

CHAPTER -- IV

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS
OF THE
SLUM - DWELLERS

This chapter deals with the details of the economic and social life of the residents of the three slums under study. As the specific problems are discussed separately in the 5th Chapter, here the intention is to present only a broad outline of their life. In all 150 families were selected and the details of these were collected in the proforma (copy appended in the end of this thesis). The total population of these 150 families is 820. The sexwise and age-groupwise composition of these is presented in the following table.

TABLE : 4

Table showing sex composition of various groups age groups in the slum area. :-

Age Group	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
0 - 5	48 (55.1%) (11.18%)	39 (44.9%) (9.97%)	87 (10.6%)
5 - 15	141 (54.02%) (32.86%)	120 (45.9%) (30.69%)	261 (31.82%)
15 - 45	187 (53.12%) (43.58%)	165 (46.8%) (42.19%)	352 (42.92%)
45 & above	53 (44.16%) (12.35%)	67 (55.8%) (17.13%)	120 (14.6%)
Total	429	391	820

TABLE : 5

Table showing sexwise and occupationwise position :-

Occupation	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Unemployed	30	-	30
Mill Workers	87	-	87
Majuri	98	41	139
Service	26	3	29
Business	9	-	9
Household Work	-	183	183
Total	250	227	477

The above table gives the details of the information regarding the various major types of occupations of the slum dwellers. The table shows that majority of these people are working class people. 87 males are working in the mills and 98 males and 41 females are working on daily wages (i.e., Majuri) as labourers. The above table shows that 30 male members are unemployed. It is seen that 26 male and 3 female members are serving in various offices. And some slum people are doing small type of business whose number is 9. The unemployment problem is of course there. 30 males and a large number of females (183) are not gainfully employed. Eventhough 183 women are looking after household work, the reason probably is that they are not getting

employment opportunities. It was found in personal discussions that many of these do accept small jobs wherever available to them.

List of Occupations (Males).

1.	Mill-workers	...	87
2.	Majuri	...	98
	i) Gavandi (Construction workers)	(28)	
	ii) Cooli (Hamali)	(30)	
	iii) Wire-man assistants	(3)	
	iv) Helpers	(11)	
	v) Servants in Hotel	(5)	
	vi) Assistant to Gardner	(6)	
	vii) Wood cutter and Grass cutter	(15)	
3.	Service	...	26
	i) Sweeper	(9)	
	ii) T.T. in railway	(2)	
	iii) Gardener	(6)	
	iv) Electrician	(4)	
	v) Clerk	(5)	
4.	Small Business	...	9
	i) Kirana Shop	(3)	
	ii) Tailoring Shop	(2)	
	iii) Vegitable Seller	(3)	
	iv) Small Laundru	(1)	

List of Occupations (Females)

1.	Majuri	...	41
	i) Bidi Worker	(15)	
	ii) Tailoring (daily Wages)	(5)	
	iii) House-maid	(13)	
	iv) Construction workers	(3)	
	v) Hamali (Cooli)	(5)	
2.	Service	...	3
	i) Sweeper	(2)	
	ii) Clerk	(1)	

The slum dwellers have a variety of occupations, eventhough they are all low-income ones. A detailed list of the occupations and the number of persons doing these is given above.

Generally the economic condition of the slum dwellers is far from satisfactory. They are very poor, and lead a miserable life. The people who are employed get a meagre salary. This income is insufficient for their livelihood. It often happens that 5 to 10 members of the family depend upon one bread-winner. Further, the occupations of these slum dwellers do not provide pensions. Again the people of the area are very liberal in spending on religious occasions inspite of their poverty. Again many of them are addicted to alcohol. The medical bill consumes a large chunk of their income. All these factors have forced the

slum dwellers to be in constant poverty.

Survival becomes a problem and so the residents of the area are forced to go to money lenders. The amount of debts slowly mount-up and in the long run it forces the poor slum dwellers into insolvency. Being illiterate, the slum dwellers cannot have aspiration of a better life. Due to heavy and tiresome work; these people cannot take any subsidiary occupation to supplement their income.

