

## **Chapter IV**

### **Organisation and Working of Poona Merchants Chamber**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The Poona Merchants Chamber is a nonprofit organization of Pune, which acts as a representative of traders dealing in groceries and certain essential commodities. It was established in the year 1949 as a nonprofit making company under section 25 of the Indian Companies Act. Today, the Chamber has around 500 traders as its members and there are innumerable business associations of Maharashtra under the leadership of the Chamber.

Right from its inception, the Poona Merchants Chamber has never limited its role to working for the benefit of the wholesale grocery merchants of Pune city, but when the need arose, it has represented the grocery business for the whole of Maharashtra and established unity among the traders. Thus it has provided leadership to the grocery traders in the whole of Maharashtra. At the same time, the Poona Merchants Chamber has never taken the stand of being against the government or being anti-government. It has only concentrated on making proper representation before the government, in a legal and justified manner, to protect the interest of the wholesale grocery traders.

In addition, the Chamber has also undertaken various activities for social welfare.

#### **4.2 Achievements of Poona Merchants Chamber**

- a. In the year 1999, the Poona Merchants Chamber won the Jannalal Bajaj Award for Best Business Practices.**
- b. In the year 2007, the Poona Merchants Chamber has gained entry in the Limca Book of Records for the 'Largest Sale of Ladoos' in its 'Ladoo-Chivda Program'.**
- c. In the year 2009-10, the Poona Merchants Chamber has obtained ISO 9001-2008 certification.**
- d. In the year 2012, the Poona Merchants Chamber was recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records for 'Largest Serving of Ladoos' in its 'Ladoo-Chivda Program'.**

### **4.3 Objectives of Poona Merchants Chamber**

The Poona Merchants Chamber was established with the following main objectives:-

- Protection of traders' interest and fighting against injustice.
- Bringing about unity amongst the traders and ensuring the further growth of the trade. Also resolving conflicts between traders and other parties like 'adats'( commission agents) , customers and 'hamaals' (porters).
- Bringing about co-ordination in the trade, providing representation to the government regarding traders' issues and problems.
- Promoting awareness amongst the traders regarding legal and other relevant issues pertaining to the trade.
- Undertaking activities as a contribution to society.

At the same time, it also ensures that the interests of the customer and the farmers are not violated.

*'United we stand, divided we fall' is the motto of the Poona Merchants Chamber.*

### **4.4 Affiliation of Poona Merchants Chamber**

Right from its inception, the Poona Merchants Chamber has assumed leadership for not only the grocery traders of Pune city, but also the traders all over Maharashtra. In order to effectively fulfil its functions as a representative of wholesale grocery business, the Chamber is associated with the following organisations:-

- a. Federation of All India Food grain Dealers association, Delhi
- b. Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Mumbai
- c. Federation of Association of Maharashtra, Mumbai
- d. Maratha Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture, Pune
- e. The Federation of Associations of Maharashtra Food grain Traders, Pune
- f. Confederation of All India Traders, New Delhi
- g. Bharatiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal, New Delhi

#### **4.5 Associations affiliated with Poona Merchants Chamber**

The Poona Merchants Chamber is looked upon as a Senior Chamber and has taken along with it many other Trade Associations. In fact, the promotion of the wholesale grocery trade of Pune city has been possible because of the leadership and strong support of the Poona Merchants Chamber. The following is the list of Associations affiliated with the Poona Merchants Chamber

- a. The Poona Wholesale Jaggery & Grocery Merchants Association.
- b. The Poona Wholesale Grain & Grocery Merchants Association
- c. Shri Poona Vyapari Mandal
- d. Flour Merchants Association
- e. The Poona Coconut Merchants Association
- f. Pune Tea Merchants Association
- g. Pashukhadya Vikreta Sangh
- h. The Pune Sugar Merchants Association
- i. Sabudana Association

#### **4.6 History of Poona Merchants Chamber**

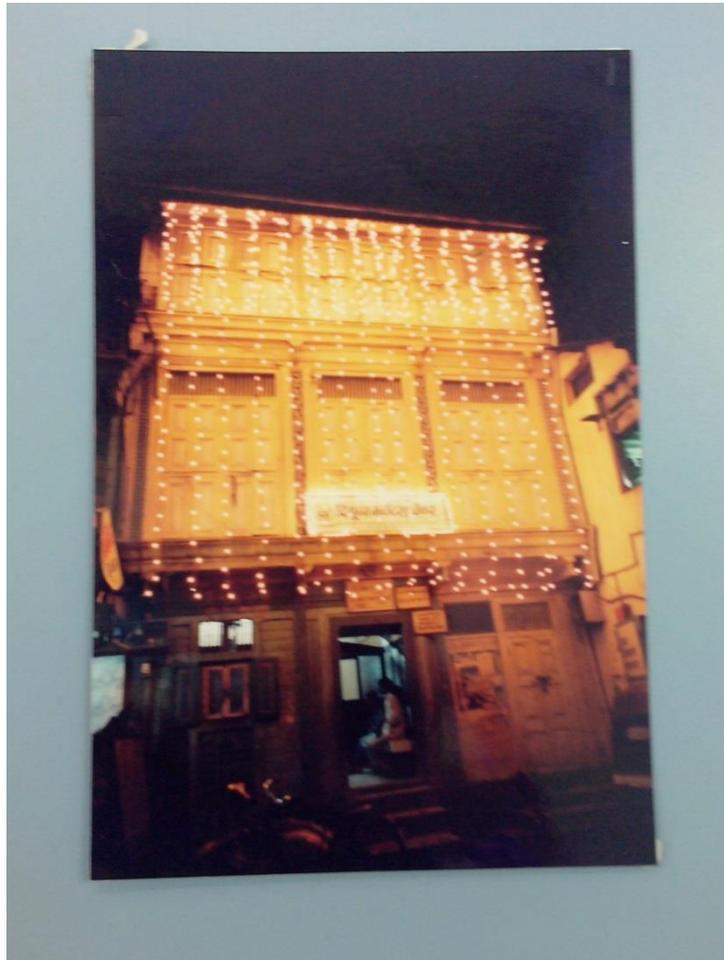
The Poona Merchants Chamber was established in the year 1949 by 21 grocery merchants of Pune city including Late. Veerchand Bafna who became the first President and Late Uttamchand Pokarna who became the Vice-President and Mr. M.B. Salvekar who was the first Secretary. Later, Shri Vitthal Maniyar and Shri Ishwar Chordia joined the team. It will not be an exaggeration to say that all these people have shaped the destiny of Poona Merchants Chamber. At that time, the market for wholesale grocery items was spread in Nana Peth, Ganesh Peth, Bhavani Peth and other areas, hence the Chamber was established in a rented office at 185, Bhavani Peth, Pune. Before the establishment of the Chamber, there were various trade associations in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city, like

- a. Wholesale Provision Merchants' Association
- b. The Poona Wholesale Grain and Grocery Merchants Association Ltd.

c. The Poona Wholesale Jaggery and Grocery Merchants Association Ltd.

All the three trade associations became the members of the Chamber, thus the Chamber could establish its lead in the wholesale grocery business of Pune city.

**Photograph of Old Building of Poona Merchants Chamber at Bhavani Peth, Pune**



During that time, there used to be frequent price rise in grocery items on account of the shortage of agricultural production. The government would take the stand that the grocery traders create artificial shortage of the grocery items, indulge in black marketing, and have high profit margin. In this way, the grocery traders were held responsible for the frequent price rise of grocery items. Hence the image of the trader in the minds of the people became as that of a self-centred and profit seeking member of the society. Because of this, the first challenge for the Poona Merchants Chamber was to remove this image and prove that the traders are also a useful member of society. Also, there were many macro-level factors responsible for the price rise, and only the trader was not responsible for the same. In fact, grocery items are necessities, and hence they have low profit margin.

