

CHAPTER: 4

SOCIAL STATUS OF THE ELDERLY WOMEN

Social status is of utmost importance in studying the well-being of a person. Human beings, being a social animal, their well-being to a great extent revolve around their participation in the social world that surrounds them which includes their family, relatives, work place, neighbours, and friends. Active participation in this world not only gives man a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment but also helps to develop confidence in them. Besides this, social recognition from other members of the society and family gives man a sense of importance, as a member of the society. For human beings, social factors play an important role in not only developing his personality but also play a greater role in his socialisation process. Social participation, social role playing and social acceptance of a person in his/her family, peer group, neighbourhood, and work place is of immense importance in this case.

During old age due to the deterioration of physical and mental abilities and also due to various societal factors, a person often experiences sudden change in his/ her social status. Old age often results in withering away of many social roles which were once a part of his life and which had help him to earn recognition from other members of the society and family. In this context, retirement or loss of job is an important factor which results in role loss among the elderly persons. Besides this, when it comes to his/ her family, changes often comes with the loss in decision making power which is generally taken over by the members of the younger generation. This role loss is often accompanied by changes in his/her social relationships, social recognition and acceptance which a person has received throughout his life. Social acceptance and recognition tends to give a person a sense of self-worth, and hence is an important factor in ensuring their well-being.

In case of women, due to their low participation in work force, the main arena in which their role and power revolve around is their family. But in our society this role and power is again determined by the marital status of a women. A living and active husband generally assures greater power and diminishes the chances of role loss to a great extent in old age. Similarly studies reveal that an active participation in house hold work and its management or any other

beneficial contribution in the family ensures an elderly woman a higher status and better social acceptance (Gowri, Reddy & Rani, 2003) and (Panda, 2005).

With the objective of assessing the changes in the social status of the elderly females, belonging to the middle and poor families, the present study seeks to investigate the extent of role loss that the elderly women of both the classes experience with regard to their job and also within their family. This is assessed by studying their participation in the decision making process and the frequency at which their consultation is sought by their family members, when it comes to decision making. Attempts are also made to investigate their perception with regard to the changes experienced by them in this regard. Besides this, their participation and decision making in household affairs and activities are also studied. Efforts are also made to explore their engagement in social/ welfare activities. Apart from this, their contributions in their family are also assessed by studying their participation in various household and other activities.

Besides these, their social acceptance is assessed by investigating their relationships with other members of their family, especially their grandchildren and children and also with their friends and neighbours, who generally form an important part of one's life, outside the family. In this context, their relationship with their husband (if alive) is also assessed. Assessments are also done with regard to their participation in various social activities like frequency of going for shopping, going to religious places, going out with family members, visiting a friend or relatives, attending social gatherings, going out for a walk etc. Efforts are also made to know about their engagement in social/ welfare activities. Apart from this, their contributions in their family are also assessed by studying their participation in various household and other activities. Moreover assessments are also done with regard to their perception on the changes that they are experiencing in their status, as a result of role losses and the attitude of their family members towards them. Their perception with regard to the fulfillment of both their economic, emotional and health care needs and requirements by their family members; towards the younger generations; and changing gender roles and social values are also assessed simultaneously.

Extent of role loss and their perception towards it:

Social roles are important in one's life as they give a person an opportunity to provide their valuable contribution in the society and family which not only gives a sense of fulfillment but

also helps to gain recognition from other members of the society. With old age, generally due to some physical and societal factors these roles start fading away leaving the elderly person jobless, unable to contribute to the society and family gainfully, thus making them dependent on others. Though this is not always true in every case and exceptions to these are also found, where an elderly person in spite of his age is actively participating in all societal affairs and continues to gain recognition from other members of the society and family. However, in case these role losses take place they generally have several impacts on the well-being of the elderly person resulting in severe depression, frustration, and feeling of worthlessness among them. Thus this section probes into and studies comparatively whether and to what extent role loss has been experienced by the elderly women of both middle class and poor families. Efforts are also made to study their perception in relation to the role losses that they are experiencing.

With this objectives, several factors are assessed like their participation in decision making process, management of household affairs, social/welfare activities etc. Efforts are also made to study the changes experienced by them in these areas and their perception towards these changes. Moreover, in order to assess their role loss, their contributions to their family especially in the household chores are also studied intensely. The elderly women who were once employed but are non-working presently are also studied for assessing their perception towards the loss of their job.

Participation in Decision making:

The role of decision making though is usually performed by men in our society but often it gives women a sense of authority and power when the decision making power of the family rests in the hands of their husband. This is because in a patriarchal society a woman's status is often determined by the status and power enjoyed by her husband. However, in old age there often occurs a change in the decision making authority in the households. The power so enjoyed by a person during his/her adulthood is often lost at the hands of the younger members of the family. Moreover, as women tend to live longer than men, so generally after the husband dies the decision making power of the family often gets transferred to the younger members of the family. This transfer of power in many cases results in a feeling of loss of authority and worthlessness among the elderly women and it is intensified if they are not given a chance to

express their views or are not consulted in any matter. However, this is not true for every woman, because in many cases the elderly women are found to be well adjusted to the transitions of their life and thus they welcome every change with positivity.

In this section efforts are made to study the elderly women's participation in decision making authority, changes in authority with regard to the same and their perception towards these changes.

Table 4.1 (i): Decision maker of the family...past and present (in percentage)

Person acted /acting as the decision making authority	Past		Present	
	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families
Self	0	8	4	6
Self and husband	10	10	16	10
Self and Son/s	0	0	0	2
Self and Daughter/s	0	0	2	4
Self and Daughter in law/s	0	0	0	2
Self , daughter/s and son/s	0	0	4	2
Husband	84	78	10	14
Husband and sons	0	0	8	6
Son/s	4	2	42	48
Daughter/s	0	0	2	2
Daughter and Son- in Law/s	0	0	6	4
Relatives	2	0	6	0
Total	50	50	50	50

Table 4.1 (i) shows lesser participation of the elderly women in the decision making of the household. It can be noticed that only 8% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families against none belonging to middle class were the decision maker of the household in the past. However, 4% of the elderly women of the middle class families against 6% of those belonging to the poor families are presently the decision maker of their family. This lesser number of elderly

women acting as the decision making authority suggest the prevailing patriarchal system in which the male still holds the authority of decision making. However, in few cases, the elderly women are found performing the decision making role along with their husband and other younger members of the family. In this context it should be mentioned that this percentage is 22% in case of middle class and 20% in case of elderly women belonging to the poor category. The comparative analysis with regard to participation of the elderly women in decision making authority thus shows no significant difference between the two classes.

Table 4.1 (i) also shows declined authority of the husband in decision making, but in this context it should also be noted that most of the elderly women covered under the present study, irrespective of their class are widow, which is also one reason that accounts for the above fact. However, the decision making power in most cases, rests in the hands of the husband and in some cases both with the elderly women and their husband, where they married and co-residing with their spouse. The table 4.1 (i) at a glance shows that irrespective of class, in majority cases the decision making authority rests with the younger male members of the family like son/s and son-in laws (in case of elderly residing with their married daughter). However, only in case of one elderly woman belonging to poor families, the daughter plays the decision making role. In this context it is noteworthy that in this case the elderly woman though stays alone, in a separate arrangement and in a separate residence but she is looked after by her daughter who stays in the same neighbourhood with her husband and children. Due to her physical disability (as reported by her) it is her daughter who takes all the decisions for her. Besides these, a few elderly women belonging to the middle class resides with their relatives and hence the decision making authority rests with the relatives, co-residing with them. However 80% and 66% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and poor families respectively are found to experience changes in this matter where their own or their husband's decision making power is lost or is presently shared with the younger members of the family.

Analysis of data further shows that irrespective of the class to which the respondents belong to, their age group is found to be inversely related to their participation in the decision making process, as with increasing age their participation in decision making tend to reduce. In this context it should be noted that irrespective of class, the proportion of elderly women belonging to the 'middle aged old' and 'oldest old' group who participate in the decision making process

are either having a source of income or are living alone, where she is the sole authority to take every decisions regarding her family.

Moreover, participation in decision making is also found to be related to the educational status of the elderly women as a higher rate of participation is noticed among the elderly women who have pursued education till higher secondary level to master degree as compared to the elderly women who are illiterate, achieved non-formal education or have studied till secondary level. Similarly in case of elderly women belonging to the poor families, a higher level of participation is found among elderly women who have pursued education till higher secondary level. However, comparison of both the classes in this matter shows that a much higher number of poor elderly women, who are illiterate, achieved non-formal education or have achieved education till higher secondary level participates more in decision making than the middle class elderly women falling in these categories. This can however be due to the overall poor educational status of the elderly women of this class.

Findings also reveal that participation in remunerative work is positively related to their involvement in the decision making authority. However, the proportion of working elderly women participating in decision making authority is found to be much higher in case of the middle class elderly women those belonging to the poor category. This suggests that in most cases, even participation in remunerative work for the poor elderly women does not ensure their participation in the decision making.

Besides these, participation in decision making is also found to be positively related with the earning status of the husband, especially in case of middle class. However, this is not been found to be true in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families, a reason behind this could be the fact that all the poor elderly women with non-earning husband, who participate in the decision making process are either working or have a source of income of their own, which can be a cause of their participation in the decision making process. Moreover, irrespective of the class, to which the respondents belong to, having a source of income, especially where the elderly woman is a widow is also found to be positively related to their participation in decision making.

Besides these, a relation can also be noticed between the marital status of the elderly women and their participation in decision making. Irrespective of their class, a higher participation in decision making is noticed among the married elderly women as compared to the widows and

unmarried. A higher participation in the decision making is also noticed in case of middle class elderly women co-residing with their husband alone as compared to those, co-residing with their children and husband. This is however not found to be true in case of poor elderly women, where higher rate of participation is found in case of those co-residing with children and husband. However, irrespective of class, the rate of participation in decision making among the widows co-residing with their children or relatives in this matter are found to be much lesser as compared to the above mentioned categories.

In this context, attempts are also made to analyse the perception of the elderly women (belonging to both the categories), towards the changes experienced by them in the decision making authority. This will not only give us a picture of their attitude towards these changes but will also reflect the level of their adjustment with these transitions of life. In this context, (Panda,2005) remarks that the convenience at which an elderly person give up her previous roles and takes up new roles according to the changing needs, reflects her ability to adjust. With these objectives, some statements are presented before the respondents during study. They are asked to select the statements that they think could give expression to their feelings and views. Data gathered from this process reveals that in case of 16 elderly women belonging to middle class and 13 belonging to the poor families such changes has not taken place, (i.e. the person previously playing the decision making role still continues to play it). However, (out of the remaining 34 elderly women belonging to the middle class and 37 elderly women of the poor families) , 21 (62%) elderly women of the middle class and 15 (41%) elderly women of poor families feel that the change is quite '*normal*'. Besides, these 12 (35%) elderly women belonging to the middle class also feel that their '*position is not affected by the change*'. On the other hand the remaining 13 i.e. (38%) elderly women belonging to the middle class and 20 (54%) elderly women of poor families feel that '*they have no option but to compromise with the present change*' and also that '*in the past the person playing the decision maker role was better than the present one*'. A few of them even feels that '*their authority is lost due to the change*'. However, 6% elderly women belonging to middle and 5% belonging to poor families remain '*indifferent*'. In this context it should be noted that, accepting this change as normal and feeling that their position is not affected by the change reflects their adjustment to the changing situations of their life. The percentage of the elderly women accepting the change positively is comparatively higher than those elderly women who

are facing problems to adjust with it or who feel that their position is lost due to it. However, it should be noted that the number of elderly women accepting the change as normal are found to be more in case of middle class families than in case of poor families. In poor families, majority of the elderly women are found to face problems while adjusting to these changes. These differences among both these two categories of elderly women can be explained by the difference in their educational and cultural background. Education not only aims to provide knowledge but also provides the power of tolerance, control and adjustment to life situations and these can be clearly reflected in this case.

However, to understand the elderly women's participation in decision making process, it is also important to study the frequency at which they are consulted by their family members when any decisions are being taken in the family. Their participation in this process is important because the level at which their consultation is sought by their family members determines to a great extent, the level of their social acceptance in the family.

Table 4.1 (ii): Frequency at which the consultation of the respondents is sought in decision making (percentage)

<i>Frequency of consultation</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Always	32	18	25
Mostly	24	34	29
Sometimes	16	10	13
Rarely	8	10	9
Never	18	24	21
N/A	2	4	2
Total	50	50	100

The table 4.1 (ii) reflects the frequency at which the elderly women are consulted by their family members in the decision making process. The table 4.1 (ii) shows that 32% of the middle class elderly women and 18% of those belonging to the poor families are 'always' consulted by their family members when any decisions are being taken in the family. In this context it should be noted that these elderly women whose consultation is 'always' sought by their family members

are mostly married and are co-residing with their husband, with or without children or where the elderly women is herself the decision maker of the family. However, the table 4.1 (ii) shows that majority of the elderly women studied i.e. 56% in case of middle class and 52% in case of poor families are 'always'/ 'mostly' consulted by their family members at the time of decision making. Only 16% and 8% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class against 10% and 10% elderly women of poor families are 'sometimes' and 'rarely' consulted. On the other hand 18% and 24% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and poor families respectively report that they are 'never' consulted in any matter. However, the question is non-applicable for 2% and 4% of the middle and poor elderly women respectively, as they stay alone, and have no family members staying with them to seek their consultation.