✓ This poverty has forced most of the parents to put their children to some job or the other in preference to school education. The school-going children is a burden to the family. Thus, many children are forced to leave schools.

A table showing both the income and expenditure and their co-relation in respect of the 150 families selected for study is given below.

Unemployment has been another cause for their poor economic status. The youth of the locality who are unemployed are a heavy burden on the family. They are irresponsible and do not think of the good of the family. Sometimes they earn a little money by working as coolies etc. But they do not care to help the parents. The slum dwellers continue to be dissatisfied with them.

Because of poor economic condition the slum dwellers are badly dressed. Gambling and other vices consume a fairly large portion of their little income and ultimately many a families are forced to become debtors.

Another significant point is that many of the jobs are insecure or temporary. Hence there is no economic security. The slum dwellers generally use jawar regularly and rice and wheat very rarely. They scarcely use vegetables, sugar and oil; ghee is not used by the slum dwellers. They get taste of it only when they visit the restaurants. The food consumed by the slum dwellers is thus of an inferior quality.

As the size of the family increases the standard of living, especially in the case of people in the lower income group, is bound to go down. The size of the families in slums is generally large. This is again a contributing factor in their persistent poverty.

In summary it can be observed that the economic

conditions of the slum dwellers is generally deplorable. The specific problems of unemployment and indebtedness are dealt with in the 5th Chapter.

✓ SOCIAL CONDITIONS :

Slum is an area of physical and social decay or disintegration. The personality of slum dweller, his relationship with others, his social institutions such as marriage, family, religion, education, leisure etc. are determined at least to some extent by this social environment. In India the poverty of such slum areas is indicated by over-crowding, haphazard plan, poor drainage, defective ventilation, narrow street system etc.

The slum furnishes temporary shelter to the new arrivals to the city. It has also received those members of the urban community who have lost their economy and social hold in the more elevated strata of the urban society.

 The types of people that swarm modern slums are enumerated by Riemer as people having -

1. Economic failure.
2. Illness and consequent unemployability.
3. Emotional instability.
4. Divorce and consequent loss of support.
5. Alcoholism.
6. Drug addiction.
7. Gambling.

8. Crime, delinquency and prostitution.
9. Ostracization from a specific occupational group to which individual's earning capacity is limited and
10. Irregular sex life, perversions and consequent (1) ostracization.

These conditions are recognised as symptoms of social disorganization. Very often, personality disorganization turns into social disorganization.

GENERAL NATURE OF THE SLUMS UNDER STUDY :

The slum provides cheap housing for a single man and impecunious families. By social composition, we mean the various social ingredients such as family, caste, class, occupational group, associations etc. These vary from slum to slum depending upon the functional type of the urban centre in which the slums are situated. In a number of studies, it has been found that a substantial percentage of slum population is that of low castes. In the present study also the similar picture is seen. A table showing caste and communitywise break-up of the 150 families selected for study is presented below :

(1) Riemer, Svend; The Modern City; 1955 - Page 146.

TABLE : 7

Caste-wise and community-wise break-up
of the 150 families :

Caste	No.

1. Hindu	
i) Mochi	43
ii) Lingayat	6
iii) Harijan	33
iv) Wadar	10
v) Shimpi (Namdeo)	4
vi) Maratha	2

2. Muslim	
i) Fakir	17
ii) Bagawan	23

3. Christian	12

Total	150

The above table indicates the composition of the 150 families according to caste and sub-castes. As the above table shows out of 150 families of the three slums, as many as 86 belonged to the Scheduled castes. The remaining families are from the Muslim (40), Christian (12) and some other backward communities. It is noteworthy that only 2 families belong to the Maratha caste and not a single family from Brahmins and other so-called higher

NET WORK OF SOCIAL RELATION :