### **Shift to the Market Yard**

The city areas of Nana Peth, Ganesh Peth and Bhavani Peth were becoming overcrowded on account of increasing population and expansion of the grocery business and number of traders. So from the year 1966, the idea of allotting a separate market area for the wholesale grocery business had begun to take shape. Finally the government allotted the land, and in the year 1975, the entire wholesale grocery market was shifted to Gultekdi on the outskirts of the city. With the passage of time, the office of the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee, the offices of the Department of Co-operation & Marketing, Pune District, the offices of the various transporters and warehouses were also shifted to the Market Yard, Gultekdi, Pune. This was really a positive change, which solved many of the problems of wholesale grocery business. In addition, with the increase in population of Pune city, there was also an expansion of the turnover of the wholesale grocery business. Today the area is known by the name 'Market yard' only.

Today, most of the wholesalers operate from the Market yard, while, there are certain traders who still operate from the previous areas also. The Poona Merchants Chamber continued to work from the old office at Bhavani Peth for many years. In the year 1992, the Chamber built its new building named 'Vyapar Bhavan' at Market Yard, Gultekdi, Pune. The new premises are well equipped with facilities for smooth functioning of the administrative office of the Chamber, and also has a conference room for meetings and seminar hall for organizing events and functions.

### **4.7 Membership of Poona Merchants Chamber**

The Poona Merchants Chamber has been providing membership to individual traders, Associations, Dalals and others. The table given on the next page shows the number of members of the Chamber over the last several decades. It is observed that the number of such members has increased over the last several decades:-

**Table no. 4.1 Table showing the number of members of Poona Merchants Chamber**

| <b>Decade</b> | <b>Number of members</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1949          | 80                       |
| 1950s         | 120                      |
| 1960s         | 180                      |
| 1970s         | 250                      |
| 1980s         | 325                      |
| 1990s         | 375                      |
| 2000          | 505                      |
| 2010          | 500                      |
| 2015          | 495                      |

Source: Records of Poona Merchants Chamber

The Poona Merchants' Chamber has a written Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Poona Merchants Chamber have been prepared with a broad vision, such that even today it serves as a guide to the office bearers of the Poona Merchants Chamber. Only a few points have been removed which have become irrelevant on account of the passage of time.

As per the Articles of Association of the Chamber, the following are the persons, belonging to the wholesale grocery business, who can attain membership of the Chamber:-

- a. Any person carrying on wholesale trade in goods within the limits of Pune district in the State of Maharashtra, shall be entitled to become a member of the Chamber, subject to the provisions of the Chamber regarding membership.
- b. Firms, associations and any other corporate or unincorporated bodies carrying on wholesale trade as above.
- c. Entrance fees shall be payable only once and annual subscription for a member every year shall be payable in advance within two months from the commencement of that year. Such fees shall be decided by General Meeting.

There is no separate category of membership or different membership fee for individuals, firms and companies. The annual membership fee was Rs. 100 in

the 1950s which is now Rs. 2809. The following table shows the annual membership fee for the year 2015-16

**Table no. 4.2 Annual membership fee of Poona Merchants Chamber for the year 2015-16**

| Particulars                             | Amount (Rs.) |
|---|--------------|
| Membership fee (annual)                 | 2,500.00     |
| Taxes                                   | 309.00       |
| Total membership fee payable by members | 2,809.00     |

Source: Poona Merchants Chamber Office

#### **4.8 Organisation structure of Poona Merchants Chamber**

##### **a. Council of Management or Executive Committee of the Chamber**

The Poona Merchants Chamber has a Council of Management or Executive Committee which is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the Chamber. As per the Articles of Association of the Chamber, the Council of Management shall consist of maximum 19 councillors made up as follows:-

- 15 councillors elected by the members of the Chamber biennially at the ordinary General Meeting.
- Not more than four councillors to be nominated by absolute majority of the members of Council from amongst the members of the Chamber if Council resolves that any particular section or class or category or group of merchants are not adequately represented on the Council of management. The terms of such nominated members shall be concurrent with the term of the council of management.

The tables given on the next page show the number of meetings of the Executive Committee of the Chamber and the issues discussed therein during the past five years

**Table no. 4.3 Number of meetings of the Executive Committee of the Chamber during the past five years**

| Sr. no | Year    | Number of meetings held |
|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1      | 2010-11 | 30                      |
| 2      | 2011-12 | 39                      |
| 3      | 2012-13 | 42                      |
| 4      | 2013-14 | 39                      |
| 5      | 2014-15 | 43                      |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

**Table no. 4.4 Issues discussed in the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Chamber**

| Year    | Issues discussed in the Meeting of the Executive Committee   |
|---------|--|
| 2010-11 | Service tax on membership fee, increase in weighment fees, thefts in the Market yard, increase in levy of the Mathadi Board, registration of 'Stree Kaamgaar KalyanYojana', rule of Maharashtra Government regarding sacks weighing more than 50 kgs., provisions of Legal Metrology Act, 2009, Food Safety & Standards Act, octroi on essential goods, increase in packing charges, important correspondence, new applications from traders for membership and from commission agents for licenses, audit report and others.  |
| 2011-12 | Issue of not exceeding the weight of sacks by 50 kg., FDI in retailing allowed by Central Government, Food Safety & Standards Act and its licenses, regularization of sheds, tax on sheds, and new rules of Maharashtra Shop & Establishment Rules ( Amendment) 2012 , increase in wages of female workers, extension of lease agreement of shops, preparations for various Chamber events like the state level conference, important correspondence, new applications from traders for membership and from commission agents for licenses, audit report and others. |
| 2012-13 | Problems of increase in remuneration to hamaals, cost of plastic packing, direction of agitation against LBT, issue of thefts in the Market Yard, new rules of Shop Act, preparations for various Chamber events like the state level conference, important correspondence, new applications from traders for membership and from commission agents for licenses, audit report and others.   |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| 2013-14 | Transportation problems, problems of wholesalers and retailers, donating Rs. 5 lakhs to Sakal India Foundation for its scholarship project, problems in renewal of license, new applications from traders for membership and from commission agents for licenses, issues in Food Safety & Standards Act, Audit report, preparation for various events like the state level conference, important correspondence and others |
| 2014-15 | Increase in wages of streekaamgaar, cess on processed items by APMC, LBT and Chamber's stand on it, notices to retailers, norms for working of wholesaler and commission agent, preparations for various Chamber events like the state level conference, important correspondence, new applications from traders for membership and from commission agents for licenses, audit report and others.                          |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

In addition, to this, there is an Annual General Meeting held every year in which all the members are invited. Also, Special General Meetings are organised for discussion of certain special issues which arise from time to time, for which discussion with members is required. There is also a meeting of the Executive Committee every week to discuss the correspondence or letters received and decisions to be taken and replies to be given for those letters.

**Table no. 4.5 Number of Special General Meetings of the Chamber during the past five years and issues discussed therein**

| Sr. no | Year    | Number of Special General Meetings held | Issues for which Special General Meetings held  |
|--------|---------|---|---|
| 1      | 2010-11 | 07                                      | Collecting the 'hamaali' of weighment from the transporters, increase in packing charges for different commodities in Pune Market Yard and other day-to-day issues in the Market Yard |
| 2      | 2011-12 | 07                                      | Issue of not exceeding the weight of sacks by 50 kg., FDI in retailing allowed by Central   |