Comparative analysis of the two classes shows that a higher proportion of the elderly women belonging to the middle class are consulted by their family members as compared to those belonging to the poor families. This to a great extent reflects the acceptance of the middle class elderly women within their family and their relationship with their family members. Analysis also shows that consultation in decision making is positively related to the educational status of the elderly women as a large majority of the middle class elderly women who has pursued educational qualification till higher secondary to master degree are 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members, than those who are either illiterate/ achieved non formal education or who have studied till secondary level. Similarly in case of poor families, elderly women who have pursued educational from primary to higher secondary level are found to be 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members than those who are either illiterate or have achieved non-formal education.

Much like participation in decision making, consultation in the same are also found to be inversely related to the age group of the elderly women, as irrespective of class a higher proportion of elderly women falling in the age group of 60-69 years are found to be 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members as compared to the elderly women falling in other categories. Moreover it is found to diminish with age.

A positive relation is also found between the participation of the elderly women in remunerative work and household chores and consultation in decision making. It is found that irrespective of class, a higher proportion of elderly women participating in remunerative work and household

chores than those who do not are 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members in decision making.

The study also reveals a relation between the frequencies of consultation with the living arrangement of the elderly women. It shows that irrespective of class, a much higher number of elderly women co-residing with their husband alone are 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members as compared to those co-residing with their children and husband. However in case of widows co-residing with relatives/ children, source of income are found to play an important role in the frequency at which their consultation is sought.

The study reflects that most of the elderly women whose consultation is sought by their family members are consulted in Property related matters, matters related to marriage, job, buying of household goods/furniture, education of children, buying gifts for relatives, religious affairs/ rituals and child rearing. However, when it comes to religious affair and rituals, their consultation is mostly sought by younger members of the family. A considerable number of elderly women are also consulted in property related matters and this is true for both the classes. This is followed by a large number of elderly women who are also consulted by their family members in case of deciding and buying gifts for relatives and during the purchase of any household goods/ furniture. Marriage of is an area where the elderly women still find importance; this is also reflected in the study as irrespective of class, a significant number of elderly women are consulted when it comes to the marriage of their children or grandchildren. This is followed by a some elderly women who are consulted in child rearing, but their number is comparatively much less in case of poor elderly women. This is probably due their poor relationship with their children especially their daughter-in laws in most cases and also due to the fact that a significant number of them are staying alone or co-residing only with husband without their children. In matters of education and jobs of the family members however, the elderly women of both the classes are found to get less importance as their consultations are rarely sought by their family member in these matters.

Efforts are also made to probe into their perception, if in any case they are not consulted by their family members. Majority of the respondents of the present study (i.e. 50% of middle class and 34% belonging to the poor families) state that '*it is normal*', as according to these elderly

women, *'it is not always possible for the family members to seek their consultation in every matter'*. Some of the elderly women having similar opinion state that *'though their family members always seek their consultation but sometimes in the interest of the family they have to take some decisions at their own, which is quite normal and there is nothing to feel bad about'*. Few elderly women especially belonging to poor category state that *'the children are now grown up and now they are the earning members of the family, thus it is quite natural that they will decide everything'*. These statements reflect greater adjustment of the elderly women towards the role loss that they are experiencing at this age.

This is followed by 14% and 12% elderly women of the middle and poor families respectively who state that *'they have no interest to be a part of the decision making'*. Such statements are an indication of social withdrawal and loss of interest of the elderly women in family and social matters. This is both due to their poor physical condition and sometimes out of the feeling of depression that results from their role loss. Much similarly 2% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and 4% belonging to the poor families feel that *'they are not capable of giving a better suggestion'*.

On the other hand, 30% of the elderly women of middle class and 34% belonging to the poor category *'feels bad', 'feels insulted and feels that their authority is lost'* when they are not consulted by their family members in any matter. Some of these women belonging to the poor families remark that *'I don't have any problem with regard to the decisions taken by my sons, I don't want to interfere. They do whatever they like but sometimes I feel bad and depressed and feel that my importance has reduced'*. Another woman remarks that *'when it comes to decision making I have no authority. My son decides everything and sometimes consults my husband but if I ask, they avoid me. I feel bad because the entire day I work for the family but can't expect to have any authority in return'*. Besides this, 8% elderly of poor families remain indifferent to this question. However, 4% and 8% of the elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively state that they take every decision in their family and hence none of the decisions are taken in their family without their consultation.

However, comparative analysis of both the classes reveals that a higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the middle class are found be well-adjusted than those belonging to the poor families.

Information about decisions taken in the family:

In order to assess the extent of importance given to the elderly women in their family, along with their level of their participation in decision making, the frequency at which their consultation is sought, and the frequency at which they are informed about any decisions being taken in the family. Attempts are also made to assess their attitude towards the same.

Table 4.2 shows that quite a larger proportion of elderly women i.e. 62% belonging to the middle class and 58% of the poor families are ‘always’ and ‘mostly’ informed by their family members about any decisions being taken in the family. This again points out to their acceptance among their family members and the importance given to them in their family. This is followed by 14% elderly women belonging to middle class against 10% of the poor families who report that they are ‘sometimes’ informed about the decisions taken in the family. Whereas 16% elderly women belonging to each class report that they are ‘rarely’ informed. On the other hand 6% and 12% elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively report that they are ‘never’ informed about any matter. However, the question is found to be non-applicable for 2% and 4% elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively as these women stays alone and hence this question is non-applicable for them.

<i>Frequency at which the elderly women is informed</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Always	38	22	30
Mostly	24	36	30
Sometimes	14	10	12
Rarely	16	16	16
Never	6	12	9
N/A	2	4	2
<i>Total</i>	50	50	100

Attempts are also made to assess the perception of the elderly women, in case they are not informed by their family members about the decisions taken in the family. A significant number

of elderly women (i.e. 40% of middle class and 24% belonging to poor families) state that, 'It is normal' and they do not feel bad about it. While, 12% and 8% elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families remark, that 'they have no interest to know' about the decisions taken in the family. On the other hand 44% and 52% of those belonging to middle class and poor families respectively, feel 'worthless', 'feels insulted', 'position is lost' and 'feels bad' in case they are not informed about any decisions taken in their family. However, the question is non-applicable for 4% of middle class elderly women and 16 % elderly women belonging to the poor families as these women are either staying alone or some of them report that such situations do not arise in their case.

Participation in the management and decision making of household affairs:

In Indian society, a women's position till today centers within the four walls of her family and household. In this society, a woman whether working or non-working is expected to deliver her duties towards her family as her first priority. During her adulthood a woman generally manages the household affairs by her own. In some cases she acts as the sole authority in the management of these affairs and all the family members has to consult her before taking any decisions related to these affairs. But with age, a woman loses many of her roles, and management of household affairs is also one among them. With the arrival of daughter-in law in the family, she gradually loses her authority on household affairs. The new person generally tries to manage the household affairs according to her own wish and convenience which generally takes away from the elderly women the roles related to the management and decision making of these affairs. However, to some elderly women this transfer of authority and the responsibilities associated with it, is a cause of great relief in old age where as to others this cause feelings of loss of authority, feeling of being dominated and also sometimes even results in depression among them.

In this context the present study has also enquired whether any changes have taken place with regard to the decision making of the household affairs. Table 4.3(i) reflects that irrespective of class, in majority cases, the elderly women were the sole authority in the management of household affairs in the past (90% and 96% in case of middle and poor families respectively). Besides these, another few proportion of the elderly women in the past participated in the

decision making affairs jointly with others. Only in case of 4% elderly women belonging to the middle class the role of management was played by the relatives staying with her.

However, the table 4.3 (i) also shows that in the present time the role of management of household affairs in majority cases has been transferred to the daughter-in laws of the family, though in case of a considerable proportion the authority still rests with her (i.e. 26% in case of elderly women belonging to each category). Besides these, 18% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and 22% belonging to poor families are found to participate jointly with their daughter-in laws in the management of these affairs. Similarly joint participation with daughters in the management is found in case of 6% and 12% of the elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively. Only in case of 4% elderly women belonging to the middle class families the authority rests jointly in the hands of the elderly women along with the relatives staying with her. However, in very few cases, especially where she co-resides with her daughters, these affairs are decided and managed by the daughters. Only in 2% case the authority is enjoyed by the relatives staying with the elderly women. In this context it is significant to note that the number of elderly women participating in the management of household affairs are higher in case of poor families (60%) than in case of middle class families (54%), this confirms greater participation of the elderly women belonging to the poor families in the management and decision making role of the household.

**Table: 4.3 (i): Management and decision making of the household affairs....past and present
(in percentage)**

<i>Person acted/ acting as the decision making authority</i>	<i>Past</i>		<i>Present</i>	
	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>
Self	90	96	26	26
Self and Daughter/s	4	4	6	12
Self and Daughter in law/s	0	0	18	22
Self and others	2	0	4	0
Others/relatives staying with the elderly	4	0	2	0
Daughters	0	0	6	4
Daughter-in law	0	0	38	36
Total	50	50	50	50

While analysing the proportion of elderly women who has experienced changes in this regard it is found that in case of 42% and 40% cases belonging to middle class and poor families the decision making power of the elderly women in this regard is lost at the hands of the younger members of the family. Presently these younger members now act as the sole decision maker in the management of these affairs.

Analysis of data shows that much like their participation in decision making of the family, their participation in the decision making and management of the household affairs is inversely related to their age-group, as their rate of participation in these affairs are found to decrease with their increasing age. On the other hand, it is found to be positively related to the educational status of the respondents, their participation in remunerative work and in household chores, self- income and income of husband of the respondents. Besides these, living arrangements of the elderly women are also found to be related with their participation in these affairs.

A higher rate of participation in these affairs is found among the elderly women with higher educational status (Higher secondary- Masters in case of middle class families and Primary – Higher secondary in case of poor families). Participation in these affairs is also found to be

higher among those elderly women who participate in some remunerative work and also among those who participate actively in household chores. Data shows that proportion of participation in the management of household affairs is higher among those elderly women, who actively participate in household chores, This proportion is however found to be much lesser in case of the elderly women who participate in some light household chores whereas this proportion further reduces in case of those who do not participate in any household chores.

Besides these, a higher number of middle class elderly women with an earning husband are found to enjoy the decision making authority in household affairs than those whose husbands are non-working. However, this is not found to be true in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. In their case it is to be noted that, these poor elderly women, with non-earning husband either have a source of income of their own or they co-reside with their husband alone/ with husband and unmarried children where she is the sole authority to manage these affairs. Besides these in case of widows, having a source of income is found to be related to their participation in these affairs. It is also noted that irrespective of class, a higher number of elderly widows having a source of income, participates in the decision making of household affairs than the widows who do not have any source of income. Moreover, irrespective of class, a higher rate of participation is found among the elderly women co-residing with their husband alone than those co-residing with their husband and children or widows co-residing with their children or relatives. Moreover, irrespective of class, in case of elderly widows their income status is found to be positively related to their participation in decision making as higher proportion of widows with a source of income are found to participate in the decision making of these affairs as compared to the widows who do not have a source of income.

In this context, the perception of the elderly women towards the change in the management and decision making of the household affairs is also studied. The study reveals that out of 50 respondents from each class, in case of 15 elderly women belonging to middle class and 14 belonging to the poor families, the change in authority have not taken place. Thus the remaining 35 elderly women belonging to middle class and 36 belonging to the poor families, in whose case decision making role have changed or have been handed over to some other person, are studied to assess their attitude towards this change. The assessment reveals that majority of the elderly women have a normal attitude towards the change. This is true for both the classes.

However elderly women showing ‘normal’ attitude is comparatively much more in number (71%) in case of middle class than in case of elderly women belonging to the poor families (50%). Another 9% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and 6% of poor families state that ‘*they feel relieved*’ due to the handover of authority to the younger generations of their family. Besides, 3% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families feel that ‘*their position is not affected by the change*’. On the other hand, the remaining 26% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and 36% of poor families remark that ‘*they have no option but to compromise with the present change*’ or feel that ‘*their authority has lost due to the change*’. Moreover, 6% of the elderly women of the poor families remain indifferent to the question. Much like the previous section, the assessment made in this section also gives an indication that the middle class elderly women are well-adjusted than their poor counterparts with regard to the role loss experienced by them in their old age.