The slum dwellers of urban centres are involved in a complex network of relations, based on ties of kinship, caste, community or region. These networks emerge both by necessity as well as by choice. They provide social security in times of emergency, sickness and unemployment, secure shelter in the city, arrange for jobs; take care of relatives; disseminate news and provide informations. Vacancies are mostly advertised by word of mouth and therefore, territorial kin and caste affinities play a predominant role in the recruitment of workers to the urban labour force. This is substantially borne out in the detailed discussions with the leaders of the slum-dwellers.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY :

This is an age of change and social awakening. A sense of social awareness and enlightenment coupled with social responsibility is felt at most everywhere. But even today these slum people are neglected. Sociologists have summed up these consequence as the emergence of "slum mentality". The child in every family is an asset to society, but the slum provides a hostile environment for them. The family structure in these slums presents unique characteristic features. There are quite

few families where the husband and wife relationship is stable.

As it will be pointed out with evidence, the slum parents have more children than they can support. Ignorance and economic strain make them indifferent to the proper development of their children who are usually unwellcome guests in their families. These unfortunate children are totally neglected by their parents. As the size of the family increases the standard of living - especially in the case of people in the lower income-group goes down. A table is presented below to show the family sizes. :

TABLE : 8

Table showing information about family size in the slum area. :

Family size	No. of families.
1 to 4	36 (24%)
5 to 8	62 (41.4%)
9 to 12	42
13 to 16	10 (34.6%)
Total	150

The above table shows that out of 150 families

62 families (41.4%) are having 5 to 8 family members, whereas 52 families (34.6%) are having 9 to 16 members.

As the above table shows the size of the families in slum is generally large. This factor is conducive to a low standard of living. There are 52 families having 9 to 16 members living together in a single room.

Early marriage, lack of education, lack of knowledge about birth control and lack of recreational facilities may be probable reasons for the large size of the family in slums.

Most of the slum people have preferred joint family. If parents and children live together with their wives it is easier to run a small business. And they think it helps in bringing more prestige to the family. Although there happen to be quarrels between the sons, wives and the mother-in-law, the head of the joint family can settle them. Of course, some people in slum area also form their own separate nuclear family, leaving the common household.

In slum area the family is so loosely organized that the members usually go in their own way in search of amusement or pleasure. Owing to prohibition, they smuggle the illicit liquor and drink at home. Disorderly family

conduct and sex offences are quite common. The world of the slum dweller and his family is always involved in the struggle for the basic necessities of life and in a search for pleasure to break the monotony of work; probable unemployment and insecurity. Family life, is punctuated with quarrels followed by fights and physical violence.

Marriage is celebrated for the girls in early teens and for the boys either in late teens or early twenties. This has affected upon the size of the family and the population in the locality. This trait has made the family life more complex. The child is generally delivered at home or at Government hospital.

Divorce among the slum dwellers is fairly easy. The husband and wife lead separate lives in their own way. Widow remarriage is permitted. There have been several instances of elopements of even married men and women.

For the slum dwellers sex is also one of the major recreational activities. Being fatigued and tired, the slum dweller either drinks alcohol or when he has no money for it - enjoys sex with his wife. Some of the interesting facts noticed in the study are :- It is very rare that the men-folk of the same area go to the prostitutes of the locality, hence he has to go to his wife only. This has been one of the reasons for the high birth rate in the area.

CASTE :

Caste is an important aspect of the social life in India. In case of the slum dwellers caste plays a dominant role in staying together and mutual help. The following tables are informative from this point of view.

TABLE No.: 9

Caste factor in living together :-

Opinion	No. of respondents
Yes	... 134 (89.4%)
No	... 16 (10.6%)
Total	... 150

The above table shows that out of 150 families 134 families (89.4%) are of the opinion that caste is a factor responsible for living together and out of 150 families only 16 families give the negative answers.

