# Chapter - II
# METHOD OF ENQUIRY

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The Primary objective of the present study is to make an in-depth study of empowerment of women. There is effectively no disagreement about the necessity of women's empowerment, as women constitute an important segment of the society. Given the importance of women and their potential contribution to the overall development, modern scholars in social science devote considerable time and energy on discourses on gender issues.

In the Indian context, it becomes more relevant in view of the fact that, Indian tradition accepted women only in a supportive role. But with the enlightment spreading throughout the world the traditional belief on women began to change. It is now widely acknowledged that, women are to be brought at par with men in all the fields if they are not already. To this end, a number of programmes has been taken to ensure what is called empowerment of women. Given this broadly accepted premise that women are to be empowered, the present study seeks to analyse to what extant women have been empowered and what are the constraints that come in the way of women empowerment.

As such, the study is exploratory, descriptive and diagnostic in nature. The study aims at exploring the ideological and philosophical foundations of empowerment in general and women's empowerment in particular. The exploratory part of the study is based on the content analysis and review literature on the issue of empowerment. The study also aims, at describing the actual state of women empowerment in India, measures undertaken for empowering women and the outcome of those measures in empowering women in India, Finally, the study is diagnostic as it aims at diagnosing also what are the reasons that come in the way of women empowerment in India. Thus, the descriptive and the diagnostic parts of the study are covered through a survey conducted among the sample women in the selected blocks of Murshidabad district who are politically empowered by being the panchayat functionaries and

aspirants. Besides, a sample of politicians, officials, and common citizens were also brought under survey to elicit their views on the issues relating to the empowerment of women.

The survey was conducted on the basis of a structured schedule containing questions to elicit information on various aspects – social, political and economic that are thought to be parameters of empowerment. The schedules were pretested, finalized and then administered to the selected respondents in the selected blocks of Murshidabad districts.

The selection of the sample respondents was both purposive and on probability. As far the women functionaries and aspirants in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the sampling was purposive so as to cover a large number of the women. However, in the selection of other respondents i.e. the politicians, the officials and the common citizens the sampling was probability sampling.

The selection of the blocks was also purposive because the considerations of the level of development, demographic configuration, geographical location etc were kept in mind in selecting the blocks. In all, nine blocks were selected and studied.

## *Rationale for Selecting the District:*

1.      In West Bengal the district Murshidabad lies geographically in between South bengal and North Bengal. This district also has mainly two geo-climatic divisions popularly known as 'Bagri' and 'Rarh' anchal. The 'Bagri' area are mainly attached to the international border and so the migrants from Bangladesh constitute not only a steady influx but also adding to the number of total population and changing the socio-econiomnic status of the people. As such, it calls for special administrative care. This district has also witnessed the historical impact of 'Nawabi regime' and the dawn of the British rule in India.

*2.*                    *Distribution*

| Sl. No. | District | Area (sq.Km.) | Population | Sex Ratio | Literacy Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cooch Behar | 3387 | 2171145 | 881 | 45.78 |
| 2 | Jalpaiguri | 6227 | 2800543 | 843 | 45.09 |
| 3 | Darjeeling | 3149 | 1299919 | 876 | 57.95 |
| 4 | West Dinajpur | 5359 | 3127653 | 918 | 39.29 |
| 5 | Malda | 3733 | 2637032 | 1007 | 35.62 |
| 6 | Murshidabad | 5324 | 4740149 | 1040 | 38.28 |
| 7 | Nadia | 3927 | 3852097 | 1014 | 52.53 |
| 8 | 24 Pargana (N) | 4094 | 7281881 | 918 | 66.81 |
| 9 | 24 Pargana (S) | 9960 | 5715030 | 927 | 55.10 |
| 10 | Calcutta | 185 | 4399819 | 536 | 77.61 |
| 11 | Howra | 1467 | 3729644 | 935 | 67.62 |
| 12 | Hoogly | 3149 | 4355230 | 983 | 66.78 |
| 13 | Midnapore | 14081 | 8331912 | 1006 | 69.32 |
| 14 | Bankura | 6882 | 2805065 | 1032 | 52.04 |
| 15 | Purulia | 6259 | 2224577 | 1011 | 43.29 |
| 16 | Bardwan | 7024 | 6050605 | 1004 | 61.88 |
| 17 | Birbhum | 4545 | 2555664 | 1029 | 48.56 |
| **West Bengal** | | 88752 | 68077965 | 945 | 57.70 |

**Source :** *Census of India, 1991.*

The above distribution shows that among 17 districts in West Bengal, Murshidabad is ranking 8th position in area distribution, 5th position in population, where woman ratio per thousand male is 1040 which ranks on the top positionin the state but in the case of literacy rate this district ranks 16th position which is at the bottom. This is very interesting to see that this district has a peculiarity and vewry appropriate to make an indepth study on woman.