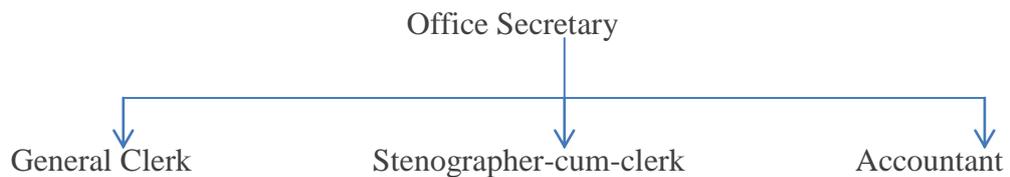
|   |         |    |  |
|---|---------|----|--|
|   |         |    | Government, Food Safety & Standards Act and its licenses, regularization of sheds, tax on sheds, and new rules of Maharashtra Shop & Establishment Rules ( Amendment) 2012 . |
| 3 | 2012-13 | 08 | Issue of increasing wages of hamaals, high cost of plastic packing, increasing rates of commission, LBT, issue of safety in the Market Yard                                  |
| 4 | 2013-14 | 19 | Issue of LBT, notices of Pune Municipal Corporation regarding illegal construction, problems in renewal of license of APMC and other long pending problems with APMC         |
| 5 | 2014-15 | 4  | Increasing wages of stree kaamgaar, issue of retailers, cess on processed goods, formation of new rules, and other ongoing problems and issues                               |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

#### **b. Administrative staff**

The following is the organisational structure of the administrative staff (employees) of the Poona Merchants Chamber:-

**Chart no. 4.1 Organisational structure of administrative staff of Poona Merchants Chamber**

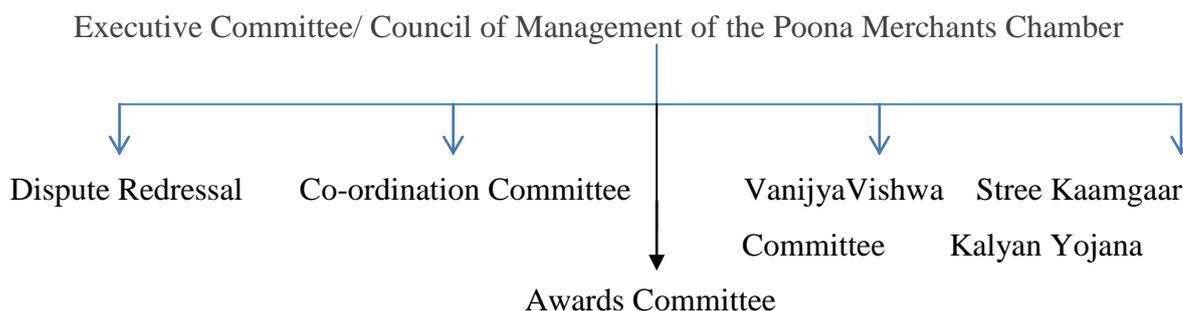


In addition, there are three peons, a cleaner, and a watchman.

#### **c. Committees of Poona Merchants Chamber-**

The following committees are formed out of selected members of the Council of Management or Executive committee for special aspects:-

**Chart no. 4.2 Committees formed out of selected members of the Executive Committee of the Poona Merchants Chamber**



There is a separate building called ‘ Vyapar Bhavan’ created by the Chamber in the Market Yard area in the year 1992 . It consists of a special Conference Hall titled ‘ Pokarna Hall’ on the ground floor, Record rooms, offices for the Office bearers, Committee Meeting Hall, Administrative office and the library.

#### **4.9 Committees of Poona Merchants Chamber**

The purpose, constitution and functioning of the above committees has been explained in detail below:-

##### **(i) Dispute Redressal Committee**

The Dispute Redressal Committee is responsible for resolving disputes among the members of the Chamber, suppliers, customers and the commission agents. This Committee consists of six members, including a President and Vice-President.

The Dispute Redressal Committee of the Poona Merchants Chamber is a quasi-judicial body and it solves disputes amongst the traders, suppliers and customers. Many transactions in the wholesale grocery business are made on the basis of oral agreement only, there is no written agreement. Hence, in the case of disputes, it is difficult to get relief from the regular court of law. In this situation, the members can approach the Dispute Redressal Committee of the Poona Merchants Chamber for justice and grievance redressal.

The Dispute Redressal Committee of the Chamber takes the following steps:-

- a. On receiving a complaint, the view of both the parties is taken in writing.

b. Then the Chamber tries to convince both the parties to resolve the matter together by mutual consent and agreement.

c. In case that fails, then the Chamber performs its judicial function of arbitration.

d. The legal advice of the Chamber's legal advisor is taken and the final judgement is given in the presence of witness.

This is called the Arbitration Award, which is legally binding on both the parties as per the Arbitration & Conciliation Act, 1986.

e. Even then, if one party does not accept the judgement, then the Chamber takes legal action on the application of the aggrieved party.

f. In case any member of the Chamber does not accept the judgement of the Dispute Redressal Committee, a circular may be sent amongst all the members, regarding the wrong doing and hence the other members are prohibited from dealing with such a member.

g. There is also provision that if a member is not satisfied with the award of the Dispute Redressal Committee, he can appeal to the Council of Management of the Chamber.

h. In case of any dispute, the Dispute Redressal Committee directs any party to make payment, and if the party refuses to do so, then the District Court can be approached , for the execution of the decree i.e. for recovery of the amount.

The Chamber has built a strong reputation for ethical judgement of the Dispute Redressal Committee, where even the relatives of the office bearers have not been spared, in case of any wrong doing on their part.

The table given on the next page shows the number of cases submitted and resolved by the Dispute Redressal Committee of the Poona Merchants Chamber, during the past five years

**Table no. 4.6 Number of cases submitted and resolved by the Dispute Redressal Committee of the Poona Merchants Chamber, during the past five years**

| Sr. no. | Year    | No. of cases submitted | No. of cases resolved |
|---------|---------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1       | 2010-11 | 09                     | 08                    |
| 2       | 2011-12 | 15                     | 12                    |
| 3       | 2012-13 | 11                     | 11                    |
| 4       | 2013-14 | 13                     | 12                    |
| 5       | 2014-15 | 12                     | 11                    |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

**Table no. 4.7 Number of Meetings of the Dispute Redressal Committee during the past five years**

| Sr. no | Year    | Number of meetings held |
|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1      | 2010-11 | 18                      |
| 2      | 2011-12 | 17                      |
| 3      | 2012-13 | 21                      |
| 4      | 2013-14 | 07                      |
| 5      | 2014-15 | 16                      |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

The Dispute Redressal Committee has framed the following rules, applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2004, regarding credit sales, in order to minimize the disputes among the traders:-

- a. The period of credit should be maximum 30 days and payment for goods purchased must be made within 30 days of the date of purchase.
- b. A 30 days post-dated cheque of the amount of bill must be given within 7 days of the date of purchase.
- c. If the amount of bill is paid after 30 days but within 35 days then 1% simple interest would be charged on the amount of bill.
- d. If the amount of bill is paid after 35 days, then 1% interest, and also 1.5% interest per month, on the amount of bill (i.e. 18% annual interest) should be charged.

## (ii). Co-ordination Committee

This Committee works for resolving disputes and maintaining co-ordination between the member-traders of the Chamber and the 'Hamaals' or porters in the wholesale grocery business. This Committee consists of members representing the wholesale grocery traders and also members representing the 'Hamaal Panchayat'. There are six members in this Committee.

**Table no. 4.8 Number of Meetings of the Co-ordination Committee during the past five years**

| Sr. no | Year    | Number of meetings held |
|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1      | 2010-11 | 12                      |
| 2      | 2011-12 | 12                      |
| 3      | 2012-13 | 07                      |
| 4      | 2013-14 | 08                      |
| 5      | 2014-15 | 08                      |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

These 'hamaals' or porters are responsible for moving the goods from one place to another. They also play an important role in the wholesale market, as they load and unload heavy grain bags, oil tins from the trucks to the shops. The 'HamaalPanchayat' was formed in the year 1956, and it acts as a representative of the porters in the Market Yard of Pune. There are different types of 'hamaals' for different commodities. The rate of remuneration to 'hamaals' or 'hamaali' rates are agreed between the Poona Merchants Chamber and the 'HamaalPanchayat'. The rates vary, depending upon commodity and weight. They are revised every three years, based on negotiations between the Chamber and the 'Hamaal Panchyat'. Dr. Baba Aadhav, the Head of the 'Hamaal Panchayat', has played a yeoman's role in the establishment of cordial relations between the traders and the 'hamaals'.

