

Chapter I. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter covers the following points :

- (a) Title and Objectives of Research.
- (b) Research Questions.
- (c) Selection of Sample.
- (d) Methodology.
- (e) Tools.
- (f) Layout of Chapters.
- (g) Constraints and Difficulties.
- (h) Review of Related Literature.
- (i) The Significance of this Study.

Thus, this chapter sets the boundaries within which the researcher has carried out her work and explains how she has done so.

Title

The Title of the thesis is " A Study of the Mahila Mandals in Khed Taluka of Pune District with special reference to their training needs for making the Mandals more active."

The Objectives

The main objectives of the present work are as follows :

- (a) To study the historical growth of the Mahila Mandal movement and its place in Community Development.
- (b) To Study selected Mahila Mandals from Khed taluka of Pune district covering the following points :
 - (i) Organisation and Administration.
 - (ii) The environment (i.e. the village) in which a Mahila Mandal functions.

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- (iii) The aims and activities of the mandals.
 - (iv) The contribution of the mandals in the development of its members as well as in the development of the community as a whole.
 - (v) The needs of the Mahila Mandals.
- (c) To study the socio-economic and educational background of selected members of the mandals covering the following points :
- (i) The life of a rural woman.
 - (ii) Her contribution to Mahila Mandal activities and to the development process as a whole.
 - (iii) Her gain from being a member of the Mandal.
 - (iv) The needs felt by her.
- (d) To study the impact of Government and non government organisations on the functioning of the mandals and the development of the rural woman.
- (e) To identify and classify the needs of the Mahila Mandals and its members and to select a few such needs as can be covered by a short training programme.
- (f) To conduct a short training programme with the help of a voluntary agency.
- (g) To study the impact of the training given.
- (h) To record findings and recommendations.

Research Questions

Some of the main research questions are as follows :

- (a) What is the status and present condition of rural women ?
- (b) Has it changed for the better since the inception of the Community Development programme ? If yes, to what extent ? If not, why not ?

/ (c) What

- (c) What are the aims of the Mahila Mandals - as they are and as they ought to be.
- (d) What has been the contribution of these organisations in the development of its members and the community ?
- (e) To what extent have the Government and non-government agencies assisted the Mandals ?
- (f) To what extent training given by Government and voluntary bodies and individual social workers has helped the rural women (of the sample mandals) in satisfying their needs and removing their difficulties ?

Sample

Khed taluka of Pune district was chosen as the universe for this study. A map showing the geographical location of Khed vis-a-vis Pune is placed at Appendix 'A'. A map of the taluka, showing the terrain and the villages selected is placed at Appendix 'B'. The 35 villages where the Mahila Mandals were studied have been high-lighted on the map. Some important, general information regarding the Khed taluka is placed at Appendix 'C'.

Khed taluka was selected for the following reasons :

- (a) It has a large number of well established and registered Mahila Mandals.
- (b) The taluka has a wide range of socio-economic conditions, terrain and environment, and level of development.
- (c) The voluntary agency with whom the researcher associated herself for the conduct of a training programme has a base, field work experience and standing in the taluka.
- (d) The researcher has her home at Pune. The University where she is registered, the institution where she is studying and her guide, are all located at Pune. Thus administratively it was better to operate at Khed rather than anywhere else.

/ The selection

The selection of villages and in the Mandal the selection of the members to be interviewed was based on certain factors. At the time of starting the research work, there were 209 registered Mahila Mandals in Khed taluka. 35 villages, i.e. 15 % (to be exact 16.75 %) were selected for study and this was considered adequate.

Ten members from each Mahila Mandal were interviewed, i.e. a total sample of 350 members. The figure of ten members was made up by including, as far as possible, all the office bearers of the mandal - usually four or five - and the rest of the members were chosen at random. Volunteers were preferred, and in fact, many women came forward when they were told about the study.

