

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This chapter gives a brief account of socio-economic background of the respondents in this study. The characteristics which were taken into consideration are respondent's

- Age
- Religion
- Sex
- Marital status
- Caste
- Education
- Household composition
- Occupation
- Income
- Social participation
- Material possession and
- Mass media exposure etc.

The findings are given below:

Age

Out of the total respondents in the villages 54.40 per cent were in the age group of 30-45 years followed by the age group above 45 years (35 per cent) only. About 11 per cent of respondents were found belonging in the age below 30 years. The percentage distribution of respondents by age groups and district has been presented in Table 4.1. It can be seen from the Table 4.1 that in Cooch Behar district 55.66 per cent of the respondents were of middle aged farmers whereas 31.67 per cent were in above 45 years and only 12.66 per cent were young in age

(i.e. below 30 yrs). In the Jalpaiguri district the proportion of respondents in the age group between 30 and 45 years was 53.40 per cent and for the age group above 45 years, it was 37.63 per cent. Therefore, as far as and for the age is concerned the majority of the respondents in the surveyed villages were of middle-aged farmers.

Sex

Out of total 500 respondents under study 499 were males and only one was female. The lone female respondent was from Cooch-Bihar district. Therefore, 99.80 per cent of the respondents in present study were males. It was so because female-headed households were rare in the surveyed villages.

Marital Status

About 96 per cent of the respondents were married and only 4.20 per cent were found bachelor. The proportion of married and unmarried respondents in two districts was almost similar.

Religion

About 83 per cent of respondents were Hindus. The percentages of Muslim and Christian respondents were 15.80 and 1.60 respectively. So, majority of the respondents under present study were Hindus by religion.

Caste

It will be seen from Table 4.1 that about 41 per cent of the respondents were belonging to the category of scheduled castes (SC) and 45.80 per cent to the category of Other Backward Classes (OBC). Scheduled tribes and other (non SC) castes constituted a small proportion by covering only 3.40 per cent and 9.80 per cent of the total population respectively. So, by social status the majority of the respondents in the villages were of lower castes.

In the Jalpaiguri district, scheduled caste respondents constituted 41.93 per cent of the total respondents. The corresponding proportion was 39.81 per cent in the case of district of Cooch-Bihar. The proportion of scheduled tribe

respondents in the Jalpaiguri district was 6.09 per cent. In contrast, in the Cooch-Bihar district there was no scheduled tribe among the selected respondents. The proportion of OBC respondents in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar was 43.36 per cent and 48.86 per cent respectively. The Percentage of non SC/General castes in the districts of Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri was 11.31 and 8.60 respectively.

Out of 205 scheduled caste respondents 68.78 per cent were Rajbansis, 26.34 per cent were Namasudras and 4.87 per cent were the other scheduled castes. Among the total scheduled caste respondents in the district, the proportion of Rajbansis in the districts of Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri was 63.63 per cent and 72.64 per cent respectively. The proportion of the Namasudra respondents in the districts of Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri were almost similar (28.40 per cent and 24.78 per cent respectively). Out of 10 farmers from 'Other' scheduled caste category 7.95 per cent and 2.56 per cent were from the Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar districts respectively. Thus the two districts had almost equal proportion of S.C. population among the respondents and where numerically the Rajbansi represented as dominant community. The proportion of the Rajbansi respondents in both the districts was much higher than that of the Namasudras and 'Other' scheduled castes.

Education

Among the respondents only 19.60 per cent of them were found illiterate. The proportion of illiterate respondents was 11.31 per cent in the Cooch-Bihar and 26.16 per cent in the Jalpaiguri district. Thus compared to the Cooch-Bihar district the percentage of illiterate respondents was relatively high in the Jalpaiguri district. It can be seen from Table 4.1 that among the literate respondents, majority of them (49.80 per cent) were educated up to secondary (class V to class X) level followed by the literates having education only up to primary level (22.20 per cent). The proportion of literate respondents with

education above secondary standard (i.e. College or University education) was 8.40 per cent. By district their proportion in the Cooch-Bihar and the Jalpaiguri was 6.78 per cent and 9.67 per cent respectively. So there were marginally much better educated respondents in the Jalpaiguri district than in the Cooch-Bihar district. However, in respect of secondary education the status of respondents in the Cooch-Bihar district was slightly better (54.75 per cent) than the Jalpaiguri district (45.87 per cent). Moreover the overall literacy status of the farmers of Cooch-Bihar district was somewhat better than that of the Jalpaiguri district. But so far as the higher levels of education is concerned the respondents of the Jalpaiguri district recorded a better position than the respondents of the Cooch-Bihar district.

