of the respondents belong to nuclear family.

Table No. 10

Whether Respondent is the family Head.

| Sr. No. | Yes OR No | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Yes       | 35     | 77.78          |
| 2.      | No        | 10     | 22.22          |
| Total : |           | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

It is revealed from the above table no. 10 that 77.78 percent of respondents are heads of their families, which is consistent with the age distribution of these respondents as it is seen that most of the respondents are above 40 years of age.

Social Class :

Table No. 11 given below gives an information about class membership of our respondents. An overwhelming majority of belong to upper middle class. They are economically well off. Data given in the above table reveals that 46.68 % leaders belongs to upper middle class, 42.20 % leaders belong to lower middle class and only 11.12 % leaders belong to lower class.

Table No. 11

## Perception of Social Class

| Sr. No. | Class        | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|--------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Rich         | -      | -              |
| 2.      | Upper Middle | 21     | 46.68          |
| 3.      | Lower Middle | 19     | 42.20          |
| 4.      | Poor         | 05     | 11.12          |
| Total : |              | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected from personal interviews.

News papers play a important role in democracy. Leaders get informed about the happnings in the world. The table given below gives an information about the roading habits of the respondents.

Table No. 12

## Wheter Respondents Read Newspaper.

| Sr. No. | Yes OR No | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|-----------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | Yes       | 41     | 91.12          |
| 2.      | No        | 04     | 08.88          |
| Total : |           | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

We find that 91.12 % of the respondents read news papers. Generally the village leaders are interested in knowing about things happening around the village. They carry on their functions as village leaders with the information and knowledge they get by reading newspapers.

Affiliation to Political Party :

Political party plays an important role in promoting leadership from the village level. The chain of workers from village

to the district, state, and national level is created by the political parties. The information regarding the party membership is given in the table no. 13 given below.

TableNo. 13

## Party Affiliation of Leaders

| Sr. No. | Party Affiliation          | Number | % to the Total |
|---------|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1.      | All India Congress (I)     | 40     | 88.90          |
| 2.      | Janata Dal                 | 03     | 6.66           |
| 3.      | Peasents and Workers Party | 02     | 4.44           |
| Total : |                            | 45     | 100.00         |

Source : Information collected through personal interviews.

It is seen that 88.90 % tothe Congress party, 3 respondents are members of the Janata Dal and 2 leaders come from Peasents and Workers party. This clearly reveals that All India (I) Congress party has developed its roots at the village level and being a party in power has developed a network of workers in the rural area.

Conclusion :

The main objective of the preceding chapter was to explore the social origins of rural leaders. The focus of analysis was to trace the socio-economic traits of the elected rural leaders. Against the background of the findings the socio-economic nature of the emerging leadership in rural society can be described as follows :

- 1) Leadership is not concerned with the age of the respondent, but leadership can be from all age groups.
- 2) Majority of respondents under study are Hindus by religion.
- 3) Majority of respondents came from higher castes.
- 4) Most of the leaders have been imparted school and college education.
- 5) Majority of respondents are male and very few cases have female taken on the role of leadership.
- 6) It is seen that money land and wealth remain important factor for leadership position in rural area.
- 7) Most of the respondents live in nuclear families but have their origin in joint families.

- 8) Majority of our leaders are heads of their families.
- 9) Majority of our leaders belong to upper middle class.
- 10) Most of the leaders read newspapers.

The grass-root level leadership which comes from higher castes, some educated sections of society and from those who are economically well to do.

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1. The concept of the " dominant caste " is relevant in this connection. A caste is dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area, and economically and politically exercises a preponderating influence. It need not be the highest caste in terms of traditional and conventional ranking of castes.

M. N. Srinivas (ed). 1955 India's Villages , p. 7.  
Asia Publishing House.