In order to study the level of role loss of the elderly women with regard to the management of the household affairs, the frequency of seeking their consultation by their family members in these matters is also enquired into and represented in table 4.3 (ii). The table 4.3 (ii) reveals that nearly 58% of the respondents are consulted ‘*always*’ and ‘*mostly*’ by their family members in matters of household affairs like deciding the daily menu, buying goods of daily needs, kitchen affairs, deciding the interior of the household etc. This proportion is 60% in case of families belonging to middle class and 56% for those belonging to poor category. This indicates that inspite of their role loss in the management of household affairs; their importance in the family has not reduced when it comes to seeking their consultations in these matters. Seeking of their consultation by their family members give the elderly women a sense of importance and a feeling of being loved and respected by their family members. One respondent in this context comments that ‘*my daughter-in laws are like my daughters, they provide me with all the necessary support...I don’t feel dominated by them, in fact till now they seek my consultation in every matter*’

Table 4.3 (ii): Frequency at which consultation of the respondents are sought in household affairs (in percentage)

<i>Frequency at which consultation is sought</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Always	40	26	33
Mostly	20	30	25
Sometimes	20	20	20
Rarely	6	4	5
Never	12	16	14
N/A	2	4	3
Total	50	50	100

Besides this, 20% of the elderly women belonging to each category inform that they are ‘*sometimes*’ consulted by their family members in these matters. On the other hand, 6% of the elderly women of the middle class and 4% belonging to poor category are ‘*rarely*’ consulted on these matters. Whereas 12% and 16% elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively report that they are “*never*” consulted on these matters. However, there are few elderly women who live alone and hence the question is non-applicable for them.

Much like participation in decision making of household affairs, frequency of consultation sought by the family members from the elderly women with regard to these affairs are also found to depend on factors like educational status, age-group, participation in remunerative and household chores, self and husband’s earning status and living arrangement of the elderly.

Higher proportion of elderly women whose consultation are always and mostly sought by their family members in these matters are mostly found in case of those who have achieved education till Higher secondary /Graduation/ Masters in case of middle class elderly women and till Primary/ secondary/ Higher secondary level in case of poor elderly women. Seeking of their consultation in these affairs is found to be inversely related to the age-group of the elderly women as irrespective of class, higher proportion of elderly women whose consultation are ‘always’ and ‘mostly’ sought by their family members are mostly found in the age-group of 60-69. Moreover, this rate tends to reduce with the increase in age-group of the elderly women. Irrespective of class, participation in remunerative work and household chores are also found to

have a positive relation with the frequency at which their consultation is sought regarding the decision making of the household affairs. Irrespective of class, higher proportion of elderly women whose consultation are 'always' and 'mostly' sought by their family members are found in case of those elderly women who are presently involved in any remunerative work in contrast to those who are not. Similarly, higher frequency of consultation is also found in case of those elderly women who participates in any household chores in contrast to those who do not.

Besides these, irrespective of class elderly women with an earning husband are found to be consulted mostly in these matters as compared to those with a non-earning husband. However, it is noted that unlike the elderly women of the middle class, in case of poor families frequency of consultation in these affairs also depend on the income of the elderly women, especially when the elderly is a widow. It is also found that irrespective of class, elderly women who are 'always' and 'mostly' consulted by their family members in these matters are mostly those who are co-residing with their husband alone as compared to those co-residing with their husband and children and widows co-residing with their children/ relatives.

Majority of the elderly women state that '*it is quite normal*' and they do not feel bad if they are not consulted on these issues. However like previous analysis, the proportion of women having such attitude is much higher in case of middle class elderly women (42%) than those belonging to the poor families (30%). Another very small number of elderly women (10% in case of middle class and 6% in case of poor families), remark that '*they have no interest to be a part of these affairs*'. On the other hand 26% and 30% of the elderly women belonging to middle and poor families respectively, disclose that '*they feels insulted*', '*feels that their position is lost*', '*feels worthless*', '*feels bad*' and '*feels dominated*' in case they are not consulted. However, 6% of the elderly women of the middle class families and 4% of poor families remain indifferent to this question. In this context it is to be noted that for 2% and 4% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and poor category this question is found to be '*non-applicable*' as these elderly women stay alone and hence they don't have any one to seek their consultation. This is followed by a significant number of elderly women (14% and 26% in case of middle and poor families respectively) who state that they decide every matters of the household and hence every time they are consulted by their family members before any decision on such issues are taken. Proportion of such elderly women is however more in case of poor families than in case of middle class.

Reason for the loss of job, their perception towards it:

In this section efforts are made to study the reasons behind the loss of employment of the elderly women, who were working in the past but are non-working at present. In this context it should be noted that some elderly women belonging to the middle class who were engaged in some full time job in the past, after retirement have engaged themselves in some part time job like providing private tuitions at home and so on. Though these elderly women are working and earning some amount at present but their income has reduced to a considerable extent after retirement from what they used to earn through their full time occupation. Hence they are also included in the present section.

Table 4.4 reflects the reason for the loss job of the elderly women who were previously engaged in some work. 'Retirement' is reported to be the reason for the loss of job by 71% of elderly women belonging to the middle class (who were previously engaged in some remunerative work), while 'Physical problem' by 14% elderly women belonging to the middle class against 94% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. Besides this, 'family pressure' as the cause of the loss of employment is reported by 14% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class. Another 6% elderly women belonging to the poor families, report to have lost their job due to the sudden close down of the institution (school) where they used to work. From these data it can be concluded that while for the middle class elderly women 'Retirement' is one of the main reasons for the loss of their job, for the poor elderly women 'physical problem' or disability/ incapacity to work due to physical problem are the main reasons for the loss of employment for a majority of them.

Reason for the loss of job	Middle class	Poor families	Total%
Retirement	71	0	22
Physical Problem	14	94	70
Family pressure	14	0	4
Any other reason	0	6	4
Total	7	16	23

In this context, the perception of these elderly women towards the loss of their job are also studied and comparatively assessed. For this purpose, some previously constructed statements are presented before the respondents and they are asked to give their opinion as strongly agree/agree/indifferent/strongly disagree and disagree.

Almost all the respondents irrespective of their class ‘agree’ to the statement that ***‘Loss of job is natural and inevitable’***.

However, 57% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class against 56% respondents belonging to the poor families ‘agree’ that ***‘Retirement is healthy because after struggling for the whole life, old age is the period when one needs some rest’*** where as 43% and 38% of the elderly women belonging to middle class and poor families respectively ‘disagree’ to the same. One of the elderly women belonging to the poor families in this context remarks, that *‘Earning some money in old age to fulfill one’s need is more important than taking rest’* whereas another elderly women of the middle class who ‘disagree’ to the statement states that *‘Though retirement/ withdrawal from job is necessary, but one should be allowed to continue work till the person is capable to because work helps a person to live actively in old age’*.

71% against 31% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively ‘agree’ that ***‘After retirement or loss of job it is difficult to spend time’*** while 29% against 56% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor category respectively ‘disagree’ to it. 13% of elderly women remain ‘indifferent’ to this question. In this context it is to be mentioned that the elderly women who ‘disagree’ to the statement reveal that, after retirement they do not face any boredom, as throughout the day they remain busy in their household chores

and other activities with their family members. Thus it is not difficult for them to spend time. The number of elderly women who 'disagree' to the statement is found to be comparatively more in case of the poor families than the proportion of elderly women belonging to the middle class families. This is probably due to the greater participation of the elderly women of the poor families in the household chores.

While all the elderly women of the middle class 'strongly agree' that '***If given an opportunity I would like to join job again and do something productive***' it is only 71% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families who 'agree' to the same. It should be noted that these elderly women report that this unwillingness is due to their ill health and weak physical condition which restricts them from rejoining their job or do something productive.

Studies show that loss of job usually results in declining status of elderly women in the family, feeling of being dependent on others and of being a burden to other members of the family, loss of confidence, and low self-esteem resulting in depression among them. Hence certain statements related to these are presented before the respondents and they are asked to state their opinions against them. Out of the 7 elderly women belonging to the middle class and 16 of the poor families, who has undergone loss of job, 27% and 30% of the elderly women of the middle class families 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the the statement, '***Loss of job has affected my position in the society and family***'. In case of poor families this percentage is however, 43% and 20% respectively. On the other hand, 13% and 30% of the middle class elderly women 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement in contrast to 11% and 20% of the elderly women of the poor category respectively who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the same. On the other hand, 6% respondents remain 'indifferent' to the question.

In a similar way 9% and 20% of the elderly women belonging to middle class 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement '***I feel to be a burden to my family members due to economic dependence***' against 29% and 40% belonging to poor families. However, 71% belonging to the middle class and 31% of the poor families 'disagree' to it.

Almost equal proportion of elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families (43% and 44% respectively) reports loss of confidence due to the loss of their job by strongly agreeing and agreeing to the statement, *'Loss of job has shattered my self-confidence'*. Whereas, 13% and 30% of middle class elderly women 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement, in comparison to 11% and 20% of those belonging to the poor families. On the other hand, 14% of middle class and 25% elderly women of poor families remain 'indifferent' to the question.

Besides these, 60% and 11% respondents of the middle class 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement *'I feel depressed due to the loss of an earning source and increasing economic dependence'* in comparison to 61% and 20% of those belonging to the poor families. On the other hand, 11% and 18% respondents 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to it, whose percentage is 4% and 9% in case of the poor families. However, 6% respondents belonging to the poor category remain 'indifferent' to the question.

All the elderly women of the middle class families 'agree' to the statement, *'I want to engage myself in social and community services'*. In poor families however, only 38% of the respondents 'agree' to the same while 44% of them 'disagree' to it. 19% of them however remain 'indifferent'.

The overall data in this section reveals that, irrespective of class all the respondents are aware of the fact that, one has to lose her/his job at old age, even majority of the respondents, irrespective of their class agrees that retirement in old age is necessary in order to provide some rest to a person who has struggled throughout his/her life. Though some respondents disagreed to the same as according to them, retirement brings with it loss of earning, reduced income, loss of confidence etc. Hence according to them, one should be allowed to continue his/her work till he/she is capable to. However, some of the respondents belonging to the poor families feel that loss of job has seriously affected their economic condition and has left them with no source of income, hence it is not healthy. A higher number of respondents belonging to the middle class as compared to those belonging to the poor category also feel that after retirement/loss of job, it is difficult to spend time. Irrespective of class, in most cases the reason for these feelings, is their lesser engagement in household chores and other activities and also lesser involvement or

interaction with family members, especially with their children and grandchildren. Moreover, most of these elderly women, irrespective of their class agree that if given an opportunity they would like to join a job again, however their number is more in case of those belonging to the middle class. Some elderly women belonging to the poor families disagree to the same as they feel that they are no more capable to work due to their poor health.

Besides this, majority of the elderly women feel that loss of job has affected their position in the society and family , however this percentage is more in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families than those of the middle class. Likewise, a higher number of women belonging to the poor families as compared to the middle class feel that after loss of job due to economic dependence they consider themselves to be a burden to their family members. Similarly loss of confidence due to the loss of job is also found more among the elderly women of the poor families than their middle class counterparts. Even depression due to the loss of job is also reported more among the elderly women of poor families than those belonging to the middle class. This shows that loss of job/retirement have its impact more among the respondents of the poor families than those belonging to the middle class. Moreover it also reflects that they are faced more with the adjustment problems due to the loss of job, than their middle class counterparts.

Another difference between the elderly women of these two classes, in this context can be noticed from the fact that on the one hand all the elderly women belonging to the middle class state that they want to engage themselves in some social and community services but in case of poor families a considerable proportion disagrees to the same. These women state that they would like to engage themselves in those activities which will generate some amount of income for them, rather than any social or voluntary service.

Engagement in welfare and community services:

It is known that a very less number of respondents are engaged in some welfare and community services. Out of 50 respondents in each class, 2 belonging to the middle class and 3 respondents belonging to the poor families are engaged in such services. All the elderly women engaged in such services reports that involvement in such services gives them an excellent level of satisfaction. Out of the remaining 48 and 47 elderly women of both middle and poor families

respectively, only 28 elderly women belonging to the middle class and 11 belonging to the poor families express their interest to get engaged in such services. However, majority of the elderly women expresses their non-willingness for the same as according to them, their physical condition does not permit them to do so. Moreover, some of them feel that they remain so busy throughout the day with their household chores that they won't get time for such activities. Besides these, most of the elderly women, especially belonging to the poor families state that they want to involve themselves in those activities which will generate some amount of money for them. One of them remarks, *"by doing welfare or community services we won't be able to earn even a handful of rice for ourselves"*. In this context, another elderly woman remarks, *"What welfare we can do to others when we ourselves are in need of such services"*.

Needs (economic, social, emotional and medical):

In this section an attempt is made to analyse the needs (economic, social, emotional and medical) of the elderly women apart from their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. A major proportion of the elderly women belonging both to the middle class and poor category states that all they need at this age are the love, care, support and company of their children and family members. This is followed by the need for medical support which quite a significant number of elderly women are faced with. Their percentage is a bit higher in case of the respondents belonging to the middle class than those of the poor families. The need for good food and the things that they are addicted to are also felt by some elderly women, whose percentage is much higher in case of those belonging to the poor families than those belonging to the other category. Some elderly women, especially belonging to the middle class families also report that they want to travel to different places or visit their friends and relatives and socialise with people. A similar number of elderly women, belonging to the poor families and few belonging to middle class, report the need for some physical rest and a comfortable life. In case of poor elderly this is mainly reported by those women who are still working to earn their livelihood inspite of their weak and fragile health.