Length of stay in the village

Respondents were asked how long or since when they are residing in the village under study. They are categorised into three following groups on the basis of their length of stay in the village: (a) 1-25 years, (b) 26-50 years, (c) more than 50 years. Table 4.2 depicts that majority (77.60%) of the respondents was immigrants but by their length of stay they were somewhat early settlers of the villages and residing over here for 26-50 years.

Household Size

Table 4.3 shows that majority (65.20 per cent) of the respondents were living in medium sized households. For Cooch-bihar and Jalpaiguri district the percentage of medium sized households was 66.06 and 64.51 respectively. About 20 per cent respondents had small sized households. In both the districts, proportion of small sized households was almost similar. When only 15 per cent of the respondents were found living in large sized households, their proportion in the Cooch-Bihar and Jalpaiguri district was also almost equal.

Table 4.1: Selected Social and Economic Characters of the Respondents by Districts
(Distribution in Percentage)

Characteristics	Districts		Total
	Cooch-Bihar	Jalpaiguri	
Age			
Below 30 years	12.66	08.96	10.60
Upto 30-45 years	55.66	53.40	54.40
More than 45 years	31.67	37.63	35.00
Caste			
Scheduled Caste	39.81	41.93	41.00
Scheduled Tribe	00.00	06.09	03.40
General Caste(non-SC)	11.31	08.60	09.80
Other Backward classes	48.86	43.36	45.80
Education			
Illiterate	11.31	26.16	19.60
Primary	27.14	18.27	22.20
Secondary	54.75	45.87	49.80
Above Secondary	06.78	09.67	08.40
Occupation			
Cultivation			
Principal	96.38	97.84	97.20
Subsidiary	07.69	02.15	04.60
Service			
Principal	02.71	02.15	02.40
Subsidiary	02.26	02.15	02.20
Business			
Principal	00.90	00.00	00.40
Subsidiary	18.55	17.56	18.00
Agricultural Labour			
Principal	00.00	00.00	00.00
Subsidiary	07.69	07.16	07.40
No subsidiary occupation	63.80	70.96	67.80
Annual Income			
Upto Rs. 15,000	45.24	56.98	51.80
Rs. 15,000-40,000	43.89	33.33	38.00
Above Rs. 40,000	10.85	09.67	10.20

Table 4.2: Distribution of the Respondents by their Length of stay in the village (In Percentage)

Length of Stay	District		Total
	Cooch-Bihar	Jalpaiguri	
1-25 years	14.93	12.90	13.80
26-50 years	79.63	75.98	77.60
Above 50 years	05.42	11.11	08.60

Table 4.3: Percentage Distribution of the Respondents by their Household Size

Household Size	District		Total
	Cooch-Bihar	Jalpaiguri	
Small (Below 5)	19.00	20.47	19.80
Medium (5-8)	66.06	64.51	65.20
Large (Above 8)	14.93	15.05	15.00

Occupation

Table 4.1 shows the occupational background of the respondents by district. Agriculture was the principal occupation of about 97 per cent of the respondents. However, to 4.60 per cent of the respondents cultivation was their subsidiary occupation. The proportion of respondents principally engaged in service, and trade and business was 2.40 per cent and 0.40 per cent respectively. By district, the percentage of respondents principally engaged in cultivation in the Jalpaiguri district was slightly more than that of Cooch-Bihar district. The proportion of respondents to whom cultivation was a subsidiary occupation was 2.15 per cent in the Jalpaiguri and 7.69 per cent in the Cooch-Bihar district. Cultivation was not principal occupation to artisan and trading castes. It was