The selection of the 35 villages (i.e. the Mahila Mandals in these villages) was done on the following basis,

- (a) For the purpose of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Khed taluka is divided into 5 beats. These are : Chas, Wada, Pait, Chakan and Amboli. It was decided to select seven villages from each beat to make the sample representative.
- (b) Villages from the plains as well as the hilly areas were selected.
- (c) Purely Adivasi villages were included.
- (d) If the taluka is divided into four quadrants by the cardinal lines NS and EW with its centre at Khed, then it will be seen from the map that each quadrant is well represented.

A list of the 35 villages, with the names of the Mahila Mandals in each village is placed at Appendix 'D'. It was not considered necessary to list out the names of all the 350 members who were interviewed.

A survey on the ground was also done before the selection.

Methods Used and Procedure for Investigation

Descriptive survey method has been used for this research. Each village was visited and the Anganwadi Worker (AWW) was contacted. It was found that invariably she was also one of the office bearers of the Mandal. A meeting was called where as many women as possible attended. The purpose of the researcher's visit was explained and doubts if any were clarified. Often there was group singing and an exchange of personal information (the most often asked question was " Why are you not married ?) took place. The whole idea was to de-tense the women so that a full and frank discussion could take place later on. Establishing a rapport was extremely essential.

Many times these meetings were held in the late evenings when the women were relatively free from their daily chores. In such a case the researcher had to stay overnight with the AWW or some other lady and the interviews with the ten members took place the next day. During these visits the survey covered the demographic characteristics, activities, opinions and attitudes. This was not only to test hypothesis but also to assess the influence of various factors.(1)

The data collected was tabulated and analysed to get a clear picture of rural women, the Mahila Mandals and the problems facing them. The needs were analysed and a training programme was devised. The impact of the training given was noted. The methodology of giving the training is covered in Chapter VII.

As far as possible the principle that the research has to involve the subject researched was followed. This way the research becomes more relevant and has the best chance of being used. Finally, the researcher never forgot that " true research and communication is more qualitative than quantitative"(2)

Tools

The main tool was the interview schedule. A specimen copy is placed at Appendix 'E'. But this should not in any way take

away the value of personal observation and informal conversation. Some of the most important and pertinent points came up not in the formal interview but during informal chat - sharing a bhakari in the fields or lying in the dark just before going to sleep.

Discussions with Government officials and social workers especially those connected with women's movement, were very useful. For the assessment of the Training Programme a questionnaire was used.

Lay-out of the Thesis

Chapter II covers the historical perspective and traces the development of the Mahila Mandal movement. Chapter III deals with the 35 selected mandals- their organisation, administration, activities and their needs. The interaction of the Mahila Mandals with government and voluntary agencies is also noted.

Chapter IV gives the socio-economic and educational profile of the 350 members interviewed. The rural woman's life, her problems, her social milieu, her aspirations and frustrations are examined. The mandals are located and function in a village setting and so this environment is examined in Chapter V. Chapter VI identifies the needs that have been brought out during the study of the mandals and the members. The needs are classified and four of them selected for the training programme. Chapter VII describes the concept and planning of the programme, while Chapter VIII records how it was conducted and assesses its impact. The phase II of the programme, i.e. the Follow Up Seminars are dealt with in Chapter IX. Finally, Chapter X records the Findings and Recommendations of the researcher.

Tables appear at the relevant points as most of the data is presented in table form. Tables are numbered serially for each chapter.

Constraints and Difficulties

A number of points need to be noted. Often it was difficult to arrange a meeting. Women in the villages are fully occupied

from early morning till late in the evenings. They are not too keen to spend another hour or so attending a meeting. A birth or death in the village, or any festival means there is no time for these meetings or for that matter any Mahila Mandal activity. A letter written to the Anganwadi worker enclosing a pre-paid self addressed envelope seeking some information did not bring any response. To de-tense the women and assure them of the genuineness of the researchers work took time. Even so a letter of introduction issued by the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) was necessary and had to be shown before some anganwadi workers or mukhyasevikas agreed to be interviewed.

Inspite of the de-tensing and the informal chats while they were cooking or working in the fields, the researcher is almost sure that many times frank or honest answers were not given. For example, women were reluctant to talk about alcoholism of their husbands or about the income of the family. Very few women said that their husbands drank, yet the researcher saw a great deal of alcoholism and ill treatment of women.