Besides these few elderly women state that they need enough money to spend on themselves and on their family members while a similar number of elderly women report the need for mental happiness for themselves and their children to be the only need at this age. Some elderly women

also talk about the need for a security at old age. A quite insignificant number of respondents belonging to the poor category report the need for a good living condition while a similar proportion belonging to the middle class reports the need for physical and mental fitness.

Participation/ Contribution in household work/ chores:

Contribution in household activities provides the elderly women a sense of contribution to her family, if not in terms of money, in terms of labour atleast. Moreover, to a great extent it reduces social isolation of the elderly women by providing them with some confidence for being able to participate in the household activities. In the present study irrespective of class, though majority of the elderly women are found to participate in household activities however, their level of contribution varies. In this context it should be mentioned that, 14% respondents belonging to the middle class and 6% belonging to the poor families do not participate in any household activities. It is found that in most cases, the elderly women of the poor families, continue to work/or participate in the household chores till she becomes completely disabled. 6% elderly women of the poor category who do not participate in any household activities are completely bed ridden. However this is not true for the middle class elderly women. Though in very few cases poor health and disability of the elderly women are a reason for their non-participation in household chores but in other cases, due to presence of daughter-in law and maid in the family the middle class elderly women are almost left with no work to perform. Moreover, in a significant number of cases, the elderly women especially belonging to the middle class are found to participate only in the religious activities of the household (like offering puja/ performing rituals etc.) or in some lighter work like watering plants, washing own clothes etc. However in some other cases, the elderly women belonging to the same class are found to perform all the household chores including the rearing of grandchildren, especially in cases where the daughter-in law/daughter (with whom the elderly co-resides) is working. On the other hand there are also cases, though few in number, where it is also found that, inspite of the presence of daughter-in law in the family(i.e. where the daughter in law is non-working), the elderly women perform all the household activities sometimes inspite of her weak physical condition.

Comparative analysis of table 4.5 shows that a number of the elderly women belonging both to the middle class and poor families (who have grandchildren) participate in rearing of their

grandchildren which include activities like looking after them, taking them for bath, taking them to school, feeding them, helping them in doing homework, taking them to the park or for a walk etc. Even if their grandchildren are not staying with them, they perform these activities at the time when they meet them (in this case it should be noted that grandchildren both belonging to the son and daughter side are included).

Table: 4.5: Participation and contribution of the elderly women in household activities (in percentage, approx.)

<i>Nature of activities performed by the elderly women</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Looking after Grandchildren	32	34	33
Feeding grandchildren	18	12	15
Take them for bath	10	6	8
Take them to school	2	12	7
Helping them to do their homework.	2	2	2
Taking them to parks and for walk	10	20	15
Dusting and cleaning the house	56	76	66
Washing clothes	54	66	60
Washing utensils	38	68	53
Helping in the kitchen	42	40	41
Cooking	66	58	62
Buying vegetables and other items of grocery	54	72	63
Offering puja	88	90	89
Watering plants	30	6	18
Drawing water	20	56	38
Serving food	46	36	41
Looking after ailing husband	6	4	5
Outside work	10	84	47
None	12	6	10

However when it comes to other household activities it can be seen that higher proportion of the elderly women belonging to the poor families perform these activities than the elderly women of

the middle class. This activities generally performed by them are mostly dusting and cleaning the house, washing clothes, washing utensils, buying vegetables and other items of grocery and drawing water. The reason behind this is that in middle class families most of these activities are performed by paid help. Majority of the elderly women belonging to the middle class families who does the 'washing clothes' and 'washing utensils' activities, in most cases wash their own clothes. In case of washing utensils also, as they reports, most of them rarely they have to perform this activity as most of the time they are helped by their maid in this regard. However, such paid help is usually not afforded by the elderly women of the poor families and hence they got to do all the activities by themselves, though in some cases these activities are also done by the other members of their family, especially the daughter-in law or daughters. A significant proportion of elderly women are also found to participate in cooking activities. In this context it should be noted that a large number of respondents of the present study are widow; hence many of these elderly women take vegetarian food and cook their own food themselves in a separate arrangement. This is true for both the classes. However, some elderly women both widow and married are though not cooking separately for their own, but they participate in the cooking activities actively and cook for their entire family. In some cases, however these activities are jointly performed by them along with their daughter in law/s/ daughter/s.

In table 4.5, 'outside work' includes the work outside the household which include activities like paying electricity bills, collecting ration/ kerosene oil, deposition money in bank or other institution like post offices etc. Participation in these activities is found to be more in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families than in case of middle class families. However in case of lighter job like serving food, helping in the kitchen (like chopping vegetables, grinding spices etc.), watering plants and so on the contribution of the middle class elderly women is found to be comparatively more than those belonging to the other category.

Perception towards the importance given to their contributions by their family members.

The perception of the elderly women, towards the importance given to them and their contribution by their family members, reflects the level of their social acceptance in their family.

Table: 4.6: Perception of the elderly women with regard to... “I feel that my contributions are not given enough importance by my family members” (in percentage)

<i>Perception of the respondents.</i>	Middle class	Poor families	Total%
Strongly agree	6	26	16
Agree	16	14	15
Strongly Disagree	30	16	23
Disagree	22	20	21
Indifferent	12	16	14
Not applicable	14	8	11
Total	50	50	100

Table 4.6 shows that nearly 26% and 6% respondents belonging to poor families and middle class respectively ‘strongly agree’ that their contribution is not given enough importance by their family members. Moreover 14% and 16% of the elderly women belonging to the poor and middle class families respectively ‘agree’ with the same. On the other hand, 52% belonging to the middle class and 36% of poor families ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ to it. Higher number of elderly women, of the middle class family disagreeing to the statement shows greater acceptance of the elderly women of this class in their families. However 14% respondents are ‘indifferent’ and hence proper answer could not be fetched from them. 11% elderly women (7% belonging to middle class and 4% belonging to poor families) either stays alone or do not contribute anything to their family or perform any household chores because of their disability, hence the question is non-applicable for them.

Social acceptance of the respondents both within and outside their family:

Social acceptance here is referred to the acceptance of an elderly woman in her family and outside it. The relationships and social networks of a woman mostly restrict itself within the domain of her family members and relatives, to some extent this network often extends to their friends and neighbours as well. Thus, social acceptance of an elderly woman within her family,

relatives, friends and neighbour are of immense importance when it comes to their wellbeing. But with old age, due to the loss and shrinkage of many roles of an elderly person, their social acceptance both in the family and outside it also tends to diminish. In this regard various studies have pointed out that the social relationships and social acceptance of the elderly person in their family depends on their economic and physical autonomy /independence, and on the contribution made by them in the family for the fulfillment of the needs of their children (Yadava, Yadava & Sharma, 1996) and (Reddy, 1989). A study conducted by Ansari (2000) among the elderly person of rural Bihar reveals that the status of elderly person in the society depends on their level of participation in social activities. Similarly a study conducted by Panda (2005) reflects that their social acceptance to a large extent depends on the level of their interaction and participation in different social roles, within the family and outside it. Thus, in the present study the extent of social acceptance of an elderly women, is assessed by studying their relationship with their family members (like their spouses, children and grandchildren), friends and neighbours which is in turn assessed by exploring the amount of time spend by the respondents with them. Moreover, the extent of participation of the respondents in different activities with these people is also studied simultaneously. Besides these, the extent of their social acceptance is also assessed by studying their participation in different household and social activities (like activities performed with guest, engagement in welfare and community activities, engagement with religious institutions, frequency of going for walk/shopping/visiting religious institutions/ going out with family members/ visiting friends and relatives/ attending social gatherings).

Relationship with Grandchildren:

Grandchildren are a source of joy and happiness at old age. Studies reveal that spending time with grandchildren and looking after them lowers the depression and isolation associated with old age. It also helps the elderly person to develop good relationship with them which facilitates discussion of emotions and problems (Panda, 2005).

<i>Frequency of spending time</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Often	50	33	42
Sometimes	9	22	16
Rarely	41	36	38
Never	0	9	4
Total	44	45	89

Table 4.7 shows that 12% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and 10% of those belonging to the poor families do not have any grandchildren. Thus excluding these numbers, if the remaining elderly women i.e. 44 belonging to the middle class and 45 in case of poor families are taken into consideration, then it can be seen that almost 50% elderly women belonging to the middle class and 33% of the poor families spend time with their grandchildren ‘often’. This is followed by 41% and 36% elderly women of the middle and poor families respectively, who ‘rarely’ spend any time with their grandchildren. The reason for this, as they state is that their grandchildren are all grown up now and they remain busy most of the times in their studies (school and coaching), hence the elderly women get little time to spend or even interact with them. In some cases however the reason is that their grandchildren is not staying with them, thus the elderly women get a chance to spend time with them only when they visit one another. However, some elderly women of the poor stratum report that, they go to work in the morning and come back during late afternoon and hence get little time to spend with their grandchildren. In this case it should be mentioned that while studying the relationship of the elderly women with their grandchildren, the grandchildren belonging to both the son’s and the daughter’s side are taken into consideration. Besides these, nearly 9% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and 22% of the poor families, report that they ‘sometimes’ spend time with them. This is followed by nearly 9% respondents belonging to the poor families who state that their grandchildren ‘never’ spend any time with them. In case of middle class families, however such cases are not reported. Such cases in majority are reported by the elderly women having poor /strained relationship with their children and daughter-in law/s. However, poor relationship with children does not always results in their distance from their grandchildren. In many cases, it is found that inspite of having poor relationship with children and daughter-in

law/s, the elderly women continue to enjoy good and cordial relationship with their grandchildren. In this context, one elderly women belonging to the poor families remarks, *‘I don’t have any complain against my grandchildren, after coming back from school in the afternoon they always come to me and we spend good times together. At this age they are my only source of joy’*.

Irrespective of class, quite a large number of elderly women belonging to both the classes report that they spend time with their grandchildren by ‘interacting or gossiping’ with them, especially with regard to their schools, friends and studies. However, the topic of discussion varies according to the age of the grandchildren. Almost equal number of elderly women belonging to both the classes report that they entertain their grandchildren by narrating stories, playing with them, taking them to the park /for a walk/ visit nearby religious institutions with them and so on. This is followed by a few who spend time together sometimes by watching television with. A comparatively smaller number state that they help in the rearing of their grandchildren by looking after them/ feeding them/ taking them for bath etc. However another few elderly women take their grandchildren to the school and also help them in their studies. An insignificant number of elderly women, on the other hand report that they go with their grandchildren for shopping/ go for outing and even sometimes shares problem with them. Besides these, few elderly women belonging to the middle class state that they love to cook for their grandchildren. One of them in this context remarks, *“Sometimes my grandchildren come to me and ask me to prepare different sweet dishes for them like naadu, mooya, payash etc. They say that they love to have these dishes prepared by me’*.

Relationship with Children:

Children play an important role in providing physical and mental support in old age. Studies reveal that, children, especially sons are a major source of care and support for elderly persons and co-residence with them ensures greater physical, emotional and economical support in old age (Audinarayana, 2012.a.). The study conducted by Nasreen (2009) among elderly respondents of urban neighbourhood, reveals that elderly women covered under the study, tend to depend more on their children, including their daughters and daughter-in laws than their husband, for the

fulfillment of their needs. A similar study conducted by Mohapatra (2012) among elderly respondents of rural Odisha reflects that majority of the elderly respondents feels that the son and other family members should provide necessary support to old parents. Thus, the relationship of an elderly person with their children is an important factor as to a large extent it determines the care and support received by him/her. Moreover, cordial relationship with children also goes a long way in providing emotional support to an elderly person, which in turn plays a greater role in their well-being. Besides these, relationship with children also reflects the extent of social acceptance of the elderly person in their family. Keeping these factors in mind, in the present study, the relationship of the respondents with their children (of both the classes) are studied and analysed comparatively. For this purpose efforts are made to know the amount of time they spend with their children (including son and daughters), and the activities that they generally perform with them.

Before analysing the data, it should be mentioned that in the present section while studying the relationship of the elderly women with their children, both their sons and daughters are taken into consideration. As studying their relationship with all their children is not feasible, hence efforts are made here to study their relationship / frequency of interaction with at least one of their children (which include the children who are both residing and non-residing with them) and also with the child/children co-residing with them. The table 4.8 (i) show that majority of the elderly women who are covered under the present study ‘rarely’ spend time with their children. Comparison of both the classes shows in case of middle class, majority of the elderly women reports that they ‘sometimes’ spend time with their children. The reason behind, ‘rarely’ spending of time with their children, as the elderly women of the middle class reports, is that their son/s remains busy at work throughout the day and hence they get little time to interact. Moreover, another reason behind this is due to the fact that their children are not residing with them and hence they get some time to spend together only when they meet or during their interaction with them over phone or other electronic media. In case of middle class, children of some elderly women stays in abroad and hence some of them get a chance to meet their children once in a year and sometimes once in two years. However, telephone, internet and other such medium helps the elderly women to atleast communicate with their children, in case they are staying at a distance. In case of middle class families, video chatting and social network sites are

some other medium through which the elderly women communicate or spend time with their children. This though, helps to a great extent in reducing the distance between them; however, to some extent it definitely fails to substitute for the satisfaction that the elderly women receive from the face to face interaction with their children. These technological facilities are however, usually not available to the elderly women of the poor families. Besides this, poor relationship and conflict with children is also another reason for their less interaction/ spending less amount of time with children. However, 5% elderly women reports that their children ‘never’ spend any time with them, their proportion being higher in case of poor families (8%) than the middle class elderly women (2%). An elderly women belonging to the poor families in this context remarks, ‘*my son never comes even to enquire whether I am alive*’. Another elderly women belonging to the middle class states ‘*I am a burden to my family now and hence nobody wants to waste time by spending time with me*’. On the other hand, 24% elderly women belonging to both the classes reports that they ‘often’ spend time with their children. Comparative analysis of both the class shows, that a higher proportion of the elderly women belonging to the middle classes spend time ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ with atleast one of their children than the elderly women of the poor families. Moreover, irrespective of class, frequency of spending time with children are found to be inversely related to their age group (which reduces with the increasing age of the elderly women), and positively related to having a good or satisfactory health status; and having a living and earning spouse.