their subsidiary source of income. On the other hand, even for the farmers who were partly 'self-cultivators' and leased out a part of their land for share cropping, cultivation was their principal occupation and main source of income. Such types of farmers were found in the Cooch-Bihar district only. About one per cent of the respondents were principally engaged in business and for another 18.55 per cent trade and petty business was their subsidiary occupation. Little more than 7 per cent of the respondents augmented their income by working as agricultural labourers. It was their subsidiary source of income. Another noteworthy fact is that among the respondents 67.80 per cent had no subsidiary occupation. The proportion of respondents without any subsidiary occupation was 70.96 per cent in the Jalpaiguri and 63.80 per cent in the Cooch-Bihar districts.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Households by their Average Participation of Members in Agricultural & Non-agricultural Activities. (Distribution in Percentage)

Nature of Economic Activities	Number of Household Members Engaged	District		Total
		Cooch-Bihar	Jalpaiguri	
In Agricultural Activities	1	55.20	46.95	50.60
	2-3	39.36	48.02	44.20
	More than 3	05.42	05.01	05.20
In Non-Agricultural Activities	Not at all engaged in off-farm employment	56.56	71.68	65.00
	Engaged in off-farm employment (one or more)	43.43	28.31	35.00

Extent of participation of household members in economic activities

The agriculturally dependent households were categorised according to the number of their household members engaged in actual field operations/works as their principal activities. The overall participation of household members in essential agricultural works was dismally low. Table 4.4 shows that in the case of 50 per cent of the households only one member was directly engaged in essential agricultural operations. In this regard certain interesting differences had been noticed at district level. In the Cooch-Bihar district for 55 per cent of the households there were only one member involved in agricultural activities. The corresponding proportion in the Jalpaiguri district was 46.95 per cent.

Members of about 65 per cent of the households were not at all associated with off-farm activities. Among the agriculturally dependent households, 35 per cent of them had members who were also engaged in some kind of non-agricultural pursuits. In the Cooch-Bihar district, in 43.43 per cent of the respondents' households their members were engaged in non-agricultural activities. The corresponding proportion was 28.31 per cent in the case of the Jalpaiguri district.

Income

Income is the most important indicator to judge the economic status of a farmer. Adoption of agricultural practices has obvious bearing on income and economic status. Lionberger (1960) suggested that economic status and adoption behaviour of farmers have a two-way relationship. Table 4.1 shows that majority (51.80 per cent) of the respondents had the annual income below Rs. 15,000. A sizeable section of them (38 per cent) however fall in the income bracket of Rs.15,000 to 40,000; and only 10.20 per cent had annual income above Rs. 40,000. Another important feature of income situation is that 47.60 per cent of respondent farmers had annual income between Rs.6401 and Rs15,000 and

another 3.80 per cent between Rs. 4801 and Rs. 6400. The respondents belonging below subsistence level (in terms of annual income) were found only in the Jalpaiguri district . On the whole, a majority of the farmers were in the lower income group (below Rs. 15,000) and a small section in the higher one i.e. with an annual income of Rs. 40,000 and above . The economically better-off and wealthy farmers are generally supposed courageous enough to take the risk of new technology and building effective contact with diverse institution involved in agricultural development.

Social participation

The social participation of a farmer is often measured in terms of his membership, holding of office and attendance in meetings of formal and informal organizations in the village. Dasgupta (1963) in his study of West Bengal villages found, farmers participated in a wide variety of formal organization like cooperative society, village panchayat, Block development committee, agricultural marketing society etc. The informal organization with which the farmers associated were namely *Jatra, Kirtan, Harisabha* committee etc.

Social participation in organizational and cultural activities is expected to have an indirect influence on the adoption behaviour of farmers. Based on the data collected from West Bengal villages, Bose (1961) concluded that social participation had a positive impact on the adoption behaviour of farmers. Table 4.5 depicts the social participation of the farmers to development institutions and their status in several formal organizations.