TABLE No.: 10

A table showing information about the help given by caste people for residence and occupation :

Responses.	Helping for		Total Respon <u>ses</u>
	Residence	Occupation	
Yes	95	65	160
No	55	85	140
Total	150	150	300

The table No. 10 shows that out of 150 respondents, 95 (63.6%) accepted that they got help for residence. As far as occupation is concerned out of 150 families 65 (43.3%) agreed that they were helped by their caste people for occupation. This shows the extent of caste affinity.

LANGUAGE :

It is an interesting feature of Indian society that it is ~~of~~ cosmopolitan in most of the cities. Thus, in a city, alongwith major language groups there invariably live certain minorities speaking different Indian languages. Each metropolitan region have many different language groups.

It is observed by the survey taken in the Solapur slums that people speak a variety of languages. As the Solapur city is almost on the border line of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra States a large number of people residing in the slums of Solapur have been migrated from these three linguistic states.

It is also observed that Hindi (Urdu) is generally understood and spoken by every slum member. The following table shows a detail information about the languages in slums cf Solapur city.

TABLE : 11

Table showing information about languages known by the slum people :

Languages	No.of Respondents
Marathi	412
Kannada	497
Telugu	319
Hindi & Urdu	189
English	6

It will be noticed from this table that Kannada, Marathi and Telugu are the major languages known to the slum-dwellers.

The table shows that the Kannada speaking population represents the largest number (i.e., 497 people are speaking Kannada). The next larger group is of Marathi speakers, their number being 412. It is also remarkable that 319 number of population speaks Telugu. 189 people speak Hindi/Urdu and only 6 of these understand English. As is expected from a cosmopolitan group, many people understand and/or speak two to four different languages.

✓ EDUCATION :

Introduction : The adjustment of the individual to society

has always been one of the major problems claiming the attention of social groups. Education may be defined as "the process whereby the young individual is adopted to the group pattern of conduct and whereby his natural powers are developed in ways that will enable him to take an active part in group life."⁽²⁾

Education satisfies one of the basic needs of man. Illiteracy can be a serious handicap just as the physical disability. The welfare state must endeavour to provide a certain minimum level of education to the entire population, just as it tries to satisfy their requirements of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. The speed of primary education should be treated as an end in itself rather than as a means of economic betterment. But there is no doubt that the growth of literacy will contribute to economic progress by facilitating the understanding and absorption of new ideas and the adoption of new techniques and new approaches by the masses.

The educational system of the country has been repeatedly criticised on the ground that it is still following a pattern which the Britishers had created for their own purposes and needs.

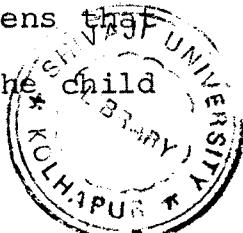
(2) 'Social Problems' - Gillin Dittmer Colbert and Kastler : (Page 323).

✓ Slums are largely a product of poverty, the majority of the slum children belong to poor parents. When the parents are illiterate, with their distressing social life, they play little care for the education of their children. A large proportion of children, irrespective of their intelligence are not in a position to expose themselves to the world they live in and acquire the most fundamental knowledge and skills.

✓ The major reason for not going to school is financial. A majority of children in 10 - 14 years' age group find interest in earning money. Interest in earning money for work thus has an inverse relation with the interest in going to school and studies.

✓ Another significant factor for the high degree of illiteracy among the slum children is the lack of educational facilities. These poor children cannot offer to buy books and stationary. The children do not have proper clothes to wear.

Because of the above two reasons the inhabitants of slum are largely illiterate. The percentage of literacy is very low. For the slum children school-going is a luxury. Parents want them to work for the family and help the family. There have also been instances of parents who have expressed their inability to control their children. They have hostile environment. It often happens that both the mother and father go out for work and the child



is left at home uncared for. It is observed that even the school going children of slum areas do not posses the minimum necessary writing material and books.

The problem of illiteracy is thus, acute in the area. There has been no deliberate attempt on the part of the slum dwellers to eradicate illiteracy among them. Even the few skilled workers available in the slums have not got any formal training. The usual expectation of every parent in slum community is that their children should follow the trade or traditional means of livelihood of the family.