In addition, there is a deduction or 'levy' from the wages, which is entrusted with the Mathadi Board of the Maharashtra Government, as per the provisions of the The Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamaal and other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act, 1969. This is then given to the 'hamaal' at the time of retirement. Today, a 'hamaal' can get an amount of Rs. 10-12 lakhs at the time of retirement from the Mathadi Board. Thus we can say that the Poona Merchants

Chamber makes efforts for the progress of all the stakeholders in the market yard, thus ensuring that the day to day functioning of the market continues smoothly.

**(iii) Vanijya Vishwa Committee**

‘Vanijya Vishwa’ is the monthly mouthpiece of the Poona Merchants Chamber. This magazine provides information to traders regarding the current changes in the wholesale grocery business, different laws and changes therein, as well as changes in direct and indirect taxes. In addition, it also has expert columns on the problems and issues in the wholesale grocery business and solutions thereto. The magazine also has other columns on health, humour and other articles on current changes in the financial markets of India and others. There is also a special issue of ‘Vanijya Vishwa’ every year at the time of Diwali. There are six members in this Committee.

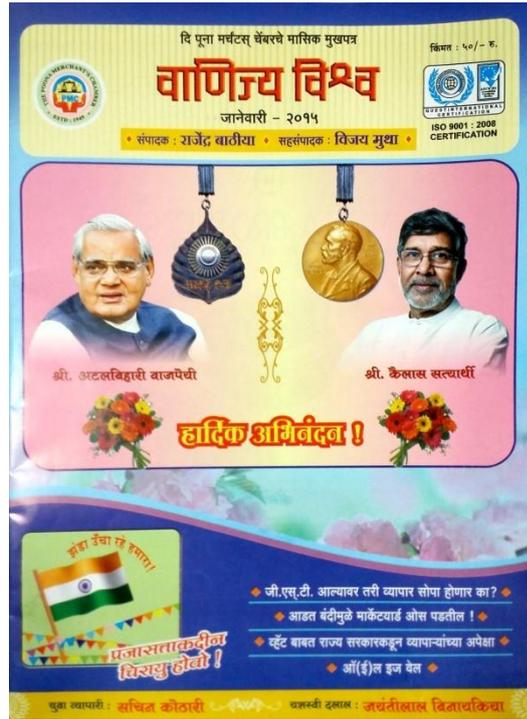
**Table no. 4.9 Number of Meetings of the ‘Vanijya Vishwa’ Committee during the past five years**

| Sr. no | Year    | Number of meetings held |
|--------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1      | 2010-11 | 18                      |
| 2      | 2011-12 | 14                      |
| 3      | 2012-13 | 14                      |
| 4      | 2013-14 | 18                      |
| 5      | 2014-15 | 16                      |

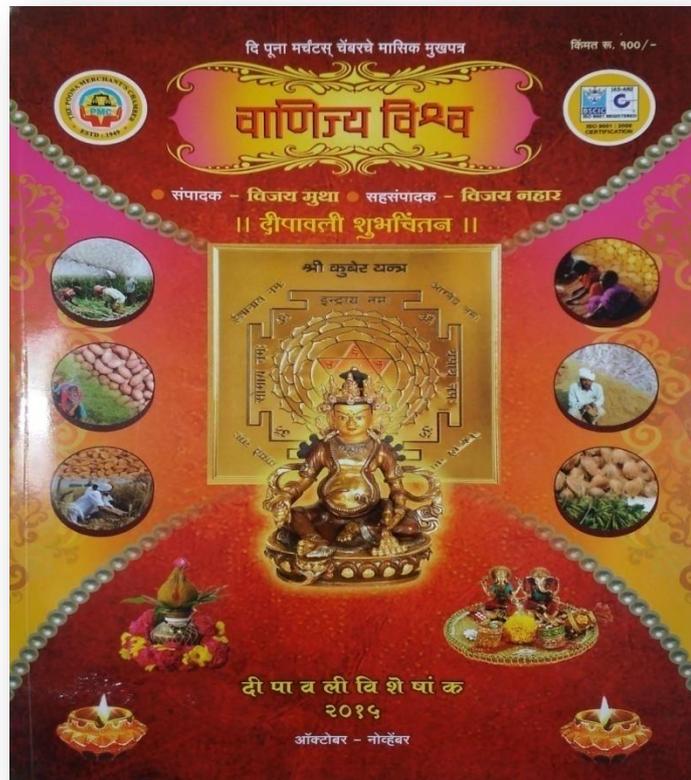
Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

‘Vanijya Vishwa’ was initiated by Late Shri Viren Gawadiya. To honour him for his initiative, the Poona Merchants Chamber has instituted an award in his name for best reporter. There is a long list of past editors who have successfully maintained the rich tradition of timely publication of each issue of ‘Vanijya Vishwa’ in the interest of members. In the Diwali issue of ‘Vanijya Vishwa’, an annual review of trade in all the grocery items of Pune wholesale market is given. In the year, 2015, ‘Vanijya Vishwa’ has completed its 46<sup>th</sup> year of publication and is leading to its golden jubilee year.

Photograph of Regular Issue of 'Vanijya Vishwa'



Photograph of Diwali Issue of 'Vanijya Vishwa'



It is important to note that the publication of 'VanijyaVishwa' is self sufficient due to the support of advertisements by the member-traders of the Chamber. There is also a prize given among the member-traders who have given advertisements in the magazine. The Diwali issue is colourful and four colour separation issue, and is attractive and catchy. All the twelve issues of the year are known for being informative, knowledge spreading and encouraging to its readers.

VanijyaVishwa was started in January, 1972. The first issue was blessed by

Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, a renowned economist and Former Finance Minister of Government of India. It was also blessed by Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture and Mahratta Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture.

Right from the beginning its advisory Committee had one of the renowned Professor from BMCC, Late Prof. S.S. Kale. Persons like Dr. P.C. Shezwalkar, CA V. K. Godbole were associated and wrote articles for VanijyaVishwa.

In 1972, the price of VanijyaVishwa was Re. 1 per copy and its annual subscription was Rs. 10.

In the year 1982, it was Re. 1.50 and annual subscription was Rs. 15.

In the year 1999, it was Rs. 8 and annual subscription was Rs. 90.

In the year 2015, the price of Vanijya Vishwa was Rs. 50 per copy and annual subscription was Rs. 600/-.

#### **iv) Committee for 'Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana'(Welfare Scheme for female workers)**

The Poona Merchants Chamber runs the 'Stree Kaamgar Kalyan Yojana'(Welfare Scheme for female workers), for the female workers in the market yard. These female workers are responsible for cleaning the shops. Earlier, they did not get payment, but used to take away the food grains which they collected while cleaning, (called 'matera' in Marathi). The Hamaal Panchayat of the Market Yard, under the leadership of Dr. Baba Adhav, acts as representative of these workers also. In the year 1988, the Poona Merchants Chamber decided to pay them remuneration. There were negotiations between the Poona Merchants Chamber and

the Hamaal Panchayat and it was decided that every female worker would get a fixed amount of salary every month. Also there would be a levy or deduction (just like in the case of ‘ hamaals’ ) which would remain with the Chamber, and the female worker would get the amount at the time of retirement. Thus the benefit of levy can be given directly to the female workers, without any kind of deductions. In addition, other welfare facilities would also be provided to the female workers under the aegis of this scheme.

It must be noted that these female workers do not come within the purview of the The Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamal and other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act, 1969. It was nothing but the enlightened attitude of the Poona Merchants Chamber, as a representative of the grocery traders, and Dr. Baba Aadhav, as a representative of the workers, that the scheme could be implemented. As quoted by Shri Walchand Sancheti, Former President of Poona Merchants Chamber, such a scheme does not exist anywhere in India.

There are six members in this Committee.