Table 4.8 (i): Frequency of spending time with Children (atleast one of their children, including both co-residing and not residing with them) (in percentage)

<i>Frequency of spending time</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Often	25	24	24
Sometimes	40	24	32
Rarely	33	44	39
Never	2	8	5
Total	48	50	98

With regard to the common activities performed with their children, irrespective of class, majority of the elderly women reports that they spend time with them often by interacting on

different family related matters. This is followed by a significant number of elderly women who shares their problems with their children. However, it is noteworthy that when it comes to sharing of problems, in most cases they choose their daughters rather than their sons. Sharing of problems with children is however reported more among the middle class elderly women than among those belonging to the poor families. Besides this, a comparatively smaller number of elderly women are found to spend time with their children by watching different programme on television. In this context, an elderly woman reports that she spends most of her time in watching serials on television but whenever her son comes back home, in the evening she moves to her room and allow her son to view the programme of his choice. Thus difference in the topic of interest also prevents some elderly women in watching television with the younger generation, especially their sons. However, daughters more or less show interest on similar programmes/ topics and hence while watching television, daughter's company is most commonly sought. Apart from these, a very few elderly women are found to go out for outing with their children; this is most commonly seen in case of middle class elderly women. However, going for shopping with children, visiting religious institutions, going for a walk, attending social gatherings with children are common for a comparatively smaller proportion of elderly women.

In this context, effort is also made to probe into the relationship of the elderly women with their children with whom they are co-residing with. In an attempt to do so, the frequencies of time spend with the children with whom they co-reside with are analysed. In this context, besides class, a comparative analysis is also made between the amount of time spend with their sons and their daughter co-residing with them.

<i>Table 4.8 (ii): Frequency of spending time with Son/s and Daughter/s who co-resides with them (in percentage)</i>				
<i>Frequency of spending time</i>	<i>Middle class</i>		<i>Poor families</i>	
	<i>Son/s</i>	<i>Daughter/s</i>	<i>Son/s</i>	<i>Daughter/s</i>
Often	9	50	14	70
Sometimes	24	38	33	20
Rarely	59	13	25	10
Never	9	0	28	0
Total	34	8	36	10

The study reveals that irrespective of the social class to which the elderly women belong to, the amount of time spend with their daughter/s with whom the elderly women co-resides is more than with their son/s falling in the similar category. Thus it can be concluded that daughters are a greater source of emotional support to the elderly women, especially when they co-reside with them. In this context it should be mentioned that 11 elderly women belonging to the middle class and 9 elderly women of the poor families either stay alone/ stay with their husband/ relatives or do not have any children and hence they are not covered under the present section.

However, a comparative analysis of the table 4.8 (ii) shows that a higher number of elderly women belonging to the poor families spend time ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ with their sons (co-residing with them) than the elderly women of the middle class. Besides this, majority, 59% of those belonging to the middle class against 25% of poor elderly women report that they ‘rarely’ spend time with their sons. The reason for this, as most of them states is that their son/s leaves home in the morning and returns in the evening and remains busy at work throughout the day and hence they get little time to interact/ spend time with them. However, some other elderly women, especially belonging to the poor families feel that, their son/s spends time or interact with them only when they have any personal interest. Moreover, 9% of the middle class elderly women against 28% of the poor families report that their sons ‘never’ spend time with them. As is revealed by the elderly women, in most of such cases the elderly women do not have a cordial relationship with her son/s, while others reports that their sons do not have time to spend on them as they remain too busy in their own schedule.

However, during the study, 9 elderly women belonging to poor families against 1 belonging to the middle class report to have poor relationship with their children (in most cases with their sons) who are co-residing with them. In this context it is worth mentioning that, in case of poor families, some cases of physical torture, verbal abuse and misbehaviour by sons are also reported. In one case, where the elderly woman stays with her married daughter, she reports misbehaviour from her son-in law. An elderly women in this context reports that she and her husband are both physically tortured by their son, she states, *“I am bound to work at this age, if I don’t my son will not allow us to stay at home and won’t give us food from the next day... I work for the whole month and at the end of the month handover all money to my son, without keeping a single penny for me, but sometimes even if I ask for the rickshaw fare, while going to work my son refuses to give the same and humiliates me like anything”*. Another woman reports that her son tortures her physically, does not give her anything to eat and frequently turns her out from home.

Though cases of physical torture is not reported by the middle class elderly women, but in a number of cases (9 cases) misbehaviour mostly from sons and daughter-in laws and in 1 case by daughter is reported by them. An elderly woman reports that, inspite of her poor health condition; she is forced to perform all the household chores by her daughter-in law. She states that *‘my daughter-in law does not allow me to visit my elder son or my daughters, as there will be no one at home to perform these household chores’*. She even states that *‘If I refuse to work, my daughter-in law says humiliating words to me and quarrels’*. Another elderly woman in this context remarks, *‘I feel bad when my son misbehaves and speaks with me rudely ’*.

However, inspite of some cases of elder abuse and poor relationship with children, the study reveals that irrespective of the social class, majority of the elderly women share good relationship with their children (both married and unmarried) staying with them. This is followed by a few who report that their relationship with their children is satisfactory. Some of the elderly women in this context remarks, *‘I can’t say about my daughter –in laws, but my sons cares for me a lot’*. Other respondent states, *‘I am very happy with my daughter-in laws. Due to some health issues I am unable to perform much household chores, hence my daughter-in laws does every work for me. I am the one to give orders to them...My daughter-in laws serves me a lot*

they massage oil on my hair, tie my hair and especially during illness they serve me a lot'. This shows that family ties are still alive and in many cases the elderly women continues to enjoy the love and care of her family members.

Comparative analyses shows that much higher proportion of middle class elderly women are having good relationship with their children and are the less victims of physical torture and verbal abuse of their children than those belonging to the poor families. This reflects the educational and cultural differences of the members of both these classes. However, irrespective of class, good and satisfactory relationship with daughters is reported in majority cases than with the sons. Moreover, unmarried sons tend to have more cordial relationship with the elderly women than the married sons. However, inspite of the higher proportion of the middle class elderly women having good relationship with their children (co-residing with them), the proportion of those who spend time with their children 'often' and 'sometimes' is comparatively lesser in case of the elderly women belonging to this class as compared to their poor counterparts. As are reported by the respondents of the middle class, this is mainly because of the nature of jobs of their children, due to which they remain busy throughout the day and even sometimes return at late night. Some elderly women of the same class report that even after returning home from their work place, their children continue with their work from home. This at times results in less interaction with not only their elderly parents but also sometimes with their wife and children. Such cases, except for a few are usually not reported from the respondents of the poor families, whose children are mostly engaged in manual, casual jobs or small and petty business which provides them ample of time to spend with their families.

Another important factor which is noted during the study, is that most of the middle class elderly women (having children) who are staying alone/ with husband alone/ with relatives alone report to have good and satisfying relationship with their children who are either staying abroad, outside the state/city or even within the city in a separate residence. On the contrary, in case of poor families women who are either living alone or with husband alone are found to have poor relationship with their children. In most cases they complain with regard to the denial of their children in providing them with any kind of support.

Relationship with spouse:

Needless to say that, a living spouse is an important source of economic and emotional support for an elderly person. During old age, spouses can provide the required emotional and psychological support. Physical and emotional support extended by spouses and spending time with them to a great extent lowers the feeling of loneliness and isolation during old age. Hence, while studying the social acceptance of the elderly women in her family with her kins, her relationship with her spouse is of utmost importance. In the present study the relationship of the elderly women with their spouse is assessed by studying the different activities performed by the elderly women with their spouse.

However, it has to be noted that, most of the elderly women covered under the present study are widows. Out of 50 elderly women studied from each class, only 22 i.e. 44% belonging to the middle class against 18 elderly women i.e. 36% belonging to the poor families are presently married. Analysis of the activities most commonly performed by the elderly women with their spouse shows, that irrespective of class, almost everyone spends time with their spouse by “*interacting with them*” and discussing on various matters, like discussion about family, about children, about relatives, on monetary matters, about the problems faced in life, on religious matters etc. This is followed by quite a large number of elderly women who reports that they “*go for walk*” sometimes with their spouses. This number is found to be higher in case of middle class elderly women than those belonging to the poor families. However irrespective of class “*sharing of problems*”, “*visiting relatives*” with spouses, are reported by another large proportion. Besides these, quite a large proportion of elderly women also state that they mostly spend their time by sitting together and “*watching television*” in the evening. This is followed by (73%) belonging to the middle class who report that they often “*visit religious institutions*” with their husband against 44% belonging to the poor families. Some elderly women belonging to the middle class report that they “*attend social gatherings/parties*” with their husband. The proportion of such elderly women is almost equal for each class. This is followed by some elderly women, almost 68% belonging to the middle class and 39% to the poor families who ‘*goes for shopping*’ with their spouses. On the other hand a smaller number, especially belonging to the middle class report that they usually ‘*go for an outing*’ with their husband. A very few elderly women, of the same class as compared to none of the poor families also report that they

'participate in social activities' together with their spouses (9%) / *'attend religious associations'* (18%) and *'go to watch movies/theaters/ cultural programmes'* with their husband (23%).

Comparative analysis reflects that the elderly women of the middle class families usually engage themselves in diverse activities with their spouses than the elderly women belonging to the poor category. While going out for walk/ visiting religious associations/ doing social activities together/ going for shopping/ outing/ going to watch movie, theater and cultural programme is most commonly noticed in case of the middle class elderly women, the elderly of the poor stratum in most cases are involved mostly in interaction/ sharing problems / watching television and in some cases in attending social gatherings/ visiting religious institutions/ relatives with their spouses. This can be explained by the differences in the economic and cultural back ground of the two classes, which often restricts an elderly woman belonging to the poor stratum in performing diverse outdoor activities with their spouses. Participation in diverse outdoor activities with spouse, are also found more among the elderly women falling in the 'young old' age group, with higher educational status and with 'good' and 'satisfactory' physical health. Unlike the poor elderly women in case of those belonging to the middle class families it is also found to be positively related to their participation in remunerative work/ welfare and community services.

In this context it is noteworthy that during the study a few 2 cases of physical and verbal abuse by husband are also reported by the elderly women of the poor families. However, inspite of this, irrespective of class husband/ spouse seems to acquire an important position in the life of these elderly women, whose presence are found to be very much associated with their social acceptance in the family and society.

Activities performed during the visit of guests:

In order to study the participation of the elderly women in various social affairs the activities performed by them during the visit of any guests are explored. Along with this, in order to assess their acceptance within their family, attempts are also made to investigate whether they are introduced to the guest by their family members, especially when the guest is unknown to them.

90% of the middle class elderly women against 72% of those belonging to the poor families report that they are introduced to the guest by their family members. Out of these, a number of them reports that they are rarely introduced to the guest, while some states that they are introduced to them only if the guest is someone among her relatives/ friends/ or someone connected to her. Colleagues/ friends / or someone who comes to visit their son/s, daughter-in laws or grandchildren are usually not introduced, as are reported by some elderly women. However the percentage of such women is more in case of poor families than those belonging to the middle class. On the contrary 8% and 24% belonging to middle class and poor families respectively reports that they are never introduced to any guest.

With regard to the activities performed by elderly women, during the visit of any guest, 76% of women belonging to the middle class against 62% of the poor families report that they usually welcome the guest and interact with them, while a much smaller proportion of the elderly women i.e. 24% of middle class and 38% belonging to the poor families report that they prefer not to talk to the person and hence withdraw from any kind of interaction with them. Such an attitude reflects withdrawal of these elderly women from these activities. Analysis of the data shows a greater acceptance and a greater participation of the middle class elderly women in these matters as compared to those of the poor families. However, irrespective of class, a welcoming and positive attitude of the elderly women are mostly found among those who participates in any remunerative work/ welfare services, with better educational qualification, among those belonging to the 'young-old' age group and those with 'good' and 'satisfactory' physical health.