However, it is possible that if proper opportunities are provided, this trend may be changed and the career of these slum children could be improved. Table No. 12 presents the position of literacy and education of the slums under study.

TABLE : 12

Table showing the information about the education.:

Education	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Illiterate	140 (42.42%) (35.35%)	190 (57.58%) (60.7%)	330 (46.54%)
Primary	182 (63.85%) (45.95%)	103 (36.15%) (32.9%)	285 (40.19%)
Secondary	71 (78.88%) (17.92%)	19 (21.12%) (6.07%)	90 (12.69%)
Under-graduate	1 (0.5%) (0.25%)	1 (0.5%) (0.32%)	2 (0.2%)
Graduate.	2 (1.0%) (0.5%)	-	2 (0.2%)
Total	396	313	709 *

The above table indicates that a large number of respondents i.e. 330 of these slums are illiterate. This means that percentage of illiteracy is more than 46. If we compare the figures of males and females it becomes clear that women are comparatively more deprived of education. Their percentage of illiteracy is more i.e., 57.58. Moreover among the literate people the females are

* Note - Total number of the population in the 3 slums under study is 820. However, as there are 111 children under the age of 5, they are not included in the above figures for the obvious reason.

less in number than the males, there are no graduates among the females. Only one girl out of 313 is undergraduate and is undergoing college education. Even in case of secondary education their percentage to total is very low (i.e., 21.12). The ~~total~~ table is quite revealing that even after so many years of independence we have not been able to provide the sufficient educational facilities to the women of this section or induce them to get minimum necessary education.

There is, however, one heartening aspect in this context. In Jagajivanram Zopadpatti there are three schools running smoothly and of which two are Municipal Primary Schools and one is aided school. Besides four Balwadiies (Pre-Primary) have also been started in 1979. The year 1979 was pronounced as International Children's Year and in this year only these Balwadiies in the slum were established.

In Konapure Chwal also there is one aided school and one Balwadi and both are running smoothly. The Balwadi is established in the International Children's Year, 1979. Moreover a High-school is also in existence in this locality since long. This means the facilities of education are available in this area. In Maddiwasti also we find one Balwadi but no nearby Primary School.

Discussion with community leaders revealed that

Private Balwadiess were closed in these areas due to the lack of funds and grants. Only in the year 1979 with the "Integrated Child Development Scheme", Balwadiess have been started in these slums and people of these slums are of the opinion that these Balwadiess are running smoothly.

HABITS AND RECREATION :

Leisure time is a phenomenon common to both young as well as older people. The difference lies in the way this time is used by different groups. Leisure has been defined as "The free time after the practical necessities of life have been attended to."⁽³⁾ It is the free time available to an individual after doing his duties and fulfilling obligations and other necessities of life. If the leisure activities are to be satisfying to the mind, they should be creative and should involve individual's efforts. If such efforts are undertaken within certain limits they prove to be very useful to the individual concerned.

Neumeyer and Neumeyer observe that "Labour and leisure go together; but the tone of society is conditioned largely by the extent and uses of the time

(3) 'Fair Child' : H.P.(Ed.) Dictionary of Sociology,
1944; P. 175.

remaining after the practical necessities of life have been attended to. If people engage in creative and constructive activities, civilization is advanced, if they indulge in useless and destructive activities, the social order deteriorates and social progress is retarded.⁽⁴⁾

This observation brings out the importance of leisure in every day life of an individual. Hard labour for the day results in tiresomeness; and if energy is to be recouped for the next day it requires some sort of rest, relaxation and such leisure time activities which might add to the pleasure of life.

Leisure is strictly an individual concept and implies a freedom of choice. Living in slums with lack of fresh air and healthy atmosphere is injurious to health. As the slums are very much congested and have no minimum basic amenities of life, there is little scope for relaxation, free movement or privacy. The lack of these essentials of life makes any attempt for promotion of health, education or dissemination of knowledge and culture, futile.