Table 4.5 depicts that the farmers of the Jalpaiguri and the Cooch-Bihar districts had been participating only in two types of development institutions namely (a) Agricultural Development Cooperative Society (i.e. KUSS: *Krishi Urmayan Samabaya Samiti*) and (b) Panchayat. Out of total (500) farmers surveyed in two districts only 18.20 per cent of them were in official capacity involved in the activities of K.U.S.S.. The proportion of such farmers was 22.62 per cent in the

Cooch-Bihar and 14.69 per cent in the Jalpaiguri districts. It is a matter of surprise that nearly 92 per cent of the total respondents not at all enrolled themselves as members of K.U.S.S. On the other hand among the members of K.U.S.S. only about 8 per cent of them were office-bearers.

Table 4.5 : Distribution of Respondents by their Social Participation to Development Institutions (Distribution in Percentage)

Development Institution		District		Total
		Cooch Behar	Jalpaiguri	
Krishi Unnayan Samabay Samiti	Number of respondents participated	50	41	91
	Percentage of respondents out of total respondents in the district	22.62	14.69	18.20
	Percentage of office-bearers out of participant respondents	06.00	09.79	07.96
	Percentage of members out of participant respondents	94.00	90.24	92.30
Gram Panchayat	Number of respondents participated	5	9	14
	Percentage of respondents out of total respondents in the district	02.26	03.22	02.80
	Percentage of office-bearers out of participant respondents	20.00	11.11	14.29
	Percentage of members out of participant respondents	80.00	88.88	85.71

Table 4.5 also shows that about 3 per cent of respondent farmers had participation in the development activities of the panchayat, and about 14 per cent of them were office-bearers. Thus it has been observed that nearly 86 per cent of the respondents were not at all involved in the activities of panchayat.

The wide gap between the number of respondents and the actual number of participants in the organizational activities is perhaps due to the fact the farmers are not yet educated and conscious enough regarding the need and importance of their participation in those development institutions.

Material condition and household asset

The type of house where the respondents live and their possession of household durables like furniture, electricity, radio, bicycle etc. help to judge their socio-economic status and standard of living. Possession of more such asset items is normally believed as an indicator of better socio-economic status.

A few studies have examined the relationship between the material level of living of farmers and their adoption behaviour. Reddy and Kivlin (1968) in their study measured the level of living of farmers with the help of scale based on the possession of such material items such as torch, bicycle, time-piece as well as a house, land and so forth. The level of living scores were found to be positively related to the adoption behaviour of farmers.

From Table 4.6 it appears that the most useable household assets for the respondents were bicycle and chair. More than 75 per cent respondents had the said durables. The farmers frequently use bicycle as the principal mode of local transportation.

A significant proportion respondents (30 per cent) were owning durables like radio and clock. Those are now a days found as essential household items in the life of the villagers. It has been further observed in the Table 4.6 that less than 15 per cent of the respondents had the assets like scooter, tape-recorder, television, stove and almirah costly goods like scooter, tape-recorder and television were mostly possessed by the economically better-off farmers.

House type of the respondents

Majority (91 per cent) of the respondents were found living in *kachha* huts followed by 7.40 per cent premises which were of mixed type. Only 1.60 per cent farmers had *pacca* houses. Majority of the farmers used to stay in the house of having three to five rooms, and only 8.20 per cent were fortunate enough to have the facility of more than five rooms. Nine per cent of the respondents had considerable shortage of space as they live in small huts with only one or two rooms.

Table 4.6: Distribution of Households by Possession of Modern Household Durables

Durables	Number of Households Possessed	Percentage
Stove	018	03.60
Bi-cycle	387	77.40
Scooter/Motorcycle	010	02.00
Radio	149	29.80
Television	042	08.40
Tape recorder	013	02.60
Clock	190	38.00
Almirah	069	13.80
Chair	385	77.00

Electricity

Domestic electric facility was being enjoyed only by 10 per cent of the respondents and they were mostly economically well-off farmers.

Source of drinking water

Shallow Tube Well (STW) has been found as the principal source of drinking water for the village people. About 98 per cent households were depended on public STW ~~publicly~~ for drinking water where as only 1.60 per cent still used dug wells for the same purpose.

Latrine Use

Majority (57.80 per cent) of the households had privy and only 5.40 per cent were with the facility of sanitary latrine. A sizeable proportion of households (36.80 per cent) had neither privy nor sanitary latrine of their own. This obviously reflects a kind of poor consciousness about health and sanitation among the respondents under study.