Participation of the elderly women with friends and activities performed with them:

Friends have a significant role to play in the life of a person from his/her very childhood till his/her old age. Especially in old age, friends can provide a great help in reducing the emotional and psychological problems that a person generally faces at this age. At this age due to the shrinkage of many social roles, loss of job, loss of spouse, loss of decision making authority and hence reduced acceptance among the family members, elderly people are often faced with a feeling of social isolation, loneliness and insecurity. A proper platform for sharing of such feelings/ problems/emotions generally proves to be of greater help in reducing the feeling of

isolation/loneliness and the resultant depression that elderly persons are generally faced with. Hence in this section, the study comparatively analyses the percentage of elderly women who have friends, the frequency of meeting them and the activities that they generally perform with them. This will help not only to assess, the level of their social network outside their family but will also highlight the role of friends in their life.

Data in this section shows that majority of the elderly women; under the present study have friends. This naturally is an indication of wider level of social network, outside their family. The comparative analysis between the two classes in this regard shows a slighter difference, with approximately 66% for the middle class and 68% in case of the poor families. On the other hand almost 37% of the elderly women (34% of middle class and 33% of the poor families) report that they don't have any friends. Some of them even report that they used to have friends previously but none of them are alive now. However, it is to be noted that in few cases the elderly women who report to have friends inform that their friends group consist mainly of their relatives, like an elderly women in this context states that her sister-in laws (wives of husband's brother) are her best friends. Another woman belonging to the poor families states, '*my sister is my only friend; I share every problem with her*'. It can thus be concluded from this that even in case of choosing friends, few women tend to choose them from their family members or relatives which again reflects their higher level of association with her kins.

Table 4.9 (i): Frequency of meeting with friends (in percentage)

<i>Frequency of meeting</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Everyday	15	26	21
Often	33	56	45
Sometimes	24	18	21
Rarely	27	3	15
Total	33	34	67

Physical problems or disability at old age often tends to limit the movement of an elderly person outside his/ her home and this often proves to be a hindrance in case of meeting their friends and neighbours. In the present study, such incidences are reported in many cases. Some elderly women informs that even a few years back they used to meet their friends almost regularly but

now due to the deterioration of their health none of them are able to move out of their family and hence they can rarely meet. However, such cases are reported mostly in case of middle class elderly women (27%) than those belonging to the poor families (3%). Table 4.9 (i) shows that the frequency of meeting with friends is more in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families than those of the middle class. 56% of the poor elderly women against 33% of the middle class report that they meet their friends ‘often’. Moreover, 15% and 26% of the elderly women belonging to the middle and poor families respectively report that they meet their friends almost daily/ every day. This is followed by 24% of the middle class and 18% of the poor elderly women who report to ‘sometimes’ get a chance to meet their friends. In this context it is also to be noted that, their friends are often from the same neighbourhood where they stay. Though it is true for both the classes, however, it is most commonly found in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families.

<i>Table 4.9 (ii) Activities that are generally performed by the elderly women with their friends (in percentage)</i>			
<i>Activities generally performed with friends</i>	<i>Middle Class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
General interaction and discussion	100	100	100
Go out for walk	42	68	55
Participate in social activities together	3	9	6
Play indoor games	0	6	3
Attend any club or old people’s association	6	0	3
Go out for shopping	27	32	30
Watch T.V together	27	47	37
Go for outing	6	15	10
Go to religious places together	15	68	42
Attend social gathering/ parties together	27	44	36

It is to be noted that in case of almost all the elderly women, the most common activity that they usually performs with their friends mainly involve general interaction and discussion on various matters, specially related to their family, children, and sharing of problems. In some cases the elderly women are also known to engage themselves in religious discussion with their friends.

This is followed by quite a significant proportion, who report that they usually go for walks with them (55%). However, the proportion of such activity is reported to be more among the elderly women of the poor families than those belonging to the middle class. Another significant proportion i.e. 42% and 36% states that they generally visit religious institutions (like temples/ ashrams etc.) and attend social gatherings/ parties together with their friends. Their proportion is however more in case of the poor elderly women than those belonging to the middle class families. Another 37% inform that they prefer sitting together and watching their favourite serials in television with their friends. Moreover, 30% of the elderly women report that they go for shopping together. Besides these, a very small proportion of elderly women reports that sometimes go for a day's outing with them. Travelling to long distance accompanied by friends are also reported by few elderly women belonging to the poor families. Besides these very few of them report that they are involved in different social activities together with their friends/ playing of indoor games (especially ludo) and / attend club or old people's association. However a higher proportion of the poor elderly women are found to participate in all the above mentioned activities than their middle class counterparts.

It is thus reflected from the findings that the frequency of interaction with friends are more in case of the elderly women of the poor families than those belonging to the middle class. It is also found that elderly women belonging to the former category are engaged more actively and participates in diverse activities with their friends than those of the latter category. In this case it should be noted that the study reveals, that some elderly women of the poor families are also assisted by their friends, when it comes to monetary support (during any emergencies) and also in providing health and medical support. This fact, points out to the higher level of interaction and participation with friends, in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families than those belonging to the middle class.

Elderly women's participation in various activities with their neighbours:

Much like friends, neighbours too play an important role in the life of a person. From general interaction on various issues, gossiping, spending time together to sharing of problems the role of neighbours is of immense importance. Much similarly, the present study discloses a greater role of neighbours in the life of the respondents.

Table 4.10 (i) shows that the frequency of interaction of the elderly women with their neighbours. As reflected in table 4.10 (i) much higher proportion of the poor elderly women as compared to the middle class interact with their neighbour on daily basis. A larger number of middle class elderly women however, state that they ‘often’ meet their neighbours. Rare interaction with neighbours is also reported more among the elderly women of the middle class than their poor counterparts. All these reflect a higher interaction of the poor elderly women with their neighbours than those belonging to the middle class. On the other hand, unlike the poor elderly women in middle class families the elderly women are more often found to restrict themselves in the boundaries of the four walls, especially in case of illness and disability. Hence in many cases, they have a rare chance to interact with their neighbours. However in these cases interaction is only possible when any neighbour visits them. These factors are not usually found to be a hindrance in case of the poor elderly women in meeting or interacting with their neighbours, where even in case of illness and disability of the elderly women their neighbours often visit them. Moreover, in some cases the neighbours even provide them with many needed assistance and support during illness. Predominance of non-formal relations existing among the members of this class is the probably the reason behind such facts.

<i>Table 4.10 (i): Frequency of interaction with neighbours (in percentage)</i>			
<i>Frequency of interaction</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
Everyday	22	66	44
Often	56	28	42
Sometimes	4	2	3
Rarely	20	4	12
<i>Total</i>	50	50	100

Table 4.10 (ii): Activities that are generally performed with neighbours (in percentage)

<i>Activities generally performed</i>	<i>Middle Class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total%</i>
General interaction and discussion	100	100	100
Go out for walk	18	30	24
Sharing problems	92	100	96
Going out for shopping	24	30	27
Watching T.V together	10	54	32
Go for outing	10	34	22
Go to religious institutions	48	56	52
Attend social gathering/ parties together	18	36	27

General interaction, gossiping, and discussion on various issues are the most common activities performed by the elderly women with their neighbours. Sharing of problems with neighbours is also reported by most of the elderly women, irrespective of their class. Besides these a significant proportion of the elderly women of both the classes are found to visit religious institutions with their neighbours, especially, during the evening to attend *aartis*, religious discussion, *puja*, *kirtan* etc. This is followed by a smaller proportion who report that they often watch television with their neighbours, when they visit them in the evening. However this proportion is much higher in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families than those of the middle class. Besides these, going out for walk/ for outing/ for social gatherings and parties/ for shopping is also reported by a comparatively smaller number. However these activities are most commonly reported by the poor elderly women, suggesting their greater participation and involvement with their neighbours than their middle class counterparts.

Frequency of meeting with their friend and neighbours are also found to depend on the age group of the elderly women, their physical health and also on their participation in remunerative work and; in welfare and community services. Increasing age, deteriorating physical health and non-participation in remunerative work and their participation in welfare activities tends to reduce their frequency of meeting their friends and neighbours. It is also noticed during the study that neighbours and friends tend to play a significant role, in the life of poor elderly women than those belonging to the middle class families. Moreover, their frequency of interaction and indulgence in diverse activities shows that the poor elderly women are more frequently and

actively involved with their peer group and neighbours. In this context, it should be noted that the psychological and emotional support provided to the elderly women by their friends and neighbours are of great significance. Besides rendering them a platform to share their grief, feelings, emotion, problems as well as frustrations, the neighbours and peer group of the elderly women also provide a significant role in many cases in the provision of economic and health related support. This is especially true in case of elderly women belonging to the poor families. Many poor elderly women, whose children do not look after them report that they are living at the mercy of their neighbours. They also report that whenever they fall sick, their neighbour assist them and accompanies them to the doctors. In some cases during illness, they also assist them in performing household chores. Some of the elderly women also report that at the time of emergency or whenever a financial necessity arises, they usually approach their neighbours for monetary support. They state that their neighbours and friends provide them with the needed support, which is later paid off by these elderly women at their own convenience.

Participation in other social activities:

Going for walk, visiting religious institutions, visiting friends/relatives, going out with family members, going out for shopping/ attending social gathering are some of the activities that provide an opportunity to an elderly person to interact with other members of the society outside their family. Thus, studying these factors tend to highlight the participation of the elderly women in social activities and also their frequency of interaction with outside world. Moreover, frequency of going out with family members also reflects their acceptance among their family members. With this vision, data are gathered and analysed comparatively, in order to fulfill the objectives of the study.

<i>Table 4.11: Frequency of performing other social activities (in percentage)</i>												
Frequency of performing social activities	Going for a Walk		Visiting Religious Institutions		Going out with Family members		Visiting a nearby friends/ relatives		Going out for shopping		Attending social gathering	
	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families	Middle class	Poor families
Everyday	8	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Often	38	30	42	24	6	2	20	26	20	4	16	4
Sometimes	18	46	24	58	28	6	34	44	24	20	20	30
Rarely	20	8	20	10	50	52	30	12	26	40	20	38
Never	16	12	12	8	16	40	16	18	30	36	44	28
Total	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

Table 4.11 reflects that 38% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class ‘often’ go for walk which is 30% in case of those belonging to the poor category; whereas majority of the poor elderly women (46%) report that they ‘sometimes go for walk. ‘Rarely’ going for walk is reported more among the middle class elderly women than their counterparts. However 16% middle class elderly women report that they ‘never’ go for walk against 12% of the poor elderly women. Physical disability and illness is the reasons given by most of these elderly women belonging to both the classes, who report that they ‘never’/ ‘rarely’ go for walk. Comparative analysis of this section shows a higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the poor section (80%) goes for walk “everyday’/ ‘often’/ ‘sometimes’ than the proportion of the middle class elderly women (64%) who does the same.

Religious institutions in this context are referred to temples/ ashrams/ missions and any other institutions having a religious affiliation. Visiting religious institutions, ‘often’ is reported by 42% elderly women of the middle class as compared to 24% belonging to the poor families. Besides these higher proportion of the elderly women (58%) belonging to the poor families against 24% of the middle class report that they ‘sometimes’ visit these places. On the other hand ‘rarely’/ ‘never’ visiting of religious institutions are reported more by the middle class women as

compared to those of the poor stratum. Analysing the situation comparatively, in this context shows a much higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the poor stratum (82%) visit religious institutions “everyday”/ ‘often’/ ‘sometimes’ than the elderly of the middle class (68%). This on the other hand also reflects higher dependency of the elderly women belonging to the poor stratum on religion as compared to their middle class counterparts.

As stated earlier, going out with family members besides reflecting their social participation, also reflects the extent of their social acceptance among their family members. In the present study, irrespective of the social class, the frequency of going out with family members among the elderly women is found to be quite low. However, this frequency seemed to be lowest in case of the elderly belonging to the poor families than those of the middle class. This however confirms the previous findings showing, comparatively lesser acceptance and poor relationship of the poor elderly women with their family members. However, poor economic background of the elderly women belonging to the poor families can also be a cause behind this difference. In this context, is important to note that the elderly women staying alone are also included in the present section.

Visiting friends/ relatives are also found to be more often among the poor elderly women than those belonging to the middle class. 26% elderly women belonging to the poor families as compared to 20% of the middle class report that they ‘often’ visit their friends/ relatives. Moreover, the proportion reporting ‘sometimes’ visiting friends/ relatives are 44% in case of poor elderly women against 34% of the middle class. Thus to sum up, 70% of the elderly women of the poor stratum as compared to 54% of middle class report to visit their friends/relatives ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’. Moreover, ‘rarely’ visiting them are reported by quite a larger proportion of elderly women of the middle class (i.e. 30%) as compared to their counterparts. However, 16% and 18% elderly women of the middle and poor families respectively report that they ‘never’ visit their friends /relatives. The data thus shows greater involvement of the elderly women of the poor families with their relatives/ friends than those of the middle class.