**Table no. 4.10 Number of Meetings of the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’ Committee during the past years**

| <b>Sr. no</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Number of meetings held</b> |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1             | 2010-11     | 11                             |
| 2             | 2011-12     | 04                             |
| 3             | 2012-13     | 05                             |
| 4             | 2013-14     | 04                             |
| 5             | 2014-15     | 04                             |

Source- Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

#### **System of wage payment under the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’**

The rate of payment of wages in the year 2015 is as given below:-

**Table no. 4.11 Details of payment of wages under the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’**

| <b>Particulars</b>                       | <b>Amount (Rs.)</b> |
|--|---------------------|
| Monthly salary (gross)                   | 5,000/-             |
| Less: Levy amount                        | 1,400/-             |
| Net wages paid to the female worker p.m. | 3,600/-             |

Source: Poona Merchants Chamber office

The levy amount is deducted from the gross salary and it is deposited in the bank account, opened in the name of each female worker. This amount is then paid to the female worker, at the time of leaving the job. This results in compulsory monthly saving, on the part of the female worker, and the amount could also be used to give loan to the worker, if she requires. Also, each female worker gets a lump sum amount at the time of retirement/or of leaving the job.

Another important point to note is that the rate of increment in wages for female workers is equal to that paid to the ‘hamaals’, even though they are not covered under the The Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamal and other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act.

Thus the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’ is a unique scheme in the entire state of Maharashtra, implemented by the Poona Merchants Chamber, in the interest of the female workers.

**Welfare facilities and benefits provided to the female workers under the scheme**

1. **Developing regular banking habits-** Most of the female workers are uneducated, and hence do not have a bank account and are not much aware of banking habits, prior to joining the job. By opening the Bank account in the name of each female worker, the Poona Merchants Chamber introduces them to the benefits of the banking system. It also conducts regular training programmes to train them about banking transactions, use of new technology like ATM and others.

2. **Diwali Bonus-** Each female worker is paid a Diwali bonus, of an amount roughly equal to the gross monthly salary. The Poona Merchants Chamber also gifts each worker a box of ‘ladoo’ and ‘chivda’ and a saree, at the time of Diwali.

3. **Loan facilities-** The female workers can also avail loan facilities from the amount to their credit in their bank account. Around 20% of the female workers, take the benefit of this facility.

4. **Lump sum amount at the time of retirement, or when leaving the job-** The final balance of amount to the credit of their bank account is paid to the female worker at the time of retirement, or when leaving the job. This can help to make up for the loss of monthly salary, and provide for old age.

5. **Medical Facilities-** The female worker can avail medical facilities at concessional rates at the Poona Adventist Hospital, Salisbury Park, Pune. This facility is provided in

co-ordination with the Pune Hamaal Panchayat. Around one-third of the female workers are taking regular benefit of this facility.

6. **Grievance Redressal-** There is an organised grievance redressal mechanism under the scheme. Monthly meetings are held by the representatives of the Poona Merchants Chamber, jointly with Dr. Baba Aadhav, Head of 'Hamaal Panchayat', in which the female workers can talk about their problems relating to their work, conflicts with the employers (traders) and get them resolved.

In addition, the senior members amongst the female workers, also provide guidance pertaining to family problems and issues, in these monthly meetings.

7. **Felicitation of meritorious children of these female workers-** The Poona Merchants Chamber has always tried to bring about social welfare in its activities. One of these is the promotion of education. Every year, the meritorious children of the member-traders of the Chamber, commission agents, Hamaals are felicitated in a special function which is organised by the Chamber. In this function, the meritorious children of the female workers, too are felicitated. Many children of the hamaals, female workers have reached graduate level education also.

#### **(v) Awards Committee**

The 'Adarsh Vyapari Uttam Puraskar' has been instituted in the year 1995 in the memory of former President and Founding member of the Chamber, Late Uttamchand 'Baba' Pokarna. Mr. Uttamchand Pokarna had provided leadership to the Chamber for around 32 years. This award is given for three categories:-

- a. Maharashtra State level
- b. Pune city and district
- c. Member of Poona Merchants Chamber.

The award is given in the form of a memento.

The Poona Merchants Chamber has instituted the 'Adarsh Patrakar Puraskar' in the memory of the Late Mr. Viren Gawadiya, former Secretary of the Poona Merchants Chamber, and editor of 'Vanijya Vishwa', the monthly mouthpiece of the Chamber. This award was instituted in the year 1999. This award is given to exemplary reporters in the field of agricultural marketing & distribution, co-operation and related fields. These reporters must belong to newspapers which are published in Pune. This award is also given in the form of memento.

Generally the award distribution ceremony for both the above awards is held in the month of July or August.

In order to judge and finalize the names for the above mentioned awards every year, the Chamber's Council of Management or Executive Committee appoints a Special Committee called the 'Awards Committee'. Besides the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and some senior Executive Committee members, eminent personalities representing the society, as well as representatives from the academic field are invited to become the members on this Committee. After getting nominations from the members, meetings of the Awards Committee are held in camera. A free and frank discussion is held before ascertaining and finalizing the names for different awards.

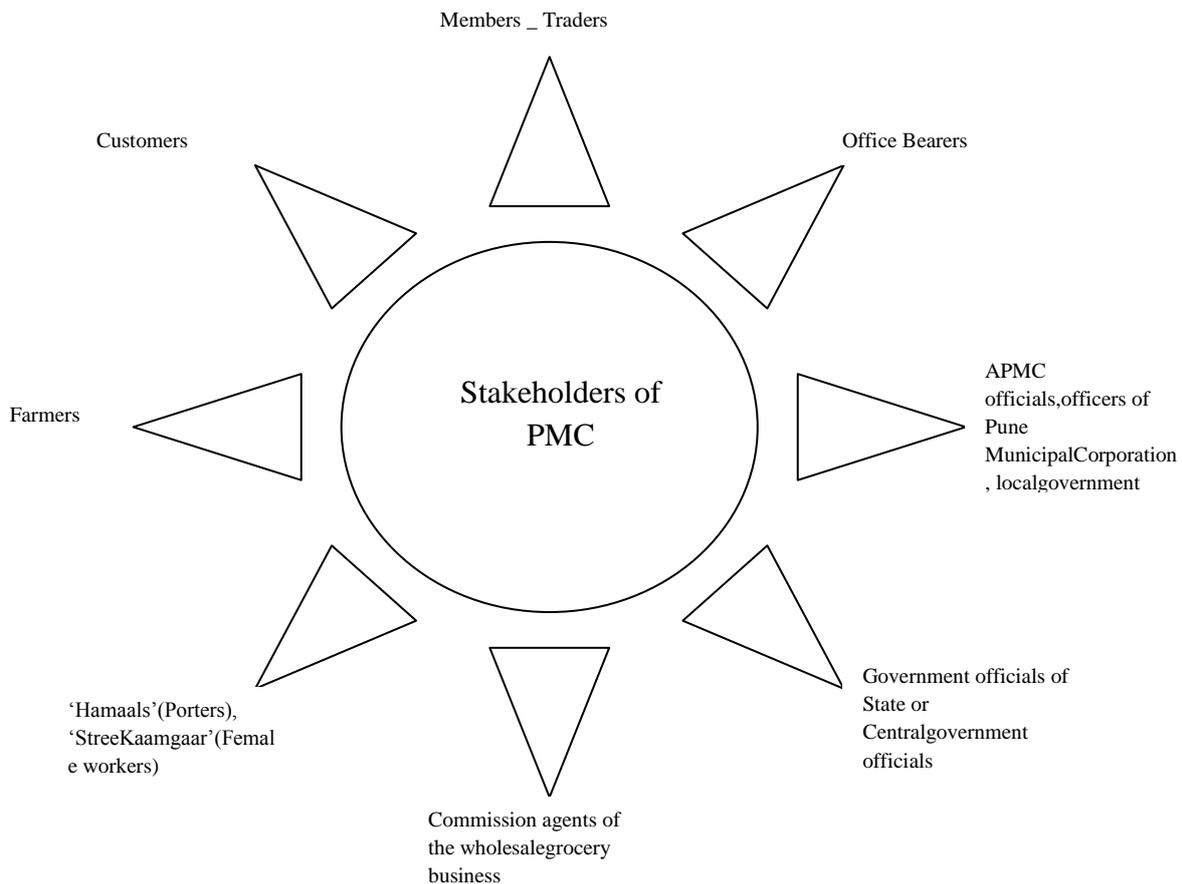
It is important to note that the Chamber authorities both past and present do not interfere in these discussions and the process of finalization of the names of awardees. Thus, receiving the award of the Poona Merchants Chamber has been recognized very highly in the business circles and the society at large over the last several years.