3.      Murshidabad is the only Muslim dominated district in West Bengal. Considering the Muslims as conservative, as runs the mainstream thought, particularly more on woman, empowerment of woman is thought to be less or limited. A study of this district is thus much relevance in view of its demographic peculiarity and its impact on the overall process of development in general and empowerment of women in particular.

4.      There is also a pragmatic consideration for selecting the district. As the researcher belongs to the same district it provided necessary insight about the district that was thought to be of immense help in collecting reliable and accurate informations on the question of empowerment of women.

## *Rationale for Selecting The Blocks and Villages:*

Murshidabad district is a polychromatic in nature having Muslims as majority. Though it is not multilingual but the language "Bangla" is spoken in multifarious way as per the geographic dimensions and cultural differences. Socio-economic behaviour of the people can be easily differentiated as such; the political behaviour is also not unified in the district.

The blocks were selected as per the geographical feature and socio-economic culture. Out of the 26 blocks in the district nine blocks were selected. Blocks like Bhagawangola can be identified as "Bagri" anchal where this block located at the "Bangladesh" border crossing the river Ganga. Barwan, Sagardighi, Khargram and Nabagram are in the border line of another district called "Birbhum", having cultural differences from other part of the district; Bharatpur-II block is adjourned to the district "Burdwan"; being in the south of the district, it differs in all the way from the block of the northern part. Blocks as Berhampore and Kandi are considered as in the middle of the district, urbanized in nature as sub divisional head-quarters.

## Table No. 2.1
### Survey Area

| DISTRICT | BLOCK | PANCHAYAT | VILLAGE – I | VILLAGE – II |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | Barwan | Sundarpur | Sundarpur | Hatisala |
| U | Berhampur | Gurudaspur | Gurudaspur | Sultanpur |
| R | Bharatpur-II | Salu | Kharera | Gulhatia |
| S | Bhagawangola | Mohmmedpur | Mohmmedpur | Bahadurpur |
| H | Hariharpara | Hariharpara | Hariharpara | Dasturpara |
| I | Kandi | Gakarna-II | Santapara | Mahalandi |
| D | Khargram | Parulia | Parulia | Uttar Gopinathpur |
| A | | | | |
| B | Nabagram | Panchgram | Panchgram | Kesharpur |
| A | | | | |
| D | Sagardighi | Monigram | Monigram | Karaiya |

Hariharpara and Barwan are dominated by the Muslims and Hindus respectively. Being religious orthodox, the people in these two blocks find themselves changed towards socio-economic and political behaviour. Table 2.1 and maps show the selected blocks, panchayats and villages for the study. From the above listed blocks one each panchayats were again selected. Another two villages were selected from each panchayats covering a total of 18 villages were taken into account for the final field survey. Table No. 2.2 shows the area (in sq km) population, no of villages and no of household of this study areas. Bharatpur- II has a less no. of villages (52 only) where as Sagardighi has 197 villages.

## Table No. 2.2
### Descriptive Statistics:  Block Wise

| Blocks | Area in sq km | Population | | | Number of Villages | Number of house-hold |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female | Total | | |
| BARWAN | 278.94 | 1,01,475 | 95,439 | 1,96,914 | 160 | 36,534 |
| BERHAMPORE | 201.15 | 1,53,910 | 1,44,856 | 2,98,766 | 145 | 55,379 |
| BHARATPUR-II | 98.74 | 65,057 | 62,281 | 1,27,338 | 52 | 23,547 |
| BHAGAWANGOLA | 155.87 | 67,959 | 63,952 | 1,31,911 | 60 | 23,197 |
| HARIHARPARA | 252.80 | 96,032 | 89,506 | 1,85,538 | 63 | 35,064 |
| KANDI | 238.54 | 82,304 | 77,491 | 1,59,795 | 93 | 29,840 |
| KHARGRAM | 378.80 | 1,04,003 | 98,819 | 2,02,267 | 155 | 37,147 |
| NABAGRAM | 305.61 | 82,193 | 77,940 | 1,60,133 | 118 | 30,159 |
| SAGARDIGHI | 345.20 | 1,02,494 | 96,597 | 1,99,091 | 197 | 36,652 |
| DISTRICT | 5,324.00 | 21,86,950 | 20,58,852 | 42,45,802 | 2220 | 8,55,170 |

**Source:** *Census of India, 1991, Series 26 Part 12B, District Census Hand Book,  Murshidabad.*

Berhampore has a maximum No. Of house hold (55379) where a block. like Bhagawangola-I has only 23197 households. In area, Khargram can be considered as largest block (378.80 sq km) but in population Berhampore has maximum population covering a figure of 2,98,766.