We shall now briefly describe how the leisure time is utilised by the slumdwellers under study.

Gambling during leisure hours is one of main

(4) Neumeyer M.H., Neumeyer E.S. - 'Leisure & Recreation'

recreations of the males in these slum areas. Gambling is often defined as deliberate wagering of money on some tests of skill or strength or on the outcome of a game. These pleasures forbidden by law are very common in these slum areas. Besides gambling, drinking liquor, seeing motion pictures and smoking are the other important leisure time activities. In this context we have separated recreations from habits and two separate tables are presented. The first one i.e. table No. 13 shows the preferences of 108 respondents to different recreations viz. Cards, Songtya, Matka, Bhajan and Kabaddi.

TABLE : 13

Table showing information about leisure time activities. :-

Leisure time activities	No. of Ist preferences
Card Playing	...
Songatyā Playing	...
Bhajan Singing	...
Matka Playing	...
Kabbadi Playing	...
Total	108

As is mentioned above gambling with the help of playing cards is very common among these people. It is

paradoxical to observe that these poor people spend their hard-earned money in gambling. The boys as well as older people, at their leisure hours, or when they are not gainfully employed, sit under the shelter of some tree or roof and play cards on stakes. 'Rumy' is their most favourite game in cards. In the actual interviews only 108 male respondents described their favourite past-time. Table No. 13 gives the relative preferences of these 108 respondents, wherein we see that 24 (i.e. 22.22%) enjoy card-playing or gambling.

Even more favourite than card playing is the 'Matka'. This is another variety of gambling very much popular among the lower-income groups in our society. Slum dwellers are not an exception to it. Out of 108 respondents as many as 35 (i.e., 31.48%) regularly play on 'Matka'.

The third variety of gambling is playing 'Songtya', again with stakes. 21 out of 108 showed preference to this past-time. Thus if all the varieties of gambling are taken together, as many as 79 (i.e., 73.14%) out of 108 respondents are involved in it during their leisure time. This is both harmful to them as well as affecting the healthy socialization of their children.

Comparatively much better and rather 'constructive' ways of recreation are the bhajans (10) and playing Kabbadi (19). Eventhough the percentage of

preferences to these past-times are low, they will have good effect on the younger generations provided they are given more encouragement.

Among the habits, the most common ones are (1) drinking, (2) smoking and (3) chewing 'pan' and/or tobacco. A table showing the major habits of slum dwellers is presented below.

TABLE : 14

Table showing information about the preferences in habits of slum people :

Sex	Habits			Total
	Pan-tobacco chewing.	Bidi-Sigar smoking.	Sindi-wine drinking.	
Male	66	82	62	210
Female	29	3	6	38
Total	95	85	68	248

The most common and favourite habit among the males and females taken together is chewing pan and/or tobacco. Both the males as well females indulge themselves freely in this habit. In the personal discussion it was found they were totally ignorant or unaware of the bad effects of this habit. They do not know that many times this habit is an invitation to devastating diseases like cancer.

Another important habit confined almost to males is that of smoking. 82 out of 210 males prefer smoking to the other two habits. There are 3 women also who have a habit of smoking. Here also the slum-dwellers are equally ignorant of the bad effects like T.B. or cancer. Eventhough the first preference to this habit are 82, it was the general impression that practically all males including young boys smoke, mostly bidis and sometimes cigerettes. Smoking is supposed to be a symbol of manhood and independence from the older folk in the society.

The third habit is drinking country wines or illicit liquors. 62 males and 6 females expressed preference to this habit. The explanation rationalising this habit, offered by some persons in personal discussion is quite common but interesting. They say that they drink for 'kick' wherein they can forget their miseries. They are aware that this habit is bad especially from economic point of view, but at the same time they frankly tell that it has become a habit and they cannot become free from it. One of the immediately harmful effect of drinking is that under that 'influence' ensuing quarrels and clashes become common.

The little money these slum-dwellers have are thus spent on unhealthy recreations and habits, which degenerate them both physically and socially. The most unfortunate part is that the younger generations also is

trapped in this unending vicious circle of habits.