#### 4.10 Stakeholders of Poona Merchants Chamber

Every organisation exists as a part of society. Hence it is answerable to all its stakeholders. The following are the stakeholders of the Poona Merchants Chamber:-

1. Member- Traders
2. Office bearers of the Poona Merchants Chamber
3. APMC officials, officers of Pune Municipal Corporation, local government officials
4. Government officials of State or Central government
5. Commission agents of the wholesale grocery business
6. 'Hamaals'(Porters), 'StreeKaamgaar'(Female workers)
7. Farmers
8. Customers

**Chart no. 4.3 Chart showing the stakeholders of Poona Merchants Chamber**



#### 4.11 Functions & Activities of Poona Merchants Chamber

Poona Merchants Chamber performs many activities for the benefit of members, for promotion of wholesale grocery business and for social welfare. The activities of Poona Merchants Chamber can be categorised into the following functions:-

1. Representation
2. Information
3. Common Service functions
4. Promotional function
5. Social welfare work
- .6. Image building
7. Maintaining relation with other trade associations and chambers of commerce

**Chart no. 4.4 Chart showing the Functions & Activities of Poona Merchants Chamber**



The various functions of the Poona Merchants Chamber and the activities performed to fulfil each function have been explained in detail below:-

### **1. Representation**

The function of representation is one of the basic functions of any Chamber of Commerce. This function refers to the activities performed to represent the members' stand before the government, whether it is at the local, state or national level. This representation can be done by submitting memorandum to the government on important issues and demands or by having the office bearers of the Chamber on various committees appointed by the government.

Poona Merchants Chamber has made consistent efforts, right from its inception, to represent the members' stand before the government, at the local, state and national level.

Mr. Walchand Sancheti, the immediate past President of the Poona Merchants Chamber for the year 2014-15 is a founder member of the Chamber, who has worked closely with Late Mr. Uttamchand Pokarna. He is also actively involved in various committees of the government. He

- is member of Mathadi Board of the Maharashtra Government.
- Member of 'Minimum wages Committee' appointed by the Maharashtra state government
- Member of Pune District committee for VAT
- Member of Pune District LBT committee
- Member of Departmental Committee for the Food Safety & Standards Act.
- Member of committee appointed by the state government for changes in the APMC act.
- Member of Executive Committee of the Camp Education Society.
- Former President of 'Oswal Bandhu Samaj',

In the same way, Mr. Pravin Chorbele, the current President of the Poona Merchants Chamber is the office bearer of Business wing of the Bharatiya Janta Party. He is also member of Railway Departmental Advisory Committee

Many current and former members of the 'Council of Management' of the Poona Merchant Chamber are also members on various committees appointed by the government, related to the wholesale grocery business. Also, many members of the 'Council of Management' of the Poona Merchants Chamber are

- a. Office Bearers and Members of the Executive Committee of ' Federation of Associations of Maharashtra', an apex body of the associations of the state of Maharashtra.
- b. Office Bearers and Members of the Business Wing of political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party.
- c. Office Bearers and Members of the Executive committee of the Poona Jaggery Merchants Association.
- d. Office Bearers and Members of the Executive Committee of the Confederation of All India Traders, an apex body of Traders.
- e. Officer bearers of ' Gujarati KelawaniMandal'.
- f. Office bearers of Poona Blind Men's Association, 'Janseva Foundation'
- g. Member of Railway Advisory Committee-.

**Representation function performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber during the year 2014-15**

- a. Stay on VAT for essential food items-** The Chamber was successful in obtaining a court stay on the levy of VAT on essential food items.
- b. Exemption of tea from the purview of LBT-**The Chamber had made representation before the local and state level officials for exemption of tea from the purview of LBT. These efforts were successful and these items were exempted from LBT.

**c. Efforts for extending the lease of shops to 99 years-** The Chamber has consistently made efforts and follow up with concerned officials for extending the lease of shops to 99 years for those members who have registered their names with the Chamber.

**Representation function performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber during the year 2013-14**

**a. Removal of certain goods from the purview of the APMC Act-** Because of the sustained efforts of the Chamber, items like jaggery, sugar, wheat flour, all types of pulses, edible oil and all types of dry fruits were excluded from the purview of the APMC Act.

**b. Reduction of transfer fee in the grocery department of the APMC-** The transfer fee in the grocery department of the APMC was reduced to Rs. 1,57,000 from Rs. 2,16,000 earlier, for three years.

**c. Exemption of essential food items from the purview of LBT-**The Chamber had made representation before the local and state level officials for exemption of essential food items from the purview of LBT ( which were also earlier exempted from octroi). This was successful and these items were exempted from LBT.

**d. Stay on VAT for essential food items-** The Chamber was successful in obtaining a court stay on the levy of VAT on essential food items.

**Year 2012-13 Representation**

**a. Obtaining Court stay on the imposition of Value Added Tax on Food and Essential Goods-** VAT was implemented in Maharashtra from the year 2005. The Chamber played an important role in keeping the grocery and essential items exempt from VAT. The Chamber Representatives met the responsible government officers and they were successful in continuing the exemption till 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2014.

**b. Opposition to Local Body Tax in the limits of Pune Municipal Corporation-** The provisions of LBT were highly unfair, and hence the Chamber, with the support of other trader associations registered strong opposition against it at the level of Municipal Corporation as well as with the state government. For this purpose, the Chamber initiated correspondence with the concerned government officials, organised meetings, given statements and filed a case in the High Court.

Also it organised a 'Market Bandh' on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2013 in order to protest against LBT.

**c. Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006-** The Chamber had initiated correspondence with the State and Central Government in order to protest against the unfair provisions of this Act. On 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, Mr.Sharad Pawar, the Central Government Minister of Agriculture, had organised a meeting at Delhi. In this meeting, the representatives of the Chamber had a discussion with Mr. S.Dave, Advisor to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India as well as Mrs.Anuradha Prasad, Secretary of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. As per the discussion, Mr.Sharad Pawar issued orders to the relevant officials.

**f. Revised provisions of the Shop Act-** The revised provisions of the Shop and Establishments Act were extremely unfair and for this the Chamber had submitted a memorandum to the relevant officials and the government. It had also submitted a memorandum to the Committee formed by the Maharashtra Government for the same. It had organised meetings of various trader associations for this issue.

#### **Year 2011-12 Representation**

**a. Court Stay on Value Added Tax on essential goods-** VAT has been implemented in Maharashtra from the year 2005. It is well known that the Chamber has made special efforts to effect a court stay on VAT on essential goods in Maharashtra. This year too, the Chamber submitted a memorandum to the government and was successful in bringing a court stay on VAT on essential goods in Maharashtra till 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013.

**b. Exemption of octroi on essential food commodities-** The Chamber made special efforts at the municipal level to bring about exemption of octroi on essential food commodities till 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013.

**c. Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006-**The Chamber had invited the officials of the Food and Drugs Administration Department for checking the members' documents in connection with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and for accepting license fee. Around 200 members took the benefit of this facility. Also licenses were obtained and given to the members. Also obtained concession in the documents required for renewal of license.

**d. Court Stay on reduction of commission in the Jaggery business-** The Chamber was successful in bringing about a court stay on an APMC circular regarding reduction of commission in the Jaggery business.