## Table No. 2.3
## Educational Statistics: Block Wise

| BLOCKS | LITERACY | | | LITERACY RATE (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| BARWAN | 45,623 | 25,407 | 71,030 | 55.77 | 33.05 | 44.76 |
| BERHAMPORE | 61,609 | 40,085 | 1,01,694 | 48.61 | 33.65 | 41.42 |
| BHARATPUR-II | 45,623 | 25,407 | 71,030 | 52.61 | 36.92 | 44.96 |
| BHAGAWANGOLA | 18,916 | 11,041 | 29,957 | 35.85 | 22.42 | 29.36 |
| HARIHARPARA | 54,682 | 32,619 | 22,063 | 41.75 | 30.86 | 36.55 |
| KANDI | 30,636 | 15,087 | 45,723 | 46.80 | 24.72 | 36.14 |
| KHARGRAM | 20,157 | 39,674 | 59,831 | 47.49 | 25.71 | 36.95 |
| NABAGRAM | 33,638 | 18,321 | 51,959 | 51.73 | 29.96 | 41.18 |
| SAGARDIGHI | 35,564 | 20,410 | 55,974 | 44.33 | 27.03 | 35.94 |
| DISTRICT | 8,99,266 | 5,35,186 | 14,34,452 | 43.68 | 26.77 | 38.52 |

**Source:** - *Census of India 1991, Series 26 Part 12B, District Census Hand Book, Murshidabad.*

Table No 2:3 shows the educational status as Bharatpur-II has maximum literacy rate of 44.96 %, the block like Bhagawangala has only 29. 36 % of literacy rate, which can be considered as lowest in the district. Considering the women literacy percentage Bharatpur-II presents 36.92 whereas Bhagawangola presents only 22.42 percent women literates.

Table No 2.4 shows the break up of occupation. Berhampore has 12780 main workers, 5254 marginal workers where as Kandi has only 2191 main workers and 925 marginal workers. In table 2.5 we find no of female cultivation as 631 and 3445 women agricultural labours. Bharatpur-II has least number of women as 95 in cultivators and 83 in agricultural labours. The block Sagardighi has very less no of women (124) in household industry, where as Hariharpara has 1009 women in household industry. Table 2.6 shows that the block Kandi has maximum non workers (71.53%) but Nabagram has only 67.79% non workers in which Barwan has more women (46.67 %) as non worker where as Nabagram has only 43.79 % women non workers.

## Table No. 2.4

## Break up of Occupation: Block Wise

| Blocks | Main workers | | | Marginal workers | | | Non workers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| BARWAN | 3,330 | 193 | 3,523 | 435 | 1,760 | 2,195 | 47,474 | 91,901 | 1,39,375 |
| BERHAMPORE | 12,141 | 639 | 12,780 | 967 | 4,287 | 5,254 | 73,748 | 1,34,236 | 2,07,984 |
| BHARATPUR-II | 3,384 | 147 | 3,531 | 229 | 1,282 | 1,511 | 31,148 | 58,474 | 89,622 |
| BHAGAWANGOLA | 4,826 | 414 | 5,240 | 204 | 432 | 636 | 33,275 | 61,829 | 95,104 |
| HARIHARPARA | 3,323 | 84 | 3,407 | 163 | 1,089 | 1,252 | 44,093 | 86,320 | 1,30,413 |
| KANDI | 2,047 | 144 | 2,191 | 130 | 795 | 925 | 39,415 | 74,884 | 1,14,299 |
| KHARGRAM | 2,331 | 76 | 2,407 | 908 | 3,621 | 4,529 | 48,822 | 91,759 | 1,40,541 |
| NABAGRAM | 2,227 | 135 | 2,362 | 595 | 2,815 | 3,410 | 38,430 | 70,130 | 1,08,560 |
| SAGARDIGHI | 5,519 | 179 | 5,698 | 314 | 2,673 | 2,987 | 49,119 | 89,612 | 1,38,731 |
| DISTRICT MURSHIDABAD | 1,82,940 | 5,032 | 1,87,972 | 12,306 | 56,850 | 69,156 | 1,18,3329 | 2,06,3175 | 3,24,6504 |