Visiting theatres to see motion pictures is another sober way of past-time. This is very common among both males and females and youngsters as well as old people. The statistics of this recreation was not collected, because in the primary study itself almost all individuals were found to be fond of "pictures".

Those who cannot for one or another reason in the above recreations and habits, make it convenient to roam freely in a group of two to five or sit together and gossip, especially the women in their sporadic leisure time cannot do anything else and get pleasure in gossiping.

SLUM AND POLITICS :

Political elections have placed more and more power into the hands of common people. Political horizons of most of the Solapur slum people, however are very limited. Most of them are concerned so persistently with problems of food, shelter, and clothing and hence they have little direct interest in the issues of State or National importance. But almost all the people know of such things as the India-Pakistan wars of 1960 and the war at the time of the emergence of Bangladesh. But very few know their details. They know the name of the Prime Minister of India. These people are attentive to the State politicians when they speak of slum, food prices, housing conditions,

and corruption in offices, because such problems are directly ~~the~~ concerned with them.

Political parties have also entered in slum areas because of their own party interest. In every day life, the slum people are not interested in any political party but especially during election days they wake up to take the side of a party which gives more facilities and money to them.

It is also observed that some people in slum area are not interested in any political party. They say that none of the political party can do any improvement in their life conditions. If we go through the following table we can come to the conclusion that most of the slum people in Solapur city are in favour of 'Congress I' party.

TABLE : 15

A table showing the choices of the slum-dwellers regarding the political party.

Political Party.	No. of Respondents
Congress 'I'	... 85 (56.6%)
Congress 'S'	... 30 (20.0%)
Janata Party	... 14 (9.3%)
Dalit Parther	... 10 (6.6%)
Not interested	... 11 (7.3%)
Total	... 150

It is evident from the above table that 85 (56.6%) respondents like Congress 'I' party whereas 30 (20%) are in support of Congress 'S'. The Janata Party supporters are 14 (i.e., 9.3%) and only 10 (6.6%) are in favour of Dalit Panthers. It is also to be noted that 11 (7.3%) respondents are not interested in any political party.

There is another aspect of this political awareness. In the personal discussion it was agreed to by many that irrespective of political party attachment, during elections caste plays the major role. Thus they prefer a candidate belonging to Scheduled Castes even though he belongs to opposition parties. This shows that how, even after 35 years of independence, caste is a dominant factor in politics in India.

RELIGION :

The present study did not pay much attention to the religion of the slum dwellers. This was because, even though religion coupled with superstitions and blind faith has tremendous influence on the day-to-day life of the lower sections of our community, in our sample (and even the chosen slums) there were no respondents from neo Buddhist groups. As the Table No. 7 given earlier in this Chapter shows there are 98 Hindus including Scheduled Caste people. However, during the general discussions

and observations while conducting the personal interviews a few facts came to the notice which are summarised below.

Religion of the slum-dwellers is confined to a few ceremonies, rites and festivals. Magical practices are an inseparable part of the religion. Christians regularly attend the prayers in the Church. Muslims also attend the "Namaj" prayers regularly. Hindus are divided in castes and sub-castes and they have different deities, for example, the "Mochis" have Jambuvant as their most favourite deity. Besides, many of the Hindus worship Siddheshwar, Margamma, Ambabai and Markandeya. They celebrate common festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, and Rama Navami, and participate very enthusiastically in the great 'Yatra' of Siddheshwar, the presiding deity (Gram Devata) of the Solapur city. Some of them also pay homage by pilgrimage on foot to nearby Bhavani temple at Tuljapur. Pilgrimages to Pandharpur and Ghanagapur are also common. In their small huts, the slum-dwellers keep photos of various deities and pay daily individual worships to them. Goat sacrifice to Mhasoba is also quite common. Religion, in general, of these people is the religion of the masses and no emphasis is laid on "mantras" or details of the rituals.

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