**e. Opposition to Foreign Direct Investment in Retailing-** The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Confederation of All India Traders and Federation of Associations of Maharashtra (FAM) had organised an All India Bandh to protest against FDI in Retailing. The Chamber made efforts to make it successful in the city of Pune.

### **Year 2010-11 Representation**

a. The Chamber made efforts to get the **sheds of the jaggery shops regularised**. In this context it made representation before the municipal corporation, Government of Maharashtra and the APMC officials. This is now in the last stage of regularisation.

b. The Chamber was successful in obtaining **court stay on VAT** on essential goods. Also it obtained a **court stay on octroi** on essential goods. Both were effective until 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2012.

c. Due to the efforts of the Chamber, the **rates of VAT of dry fruits and spices** was reduced from 12.5% to 5%.

## **2. Information**

This function includes the activities performed to provide information to members on important matters relating to business, changes in direct and indirect taxes, changes in government laws. Thus if all the members have proper information, it smoothens the day-to-day running of the business and contributes to the promotion of the trade. The following are the activities undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber to fulfil the function of Information:-

**a. Library-** Poona Merchants Chamber has a library in its office. Members can access the library to read newspapers, latest issues of magazines and periodicals relating to business.

**b. 'VanijyaVishwa'** - 'VanijyaVishwa' is the monthly mouthpiece of the Poona Merchants Chamber, which provides information to traders regarding the current

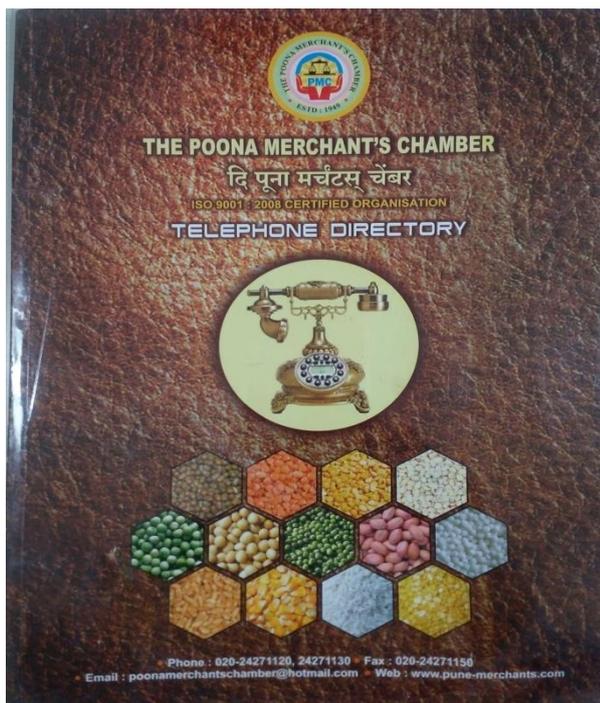
changes in the wholesale grocery business, different laws and changes therein, as well as changes in direct and indirect taxes. In addition, it also has expert columns on the problems and issues in the wholesale grocery business and solutions thereto. The magazine also has other columns on health, humour and other articles on current changes in the financial markets of India and others. There is also a special issue of 'VanijyaVishwa' every year at the time of Diwali.

**c. State Level Conference-** The Poona Merchants Chamber organises a state level conference every year in which delegates from all over Maharashtra are invited. In this conference, the current issues relating to the wholesale grocery trade and to business in general are discussed. Experts from government, trade and industry are invited to present their views.

**d. Publication of Telephone Diary-** The Poona Merchants Chamber publishes a telephone diary. The telephone diary of the Poona Merchants Chamber contains a lot of information, which includes the names, address and contact details of the following:-

- a. Member-traders and Commission Agents
- b. Transporters, banks, printers and advertisers, travel agents of Pune
- c. Important trade associations of Pune and Maharashtra
- d. Newspapers-in Pune and in Maharashtra and news channels
- e. Ministers of the State and Central government
- f. Officials of the Pune Municipal Corporation, and various government departments of Pune city.
- g. Post, airport and Pune railway station
- h. Police stations, hospitals, chemists, ambulance, blood banks and eye banks
- i. Selected Railway and flight timetable.

## Photograph of Latest Telephone Diary of Poona Merchants Chamber



**e. Guidance to other trade associations in Maharashtra-** The Poona Merchants Chamber provides guidance to other trade associations in Maharashtra on various aspects like how to conduct fair elections, rules regarding commission agents, information regarding direct and indirect taxes and also on other business matters.

The following are the activities undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber to fulfil the function of 'Information' during the past five years:-

### **Year 2014-15 Information**

#### **a. Organising State level conference**

(i) On 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2014, the Chamber organised a state level conference on 'Current Issues in the Wholesale Grocery Trade'. These issues included the issue of imposition of cess on items like jaggery, sugar, 'aata', 'rava', 'maida', pulses, dry fruits and edible oils which have been excluded from the purview of the APMC Act. In addition, issues relating to problems with the APMC, LBT and others.

(ii) **Organising State level conference-** On 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2015, a seminar was organised to discuss about the State Government's order that the commission should be charged from the purchaser, not from the farmer. The seminar was

attended by delegates from business and trade associations from all over Maharashtra.

### **State Level Conference organised by Poona Merchants Chamber**



#### **b. Guidance to other trade associations**

- i) **Shrirampur Merchants Association, Shrirampur** for the procedure of registration of members and election of the Council of Management of the Chamber.
- ii) **The Kolhapur Grain Merchants Association, Kolhapur** for the rule of the Chamber regarding the commission agents.

#### **Year 2013-14 Information**

**a. Organising State level conference-**On 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, the Chamber organised a state level conference on 'Current Issues and Challenges in the Grocery trade'. Grocery traders from all over Maharashtra as well the representatives of various Grocery Trade associations of cities like Mumbai, Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur, Ratnagiri, Ahmednagar, Chandrapur and others attended the conference.

**b. Guidance to other trade associations-**

**i) Sangli Chamber of Commerce** for providing the rate card for 'Hamaali'(Porter services) at Pune Market yard.

**ii) The Kolhapur Grain Merchants'Association-** Under the Food Safety & Standards Act, the annual return in Form D is to be submitted before 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2013. The officer of the relevant department was contacted and it was found out that the rule did not apply to wholesale traders. Also provided information regarding 'Hamaali'rates at Pune Market yard.

**iii) Ratnagiri District Traders'Meet, Chiplun-** The representatives of Poona Merchants'Chamberr attended the Traders' Meet organised by the Ratnagiri District Traders Association on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 and provided guidance on business and legal matters.

**iv) Commission Agents association of Shree Chhatrapati Shivaji Market yard-**  
- Provided guidance on how to conduct elections of the association.

**Year 2012-13 Information**

**a. Organised State level conference-** On 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2013, the Poona Merchants Chamber, in association with other associations of Maharashtra, organised a state level conference on 'Problems due to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the impact of FDI in retail trade'.

**b. Guidance to other associations-** During the year, the Chamber has provided guidance to

i) Hingoli District Traders Association- regarding the office of the Asst. Commissioner of Sales Tax (Appeal) to be maintained at Nanded or connect it to the Aurangabad office.

ii) Jalgaon District Traders Association- undertaken correspondence with the Food and Drugs Authority regarding allowing the sale of loose edible oil.

iii) Ahmednagar Adate Bazaar Merchants Association- regarding annual return under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

## **Year 2011-12 Information**

a. Organised a lecture by Mr.Chakor Gandhi on the topic ‘Managing Business successfully in the changing times’ on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

b. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2012, a conference was organised in association with the ‘Lokayat’ on the theme ‘Impact of Foreign Direct Investment in the Retail sector on customer, farmer and the businessman’.