It has been said that many times the meetings had to be held at night and therefore the researcher had to stay over-night with the AWW or some other lady. This was not a pleasant experience. Total lack of sanitary facilities was embarrassing. On a few occasions the researcher had to share a hut with a large family, cows or buffaloes, fowl and innumerable fleas and other insects which left a rash all over the body. However it had to be accepted.

The researcher did not have the funds or ready availability of resources and infra structure to conduct a training programme on her own. Therefore, she had to associate herself with a voluntary organisation for this part of her work. It was not a satisfying experience. It resulted in lack of flexibility and freedom. This aspect has been covered in Chapter X.

Review of Literature

Over a hundred books and twenty periodicals were perused

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during the course of this study. The complete Bibliography appears at the end at Appendix 'V'.

There are literally hundreds of books dealing with community development. But the astonishing fact is that there are very few books dealing specifically with Mahila Mandals. The two notable exceptions are :

- (a) Women and Rural Development : Two Studies by Mehra R. and Sardamani. and
- (b) Role of Women in Rural Development : A Study of Mahila Mandals by Jain and Reddy.

But both these books do not touch Maharashtra. Dandekar's Rural Development : Lessons from a Village in Deccan, Maharashtra has nothing to say about Mahila Mandals. Details of all these books have been given in the Bibliography.

The mahila mandal movement was, and still is, very much a part of the general community development process. Some noted literature on the subject, as for example books by Kumar Jyoti , (1), Mathew and Nair (2) and V.M.Rao(3) do not contain more than a cursory reference of mahila mandals. Even the monumental studies by S.C.Jain (4) have very little to say about mahila mandals, their importance or their potential to act as agents of change.

Besides the books and the sundry articles, there have been numerous evaluation studies undertaken by, or on behalf of, the Government. The Committee on Applied Nutrition Programme in Maharashtra, or the Working Group on Village Level Organisations , may be cited as examples. Here again, although the poor performance of the Mahila Mandals has been high-lighted, there is no record or mention of any empirical study specifically on the functioning of the mandals. Indeed Khan and Ayesha (5) have the following to say :

" Books on Indian Women are extremely limited. The position is still worse in the case of rural women. Empirical studies on women in rural societies are conspicuous by their absence."

Significance of This Study

All that has been said above strengthened the resolve of the researcher to study rural Mahila Mandals in some depth. It is an exploratory study and, as far as can be ascertained, the first of its kind in Khed taluka, if not in the District of Maharashtra. For example, the researcher visited with The Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust at Saswad and held long discussions with the officials there. (6) The Trust is operating 46 Balwadis, 5 Crèches or Palanaghars and 5 Health Centres. Not one of them is in Khed taluka. The main reason given was lack of study of the state of affairs in the Taluka and the determining of the needs of the Mahila Mandals.

Data on rural women needs to be collected, collated and analysed. Their problems need to be understood, and solved. The objectives of this study have been framed accordingly and cover, inter alia :

- (a) Rural Women.
- (b) Mahila Mandals.
- (c) Inter-action between the organisation and its members.
- (d) Inter-action between the Mandals and government and non-government agencies.

Finally, this study is unique because along with fact-finding, an element of training has also been introduced to see how far some of the problems can be solved by giving need based training at the grass root level. The findings in this respect may lead to a revision of approach of many voluntary agencies, and hopefully, of the Government.

REFERENCES

- (1) Kumar Jyoti : Integrated Rural Development, Prospects and Perspectives. 1987.
- (2) Mathew and Nair : Women's Organisation and Women's Interests. 1986.

- (3) Rao U.M. : Rural Development and the Village. Perspectives for Planning and Development. 1980
- (4) Jain S.C. : Community Development and Panchayati Raj 1967 and Rural Development. Institutions and Strategies. 1985
- (5) Mumtaz Ali Khan and Noor Ayesha : Status of Rural Women in India. 1982.
- (6) The official whom the researcher met, Mr. Sinkar and Mrs. Bhide, were most kind and helpful.