Going for shopping are reported to be more among the middle class elderly women than those of the poor families. 20% elderly women belonging to the middle class against 4% of those belonging to the poor families report that they ‘often’ go for shopping. In this context it is to be

noted that, here 'shopping' refers to buying clothes for own or for other family members, buying different household goods, items of daily use etc. Merely buying of vegetables and grocery items are not included in the present context. 24% of the middle class elderly women against 20% of the poor families inform that they 'sometimes' go for shopping. Moreover, a large proportion of the poor elderly (40%) report that they 'rarely go for shopping as compared to 26% of those belonging to the middle class. Besides this, 30% of the middle class elderly women and 36% of the poor category report that they 'never' go for shopping. This reflects lesser involvement of the poor elderly women in these activities, which is probably due to their poor economic/ financial status and hence their lesser capacity to spend in these activities.

Attending of social gatherings refers to attending parties/ wedding ceremonies/ religious ceremonies etc. In the present context 36% and 34% of the elderly women belonging to the middle and poor families respectively report that they 'often' attend social gatherings. However, 'rarely' attending to these gatherings are reported by 20% and 38% of both the classes of elderly women (middle and poor families respectively). On the other hand almost 70% of the elderly women belonging to both the classes report that the 'never' attend any social gatherings. This proportion is however found to be more in case of the middle class elderly women (44%) than those belonging to the poor families (28%). From this it can be concluded that irrespective of class, though the frequency of attending social gatherings by the elderly women is found to be quite less, their proportion is slightly lesser in case of those belonging to the middle class than the elderly women of the poor families.

To conclude, this section reflects lesser participation of the middle class elderly women in the activities outside their home (like going for walk, visiting religious institutions, visiting friends/ relatives/ attending social gatherings) than those belonging to the poor families. However, it also reflects greater social acceptance and participation of the middle class elderly women within their family than their poor counterparts. This is because a higher proportion of the elderly women belonging to the former category, report incidences of 'going out with family members' at a higher frequency than those belonging to the latter category. Higher frequency in case of 'going to shopping' also reflects better economic status of the middle class elderly women than those belonging to the poor families. On the other hand, a higher proportion of elderly women

belonging to the poor families, participating in various social activities outside their home (like going for walk, visiting religious institutions, visiting friends/ relatives and attending social gatherings) reflects their higher level of engagement with the outside world as compared to the elderly women of the middle class. However, the engagement of the elderly women of both these classes, in these activities are found to depend on various factors like their age-group, marital status, participation in remunerative work, source of income and physical health status of the respondents. Irrespective of the class, age group of the respondents is found to be inversely related to their frequency of going out for walk, going out with family members, visiting friends and relatives, going out for shopping and attending social gatherings i.e. with the increase in the age of the respondents their participation in these activities tends to decrease. Moreover, the physical health status of the respondents tend to influence their participation in the above mentioned activities (like going for walk, visiting religious institutions, visiting friends/ relatives and attending social gatherings) and also their frequency of visiting religious institutions positively i.e. respondents with better health status are known to participate in these activities more frequently than those who report to suffer from any disability /ailments. Much similarly participation in remunerative work/ welfare activities and having a source of income are known to affect their frequency of visiting friends and relatives and attending social gatherings. Participation in remunerative work though seems to positively affect their frequency of going out for shopping, in case of the middle class elderly women, these factors are not found to have any relation in case of the poor elderly women. This suggests that having a source of income or participation in remunerative work in most cases does not provide the elderly women freedom to spend money on their own or for others. Besides these, marital status of the respondents are also found to positively influence their frequency of going out with family members, visiting friends and relatives, going out for shopping and attending social gatherings i.e. it is found to be higher among those who are presently married than those who are widows, unmarried/single or divorced. However, higher frequency of visiting religious institution are found among elderly widows than the respondents belonging to other categories, which reflects greater dependence of the elderly widows on religion than those who are presently married.

Engagement with religious association/ institutions:

Studies reflect that engagement with any kind of religious associations/ institutions, visiting these associations and the various activities performed therein by an elderly person provide him/her, a space to interact with and participate in the activities of the outside world. It also has a greater role to play in their psychological wellbeing. Hence studying the same reflects the level of their participation in social activities and the level of their interaction with other members of the society.

The data gathered in this section reflects that, of the total respondents belonging to both the classes, only 37% are known to be engaged with some religious institution/ association. However, this proportion is found to be much higher in case of the elderly women belonging to the middle class (58%) in contrast to those belonging to the poor families (42%). In this context it is to be noted that, the elderly women belonging to the poor families are found to be mostly engaged with religious associations/ institutions like Ramakrishna mission, 'Janakalyan Ashram', 'Geeta Bhawan', 'Bharat Seva Ashram', 'Ashram of Anukul Thakur' etc. While some elderly women are also found to be associated with the 'Giridhari temple', situated in their neighbourhood. However, the poor elderly women mostly report their association with the 'Madanmohan temple' situated in their locality. In some cases their association with 'Ashram of Anukul Thakur' is also reported.

<i>Frequency of visit to the religious institution</i>	<i>Middle class</i>	<i>Poor families</i>	<i>Total</i>
Often	66	75	68
Sometimes	21	25	22
Rarely	14	0	11
<i>Total</i>	29	8	37

Table 4.12 shows that, majority of the elderly women who are associated with some religious associations/institutions reports that they visit there 'often'. This is however, true for both the classes. While only a few i.e. 22% reports that they 'sometimes' visit there only during any

occasion or festival. A very small proportion belonging to the middle class reports that they 'rarely' visit these associations. With regard to the activities performed by these elderly women in these institutions, it is reported by majority of them that they visit there to offer puja, attend evening 'aarti', attend 'satsang', attend 'kirtan', attend religious discussion and sometimes even participate in the programmes and join the procession organised by them.

The study finds higher level of participation of the elderly women belonging to the poor families with religious associations/ institutions than those belonging to the middle class.

Perception of the elderly women towards role loss and changing status, care and support received from family members, needs fulfillment and the changing societal system.

The present study also analyses the perception of the respondents with regard to the fulfillment of their needs and requirements by their family members and priority assigned to the same; fulfillment of their emotional needs; and care and support extended to them by their family members. Their perception with regard to their role loss, changing role and status in the family; their attitude towards the younger generation, toward the changing societal system, gender roles; and conflict management are also probed into. Their perception on the above mentioned issues will reflect their adjustment and satisfactions with regard to these factors. In this context, some statements are framed and the elderly women are asked to state their opinions against each statement as "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Indifferent", "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree".

For the purpose of studying the perception of the elderly women towards the fulfillment of their needs; and priority given to the same by their family members, their perception on the following statements are assessed (a) '*All my requirements are met by my family members*', (b) '*I get enough money from my family to meet my daily needs*' and (c) '*Whenever I ask for something or place my requirements before my family, my needs are urgently met*'.

The data gathered from the present section reflects that majority i.e. 56% of the elderly women of the middle class against 8% belonging to the poor families, 'strongly agree' with the statement that '*All my requirements are met by my family members*'. However, 32% and 36% of elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively 'agree' on the same. On the

other hand, none of the middle class elderly women against 16% of the poor elderly women 'strongly disagree' with it. However, 34% elderly women of the poor families against 12% of the middle class 'disagree' on the same. 6% respondents of the poor families on the other hand are 'indifferent' to this statement. The whole picture reflects that higher proportion of the middle class elderly women (88%) opines in favour of this statement which reflects their satisfaction with regard to the fulfillment of their needs by their family members. In contrast to this a higher number of the elderly women of the poor families (50%) have strongly disagreed and disagree to the statement, which reflects their dissatisfaction with the same.

26% elderly women of the middle class as compared to 2% of the poor families 'strongly agree' with the statement '*I get enough money from my family to meet my daily needs*', while 48% and 12% respondents belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively 'agree' to the same. On the contrary, a much higher proportion of the elderly women of the poor families i.e. 40% and 46%, 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' respectively to the statement against 4% and 20% elderly women belonging to the middle class. 2% elderly women of the middle class are 'indifferent' on this issue. In this context it is to be noted that some of the elderly women who 'strongly disagree' to the statement report that they get no financial assistance from their family members and run all the expenses themselves. However, the data reflects that much higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the middle class (74%) have express their satisfaction with regard to the monetary support provided to them by their family members by 'strongly agree' and 'agree' with the statement as compared to only 14% of the respondents belonging to the poor families. On the other hand, majority of the elderly women belonging to the poor families (86%) 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' with the statement, as compared to those belonging to the middle class (24%) which reflect the dissatisfaction of the poor elderly women in these matter. It thus shows higher level of satisfaction among the elderly women of the middle class with regard to the monetary support they get from their family members as compared to their poor counterparts.

Almost 12% elderly women of the middle class and 6% of the poor families 'strongly agree' with the statement '*Whenever I ask for something or place my requirements before my family, my needs are urgently met*' as compared to 42% and 6% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively who 'agree' to the same. Besides these the proportion who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to it, are 4% and 40% respectively in case of

middle class and 46% and 42% respectively in case of poor families. 2% elderly women of middle class are 'indifferent' on this. This shows that a higher number of elderly women belonging to the middle class (54%) feel that their needs and requirements are met with priority by their family members in contrast to 44% respondents of the same class who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the same. On the other hand higher proportion of the respondents (88%) belonging to the poor families 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the same in contrast to only 12% of the same class who express their agreement to the statement. Much like previous findings, even in this case satisfaction of the elderly women belonging to the middle class is reflected than those belonging to the poor families, who are mostly found to be dissatisfied in this matter.

Thus it can be concluded from the data that higher proportion of the middle class elderly women feel that their requirements are always met with priority by their family members as compared to those belonging to the poor families. This reflects that the elderly women belonging to the former category are much well-adjusted than those belonging to the latter group, which is probably due to the better educational status of the middle class respondents, than their poor counterparts. This can however also be explained by the difference in the economic background of the families of these two classes, which often prevents the family members in fulfilling the needs and requirements of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. Moreover, an association is also noticed between their satisfaction in these matters and their educational and marital status. Irrespective of class satisfaction in these issues are noticed more among the elderly women with better educational status and among those who are presently married. Though, this is mostly found in case of the middle class elderly women than those belonging to the poor families. Occupational and earning status of the elderly women and their spouses are found to be associated with their satisfaction in these issues only in case of the middle class elderly women. However, such association is not found in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families mainly due to the fact that these poor elderly women, even when earning, hands over her total income to the other members of her family and remains dependent on others for the fulfillment of their own needs. In such cases it is found that many of these women are denied of the monetary support at the time of their need, even from the person to whom she hands over all her earned money. On the other hand in some cases it is also due to the prevalent

gender biasness in these families which results in assigning less priority to the needs of the elderly women, sometimes even by her husband.

For the purpose of studying the perception of the elderly women with regard to the fulfillment of their emotional needs and the care and support extended to them by their family members, the respondents are asked to express their views on the following statements (a) '*At the time of illness or any other physical problem my family members take care of me and provide me with enough support*', (b) '*I am satisfied with the time, my family members spends with me*', (c) '*I am satisfied with the amount of time my grandchildren spends with me*', (d) '*I feel that my family members are too busy and do not have enough time to take care of me*', (e) '*I feel lonely as my family members are too busy and do not have sufficient time to talk to me*', (f) '*Whenever I am faced with any problem, I can always share it with my family members*'.

Equal proportion of the elderly women (24%) belonging to each class 'strongly agree' to the statement '*At the time of illness or any other physical problem my family members take care of me and provide me with enough support*'. However, a higher proportion of middle class elderly women 70% against 42% of the poor families 'agree' to the same. On the other hand, 2% and 4% elderly women, belonging to the middle class 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' respectively to the statement. This proportion is however, is higher i.e. 4% and 30% respectively in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. Though higher proportion of respondents, irrespective of their class express their satisfaction with regard to the care taken and assistance provided by their family members at the time of illness, but comparative analysis shows a much higher proportion of the middle class elderly women (94%) expressing their satisfaction in this respect, as compared to the elderly women belonging to the poor families (66%).

26% and 56% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively to the statement, '*I am satisfied with the time, my family members spend with me*' against 8% and 46% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families who 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively to the same. On the contrary, the proportion of elderly women who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement is 2% and 16% respectively in case of middle class against 18% and 28% of those belonging to the poor families. Though irrespective of class, a higher proportion of elderly women express their satisfaction with regard to the amount of time their family members spend with them, but their proportion is much higher in case of the middle

class elderly women (82%) as compared to those belonging to the poor families (54%). This reflects the satisfaction of the middle class elderly women as compared to their poor counterparts, with regard to the amount of time that their family members spend with them.

Similarly, 18% elderly women of the middle class against 6% of the poor families 'strongly agree' with the statement '***I am satisfied with the amount of time my grandchildren spends with me***'. This is however 'agree' by 52% of the middle class elderly women against 54% belonging to the poor families. The proportion of elderly women who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement is 2% and 20% respectively in case of middle class and 6% and 24% respectively in case of poor families. Thus it can be seen that irrespective of class a much higher proportion of the elderly women report their satisfaction with their grandchildren. However, the percentage is higher in case of the middle class elderly women (70%) than in case of the respondents belonging to the poor families (60%). In this context it is to be noted that 8% and 10% elderly women belonging to the middle and poor families respectively do not have grandchildren and hence the question is 'not applicable' for them.