Source: *Census of India, Series 26, Part 12B, District Census Handbook, Murshidabad.*

## Table No. 2.5

### Break Up of Main Workers: Block Wise

| Blocks | Cultivators | | | Agricultural Labours | | | Household Industry | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| BARWAN | 27,012 | 162 | 27,174 | 16,864 | 440 | 17,310 | 1,733 | 377 | 2,110 |
| BERHAMPORE | 28,868 | 383 | 29,251 | 26,734 | 2,257 | 28,991 | 1,217 | 723 | 1,940 |
| BHARATPUR-II | 13,039 | 95 | 13,134 | 9,647 | 83 | 9730 | 2316 | 967 | 3,283 |
| BHAGAWANGOLA | 12,319 | 230 | 12,549 | 14,165 | 238 | 14,403 | 476 | 372 | 848 |
| HARIHARPARA | 24,663 | 239 | 24,902 | 19,433 | 297 | 19,730 | 1,426 | 1,009 | 2,435 |
| KANDI | 22,627 | 117 | 22,744 | 12,533 | 676 | 13,209 | 873 | 249 | 1,142 |
| KHARGRAM | 26,102 | 384 | 26,486 | 17,049 | 623 | 17,672 | 3,585 | 986 | 4,571 |
| NABAGRAM | 20,689 | 631 | 21,320 | 15,283 | 3,445 | 18,728 | 861 | 299 | 1,160 |
| SAGARDIGHI | 19,830 | 343 | 20,173 | 22,934 | 2,698 | 25,632 | 241 | 124 | 365 |
| DISTRICT MURSHIDABAD | 4,42,790 | 5,479 | 4,48,269 | 3,98,476 | 18,704 | 4,17,180 | 71,558 | 1,22,760 | 1,94,318 |

**Source:** *Census of India, Series 26, Part 12B, District Census Handbook, Murshidabad.*

## Table No. 2.6

### Percentage of Main Workers, Marginal Workers & Non Workers

| Blocks | Main Workers | | | Marginal Workers | | | Non Workers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| BARWAN | 27.20 | 0.90 | 28.11 | 0.22 | 0.89 | 1.11 | 24.11 | 46.67 | 70.78 |
| BERHAMPORE | 26.65 | 2.10 | 28.75 | 0.33 | 1.49 | 1.81 | 24.57 | 44.87 | 69.44 |
| BHARATPUR-II | 26.45 | 1.98 | 28.43 | 0.18 | 1.01 | 1.91 | 24.46 | 45.92 | 70.38 |
| BHAGAWANGOLA | 26.14 | 1.28 | 27.42 | 0.15 | 0.33 | 0.48 | 25.23 | 46.87 | 72.10 |
| HARIHARPARA | 27.91 | 1.13 | 29.04 | 0.09 | 0.59 | 0.67 | 23.76 | 46.52 | 70.29 |
| KANDI | 26.76 | 1.13 | 27.89 | 0.08 | 0.50 | 0.58 | 24.67 | 46.86 | 71.53 |
| KHARGRAM | 26.83 | 1.45 | 28.28 | 0.45 | 1.79 | 2.24 | 24.14 | 45.35 | 69.48 |
| NABAGRAM | 26.96 | 3.12 | 30.08 | 0.37 | 1.76 | 2.13 | 24.00 | 43.79 | 67.79 |
| SAGARDIGHI | 26.65 | 2.17 | 28.82 | 0.16 | 1.34 | 1.50 | 24.67 | 45.01 | 69.68 |
| DISTRICT MURSHIDABAD | 26.49 | 3.44 | 29.92 | 0.27 | 1.22 | 1.49 | 24.76 | 43.83 | 68.59 |

**Source:** *Census of India, Series 26, Part 12B, District Census Handbook, Murshidabad.*

## *Critical Variables of the Study:*

Table 2.7 given below shows the framework illustrating the critical variables of the study at the theoretical and operational levels. Socio-economic factors relate to social, economic and political empowerment in the process of development within the machinery of democratic decentralization. The critical variables of the study have accordingly, been identified and categorized into three sets, as (1) Independent, (2) Dependent, (3) Intervening variables.