On the other hand, 2% elderly women of the middle class as compared to 6% of the poor families 'strongly agree' to the statement, '***I feel that my family members are too busy and do not have enough time to take care of me***'. However the percentage of elderly women who 'agree' to the statement is 14% in case of middle class and 16% in case of the respondents belonging to the poor families. On the other hand, the percentage of the elderly women who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement is 40% and 40% respectively in case of the middle class elderly women against 24% and 44% in case of those belonging to the poor families. Besides these, 4% and 10% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively are 'indifferent' while commenting on this issue. Thus, it can be seen from the above data that irrespective of class a higher proportion of respondents belonging to the middle class (80%) and poor families (68%) 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' with the fact that their family members are too busy and hence cannot take care of them. This stands in contrast to a much smaller proportion i.e. 16% and 22% of the respondents belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively, who 'strongly agree' and 'agree' with the same. The present analysis thus shows that higher proportion of the respondents irrespective of their social class, are well-adjusted and are satisfied with regard to the care taken by their family members,

However, it tends to be higher in case of the middle class than the respondents belonging to the poor families.

4% elderly women of the middle class as compared to 12% of the poor families 'strongly agree' to the statement, '*I feel lonely as my family members are too busy and do not have sufficient time to talk to me*', whereas the percentage of elderly women who 'agree' to the same is 20% in case of middle class against 10% in case of the poor elderly. On the contrary, 38% of the middle class elderly women against 20% of the poor category, 'strongly disagree' to the statement. On the other hand, 36% belonging to the middle class against 54% of the poor families 'disagree' to it. However, 2 % and 4% of the middle class and poor elderly women are indifferent to the question. The data collected in this section reflects that irrespective of class a higher proportion of elderly women 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with the statement, their proportion being equal (74%) in case of both the categories. However only a slighter difference is noticed between the proportion of elderly women belonging to both the categories who 'strongly agree' and 'agree' with the statement. This proportion is 24% in case of middle class and 22% in case of poor families. Hence a bit lesser proportion of respondents belonging to the poor families, agreeing with the statement as compared to the respondents of the middle class reflects lesser feelings of loneliness among the poor elderly women than their middle class counterparts. This is probably due to the more involvement of the poor elderly with their friends and neighbours, who in many cases compensates for the company of their children and family members.

However, 36% and 50% of the elderly women of the middle class 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively to the statement, '*Whenever I am faced with any problem, I can always share it with my family members*' against 10% and 42% of those belonging to the poor families. This reflects greater support received by the middle class elderly women from their family members than their poor counterparts and higher proportion of the middle class elderly women expressing their satisfaction in this regard. On the contrary, the percentage of elderly women who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' are 4% and 10% in case of middle class and 6% and 36% in case of poor families. However, 6% elderly women of the poor families remain indifferent to the question. This shows that almost 86% respondents belonging to the middle class in contrast to 52 % belonging to the poor families 'strongly agree' and 'agree' that they get enough support from their family members whenever they are faced with any problems. On the contrary 14% and 42% respondents belonging to the middle and poor families respectively 'strongly disagree' and

'disagree' to it. It can thus be concluded that, though irrespective of class higher proportion of elderly women feel that they get enough support from their family members, whenever they are faced with any problem but their proportion is much higher in case of the elderly women belonging to the middle class than those belonging to the poor families.

Thus it can be concluded from the above analysis that irrespective of class, a higher proportion of the elderly women expresses their satisfaction with regard to the care and support extended to them by their family members especially during illness; sharing of their problems by the family members and the amount of time that their family members and grandchildren spend with them. However, comparative analysis reflects satisfaction in the above mentioned factors among a much higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the middle class as compared to their poor counterparts. Although a higher proportion of poor elderly women disagreed to suffer from the feeling of loneliness, which shows lesser feelings of loneliness among the elderly women belonging to this category. This is probably due to their higher level of engagement with the outside world (friends and neighbours) as compared to those belonging to the middle class. Moreover, satisfaction in these issues are found to be associated with the age group, marital status and educational status of the elderly women as irrespective of class, a higher level of adjustment is found among the elderly women who fall in the age group of 60-69 and is found to decline with the increasing age of the elderly women. Moreover, a higher proportion of respondents expressing satisfaction in these issues are found among those who are presently married as compared to those who are widow. Besides these, their educational status also tends to influence their satisfaction on these matters as majority of the elderly women expressing their satisfaction in these matters are found in case of those with higher educational qualification. This is however, most prominently visible in case of the respondents belonging to the middle class as compared to their poor counterparts.

Besides these, in order to assess their perception with regard to their loss of roles and changes in status experienced by them in the family; and attitude of the family members towards them, the respondents are asked to express their views on the following statements. These statements are: (a) *I feel dominated by the younger members of my family on every issue*, (b) *I feel that my family members misbehave with me and do not listen to me as they used to do previously*, (c) *I*

feel bad when my son and daughter-in law are going for a party, or for shopping leaving me alone at home’.

Comparatively higher proportion of elderly women belonging to the poor families ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to the statement, ***‘I feel dominated by the younger members of my family on every issue’***. The percentage who ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to the statement are 24% and 35% respectively in case of poor families against 10% and 30% in case of those belonging to the middle class. On the other hand, the proportion of elderly women who ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ are 12% and 24% respectively in case of poor families, in comparison to 28% and 28% respectively in case of the middle class. The question being sensitive in nature could not fetch a proper response from 5% and 4% elderly women belonging to the middle class and poor elderly women respectively.

A higher proportion of the elderly women of the poor families i.e. 36% and 30%, ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ respectively to the statement, ***‘I feel that my family members misbehave with me and do not listen to me as they used to do previously’*** as compared to 16% and 24% in case of those belonging to the middle class families. In contrast to this, 12% and 22% elderly women of the poor families ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ to the same. However, 2% elderly women are reluctant to comment on this issue. Data gathered in this section on the one hand reflects, reduced or declined acceptance of the poor elderly women among their family members as compared to those belonging to the middle class families. It also reflects lesser number of poor elderly women showing adjustment with regard to the changing family relations than their middle class counterparts.

None of the respondents, covered under the present study, ‘strongly agree’ to the statement ***‘I feel bad when my son and daughter-in law are going for a party or for shopping leaving me alone at home’***. However, only 4% elderly women belonging to the middle class and 14% of the poor families ‘agree’ to it. On the contrary the proportion of elderly women who ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ to the statement are 26% and 34% respectively belonging to the middle class as compared to 12% and 26% respectively belonging to the poor families. 8% middle class and 22% poor elderly women on the other hand is however reluctant to comment on this and hence are indifferent. In this context it is also to be noted that 28% and 26% elderly women belonging to both the middle and poor families do not have son/s /married sons or are not living with any married son/s and hence this issue is found to be non-applicable for them.

These findings again reflect that higher number of elderly women is well-adjusted with their loss of role and changes in status experienced by them in the family than those of the poor families. One of the reasons for this is naturally the differences in the cultural and educational background of the women of these two classes. Better education along with better economic status to some extent help the elderly women to adjust with the transitions in role and status at old age. This has been confirmed again by the fact that, adjustment in these issues is reported by a higher proportion of the elderly women with higher educational status than those who are either illiterate or have received only a non-formal education. Moreover, elderly women who were previously engaged into any job or who are presently involved in any job/ community or welfare service are found to show adjustment in these issues than those who are not engaged in such activities. However, this is not found to be true in case of the poor families to that extent as in these families women are bound to work in order to run their family or in some cases to contribute some money to their sons for their upkeep. Thus, in most cases even participation in work does not ensure them relief from economic crisis or boost up their confidence level. Many of them are found to consider their work as burden. In this context, some elderly women reports that they are bound to work at this age because according to them if they do not work they will not get to eat from the very next day. Few women in this context also report that they want some rest at this age; their fragile health does not permit them to continue their work. Moreover, irrespective of class, a higher proportion of elderly women who are presently married, having an earning spouse are found to show adjustment in these issues than those who are widows or having a non-earning spouse. Besides these, increasing age and physical disability are found to reduce the adjustment of the elderly women in these issues.

Efforts are also made to study the perception of the elderly women towards the members of the younger generation and their perception towards conflict management in the family. Besides these, their perception towards the changing societal system and gender roles are also studied by assessing their views on the following statements: (a) *'Nowadays young stars do not know how to respect their elders'*, (b) *'Working women cannot take proper care of their family, children and of the elderly members of their family. Thus women should not go out for work'*, (c) *'Children should not leave their parents and shift to some other town for their job and career'*, (d) *'Nowadays daughter-in laws do not listen to or respect their in-laws'*, (e) *'I feel insulted when*

the younger members of my family members says humiliating words to me', (f) 'Whenever there is an argument in your family between two younger members, you should keep mum and not interfere'.

22% and 48% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class families 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement, **'Nowadays young stars do not know how to respect their elders'** against 40% and 50% elderly women belonging to the poor families. On the contrary, the proportion of elderly women who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' with the statement is 6% and 24% respectively in case of middle class and 2% and 8% respectively in case of poor elderly women. A higher proportion of the elderly women, strongly agreeing and agreeing to the statement, reflect rigid attitude on the part of the elderly women, which often affect their adjustment in these issues negatively which in turn also tend to negatively affect their social acceptance in the family.

Nearly 48% and 24% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class 'strongly agree and 'agree' respectively to the statement, **'Working women cannot take proper care of their family, children and of the elderly members of their family. Thus women should not go out for work'** against 22% and 36% of the elderly women of the poor families. Whereas 18% and 10% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement respectively against 10% and 32% elderly women belonging to the poor families. From the findings it can thus be concluded that, higher proportion of the middle class elderly women, agrees to the statement, which reflect rigid their attitude towards the changing role of women, as compared to their poor counterparts. In this context it is important to note that, though similar rigid attitudes are also noted among many elderly women of the poor families, (who has disagreed to the statement) but according to them 'the women of the poor families have no option, they have to go to work in order to support their family'. Moreover, it is also significant to note that higher number of women, who were previously / presently working, disagreed to the statement against those who were previously non-working/ housewives. Higher educational qualification of the elderly women especially belonging to the middle class also tend to have a positive affect on their perception of gender roles and towards the changing roles of women.

A larger number of elderly women belonging to the middle class i.e. 68% and 24% 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively to the statement, **'Children should not leave their parents and shift to some other town for their job and career'**. However, in case of poor families, only 40%

of the elderly women 'strongly agree' and 44% 'agree' to the above statement. The proportion who 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the statement is 6% and 2% among the middle class against 2% and 10% in case of those belonging to the poor families. However 4% of the elderly women remain 'indifferent' to the question. The difference between the perceptions of elderly women of these two classes is mainly due to the fact that in poor families, due to economic crisis elderly parents are often compelled to accept such separation from their adult children. In such cases they at least remain happy with the fact that their children are earning and contributing some amount to their parents. However, irrespective of class, majority of the elderly women agreeing to the statement reflect some rigidity and unwillingness on the part of elderly women to detach with their adult children at old age. It also reflects their emotional dependence on their adult children at this point of life.

A significant number of elderly women irrespective of their class, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' to the statement '*Nowadays daughter-in laws do not listen to or respect their in-laws*'. However their number is comparatively higher in case of the elderly women belonging to the poor families (44% and 46% respectively) than those belonging to the middle class (30% and 28% respectively). On the other hand, 14% and 24% elderly women of the middle class families 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' to the above statement respectively in comparison to 4% and 4% in case of the poor elderly women. A significant proportion of the elderly women agreeing to the statement reflect their negative attitude towards their daughter-in laws, which often provides a hindrance in their acceptance among their family members and their adjustment within the family. This also often affects their relationship with their son/s in a negative way. However, this proportion tends to be higher in case of the poor elderly women than their middle class counterparts, reflecting lesser proportion of the poor elderly women showing adjustment in this issue. In this context it should be noted that 4% of the elderly women of the middle class and 2% of the poor families are non-willing to express their views on this issue. It is also to be noted that though few elderly women covered under the present study, do not have any daughter-in law/s but are not excluded from the present analysis. Their opinion with regard to the above mentioned statement, is simultaneously sought as this section seeks to explore their views with regard to various aspects and relationship within the family, which is found to be equally important in case of these elderly women.

Almost 60% and 22% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class and 70% and 24% belonging to the poor families 'strongly agree' and 'agree' with the statement, ***'I feel insulted when the younger members of my family members says humiliating words to me'***. While none of the elderly women 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' with the statement. In this context it is to be noted that 14% of the middle class elderly women and 4% of those belonging to the poor families remark that their family members/children never say any humiliating words to them or never speak rudely with them. Hence the question is non-applicable for them. However, few of them (i.e. 4% and 2% belonging to the middle class and poor families respectively) are 'indifferent' on this issue.

Nearly 30% and 40% of the elderly women belonging to the middle class 'strongly agree' and 'agree' respectively to the statement, ***'Whenever there is an argument in your family between two younger members, you should keep mum and not interfere'***, against 8% and 44% of the elderly women belonging to the poor families. However, a significant number of elderly women of the poor families i.e. 10% and 38% 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' respectively to the statement, in contrast to 12% and 18% belonging to the middle class. This shows lesser interfering attitude of the middle class elderly women in comparison to those of the poor families which helps them to manage conflicts in their families in a much better way.

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