### Table 2.7

### Framework Illustrating the Critical Variables

| VARIABLES (1) | THEORETICAL LEVEL (2) | OPERATIONAL LEVEL (3) |
|---|---|---|
| Independent variables | Socio-Economic factors | 1. Sex  2. Age<br>3. Occupation  4. Education<br>5. Annual family income<br>6. Marital status  7. Religion<br>7. Caste |
| Dependent variables | Social indicators of Empowerment | 1. The level of intelligence between men & women.<br>2. Freedom of women on social questions like marriage, education and household planning.<br>3. Religious impact on women empowerment |
| | Economic indicators of Empowerment | 1. Economic independence of women.<br>2. Influence of economic independence on various decision-making levels.<br>3. Economic command of male members<br>4. Enjoyment of economic independence by women. |
| | Political Indicators of Empowerment | 1. Political awareness of the people.<br>2. Decision on voting.<br>3. Political opportunity to women. |
| Intervening Variables | Political affiliation of women panchayat members and their level of satisfaction in self-working. | 1. Socio-economic effect on decision making by women panchayat members.<br>2. Level of women satisfaction.<br>3. Position in party and Government bodies. |

# Independent Variables:

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents fall in the category of independent variable. The two categories of respondents are the elected women panchayat members and common citizens comprising various sections of people and government officials. The socio-economic characteristics are almost same. They are identified as (i) sex (ii) age (iii) occupation (iv) Education (v) annual family income (vi) Marital status (vii) religion and (viii) caste. These variables have been grouped under independent variables for the reasons as (a) they are assumed to be independent in nature, and (b) each variable becomes a basis for predicting variation on the dependent variable.

# Dependent Variables:

Social, economic and political indicators of empowerment are the dependent variables in this study. The assumption was to find out what the people particularly women, understand the term of empowerment, awareness of the people on various government policies, what do they feel the barriers of women empowerment and what do they suggest to improve the level of empowerment.

In the context of social indicators of empowerment the questions were set on:

(a) The level of intelligence between men and women.

(b) Freedom of women on social questions like marriage, education and household planning.

(c) Religious impact on women empowerment, etc.

Economic indicators of empowerment were taken into account on the questions were set as:

(a) Economic independence of women.

(b) Influence of economic independence on various decision-making levels.

(c) Existing economic command of male members of a family.

(d) Enjoyment of economic independence by women.

On the same line political indicators of empowerment were also assessed on the varying questions on:

(a) Political awareness of people, women in particular,

(b) Decision on voting

(c) Political opportunity to women.

## Intervening Variables:

Empowerment in general and women empowerment in particular call for the active involvement of the people in the process of democratic decentralization. Political affiliation of women panchayat members and their satisfaction on self-working ability and opportunity are treated in the study as the intervening variables. These attributes were assumed to influence the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

(a) Socio-economic effect on decision-making by women members,

(b) Level of satisfaction in her working as a member in development,

(c) Position in party and in government bodies, etc. These intervening variables relate only to the elected women panchayat members.

## *Contents of the Schedule:*

The data for the study was obtained from two main sources, primary and secondary. The primary data consisted of personal interviews through questionnaire for sampled women members in Panchayat Raj Institutions, and common citizens comprising village elites, religious heads, educationists, senior citizens, political leaders, government officials and even lower level people.

Questionnaires were prepared in different form for these two sets of respondents. For the elected women members, questions were formed to get the socio-economic background of the respondents, their exposure to media, social, economic and political indicators of empowerment.

Section 'A' of the questionnaires includes demographic variables as age, sex, religion, caste, qualification and occupation.

Section 'B' of the questionnaires includes their exposure to media, political affiliation, consciousness about national and regional problems and other information pertaining to national interest.

Section 'C' of the questionnaires includes the questions related to their (i) social empowerment containing religious faith and limitation, social liberty given to them, their position in family and society. (ii) Economic empowerment contains their economic conditions, economic dependence, working condition and working ability of women.

In the second set of questions, for the common citizens, section 'A' and section 'B' include same questions on demographic variables and exposure to media. In section 'C' questions relating to their attitude or views on women in social, economic and political aspect. Questions in the section were formulated on Likert's five poin Scale. The Scale ranges from "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Undecided", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree", with scores 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

## *Data Processing:*

Applying relevant statistical tools, the information's and data were analyzed to draw the generalization and to arrive at the conclusions. Mainly correlation analysis, the relationship both positive and negative between the variables of age, sex, education, income, religion, caste, occupation, work satisfaction (for the women panchayat members), level of awareness of empowerment in development process (women), level of given or acquired empowerment (women) in all the three aspects and ability of acceptance of such empowerment have been measured.

Seale Ranges from S.A, A, U.D, D.A and S D A was taken to score the intensity of orientation.

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