**c. Providing guidance to the affiliated associations-** The Chamber has always provided guidance to the associations affiliated with it. During the year, the Chamber has provided guidance to the following associations-

i. Shirur Grocery Traders Association- regarding the laws relating to the Grocery business.

ii. Sangli Chamber of Commerce- regarding non-deduction of TDS on the payment to the ‘Mathadi Mandal’.

iii. Jat taluka Traders Association- regarding implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

iv. Hingoli District Traders Association- Undertaken correspondence with the government regarding maintaining the office of the Asst. Commissioner of Sales Tax (Appeals) at Nanded or associating it with the Aurangabad Office.

**d. Organised state level conference** on ‘Current Issues in the Grocery Business’ on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 in which 400 delegates belonging to 78 business Associations from all over Maharashtra had attended.

## **Year 2010-11 Information**

**a. Guidance to other trade associations-**

-Lonand Vyapari Association (Dist- Satara) regarding increase in the rates of ‘hamaali’.

-Ahmednagar Adate Bazaar Merchants Association- regarding trade associations in Maharashtra and regarding levy.

-Gadhinglaj Merchants Association (Dist- Kolhapur) – regarding the prevailing rates of ‘hamaali’.

-Kolhapur Grain Merchants Association- regarding the prevailing rates of ‘hamaali’.

- Sangli Chamber of Commerce- The Poona Merchants Chamber provided guidance in the state level trade conference organised by the Sangli Chamber of Commerce.

### **3. Common Service functions**

The Common Service functions refer to those activities that a Chamber of Commerce performs to solve the day-to-day problems that members face, while conducting their business. The following are the important activities conducted by the Poona Merchants Chamber to perform the function of ‘Common Service’ to its members:-

**a. The ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’** - The ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’ (Scheme for benefit of female workers) of the Poona Merchants Chamber is one such activity which has been undertaken for the common benefit of all the traders of the Market yard, who are the members of the Chamber.

**b. ‘Co-ordination Committee’**- The establishment of ‘Hamaal Panchayat’ and the Chamber’s attempts to provide fair wages to the ‘hamaals’ as well as ensuring co-ordination between traders and ‘hamaals’ are also steps taken for providing a permanent solution to the common problems faced by the members.

**c. Licensing system for the ‘dalals’ or commission agents**- In addition, the Poona Merchants Chamber has brought in licensing system for the ‘dalals’ or agents in the wholesale grocery business. This has enabled the agents to build credibility among the members. Thus the fraudulent agents have been eliminated and the genuine agents and the members can carry on their business smoothly.

**d. Provision of Centrax facility in the Market yard**- By making consistent efforts and follow up with BSNL, the Chamber was successful in providing CENTRAX facility free of cost to the members from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2011. This facility has reduced the cost of telephone and communication for all the members within the Market

Yard. It has also ensured speedy and efficient communication from the Chamber to all its members.

**e. Solving the day-to-day problems in the market yard-**The Chamber has made consistent efforts to inform the APMC officials and ensure that the problems affecting the grocery traders of the Market yard, like lack of cleanliness, regularisation of sheds, cess on purchase and others, are solved at the earliest. This is done by the Chamber consistently from year to year.

The following are the activities undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber to fulfil the function of 'Common Service' during the past five years:-

#### **Year 2014-15 Common Service Functions**

**a. Solving the day-to-day problems in the market yard-**The Chamber has made consistent efforts to inform the APMC officials and ensure that the problems affecting the grocery traders of the Market yard, like lack of cleanliness, regularisation of sheds, cess on purchase and others are solved at the earliest. Regarding the matter of thefts in the market yard, the Chamber has met and discussed the problem with the police officials, due to which some problems have been solved while some are still pending.

#### **Year 2013-14 Common Service Functions**

**a. Solving the day-to-day problems in the market yard-** The Chamber has made consistent efforts to inform the APMC officials and ensure that the problems affecting the grocery traders of the Market yard, like lack of cleanliness, regularisation of sheds, cess on purchase and others. Regarding the matter of thefts in the market yard, the Chamber has met and discussed the problem with the police officials, due to which some problems have been solved while some are still pending.

### **Year 2012-13 Common Service Functions**

**a. Extension of lease agreement to 99 years-** The Chamber has taken steps to ensure that the lease agreement of the Chamber members with the government for their shops at Market Yard is extended to 99 years.

**b. Publication of the new telephone diary of the Chamber-** The new telephone diary of the Chamber was inaugurated on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 at the hands of Mr. Ramnath Pokale, Deputy Police Commissioner.

**c. Solving the day-to-day problems in the Market yard-**The Chamber has consistently made efforts to solve the various problems in the Market yard like lack of security in the market, lack of cleanliness, shortage of water, potholes on the roads, traffic problems in the grocery section of the market, inadequate power supply and lighting, the incidence of thefts, imposition of cess on purchase. For this the Chamber has made representations to the officials of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee.

**d. Organising picnic for the members and the agents-** A picnic to Mahabaleshwar was organised on 6-7<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, for the members of the Chamber and also the Commission agents.

### **Year 2011-12 Common Service Functions**

**a. Providing CENTRAX facility free of cost to the members-** By making consistent efforts and follow up with BSNL, the Chamber was successful in providing CENTRAX facility free of cost to the members from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2011.

**b. Guidance on the increased tax on the sheds situated on the land in the Jaggery department-** The Chamber has issued circulars from time to time regarding the increase in the taxable value of the sheds situated on the land in the jaggery department.

**c. Renewal of lease contract to 99 years-** The Chamber has made efforts and consistent follow up with the government regarding renewal of lease contract for the shops in the Market yard for 99 years. In this context, it has obtained 'in principal' permission for renewal of lease contract of shops of the interested members to 99 years.

d. On 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, the Chamber organised five seminars in association with Rajyog Education and Research Foundation. The themes were ‘Positive attitude for success’, ‘Managing relationships’, ‘The Art of being Happy’, ‘Managing stress’ and ‘Conflict Resolution’.

e. On 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2012, a seminar was organised in association with Aviva Life Insurance company on the theme ‘ Profitable Investment’.

#### **Year 2010-11 Common Service Functions**

a. . **Solving the day-to-day problems in the Market yard-**The Chamber has consistently made efforts to solve the various problems in the Market yard like lack of security in the market, lack of cleanliness, shortage of water, potholes on the roads, traffic problems in the grocery section of the market, inadequate power supply and lighting, the incidence of thefts, imposition of cess on purchase. For this the Chamber has made representations to the officials of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee. The Chamber has also met the Police officials and officials of Municipal Corporation in this respect.

**b. Social Activities-** The Chamber organised a special screening of the World Cup Final Match in the Baba Pokarna Hall for the benefit of the members. It also organised a picnic to Lake Weekend Resort in September, 2011.

#### **4. Promotion**

Any Chamber of Commerce ultimately works for the promotion of the trade or business to which belongs. By effectively fulfilling the functions of Representation, Information and providing common service, the Poona Merchants Chamber can make the conduct of business much more smooth for its members. In this way, it indirectly works for the promotion of the wholesale grocery business in Pune city.

#### **5. Social welfare**

The function of social welfare refers to the Chamber’s activities for the benefit of the society to which it belongs. The Chamber of Commerce, being a collective body, becomes an intermediary through which the members can undertake activities for social welfare.

Poon Merchants Chamber has a long history and culture of undertaking activities for social welfare. The following are the important initiatives undertaken by the Chamber for social welfare:-

**i. ‘Ladoo-Chivda Program’**-The famous ‘Ladoo- Chivda Program’, is a good example, in which the Poona Merchants Chamber undertakes the sale of ‘Ladoo’and ‘Chivda’at almost half the market price during the time of Diwali. The ‘Ladoo- Chivda Program’ has also gained entry in the Limca Book of Records and Guinness Book of World Records. The program has gained huge popularity in the city of Pune on account of its good quality products and low prices.

**ii. The ‘Poona Merchants Chamber Relief fund’**- The Poona Merchants Chamber also has a ‘Relief fund’from which the activities of social welfare are funded. Donation to the Relief Fund are eligible for 50% deduction under Sec. 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.The following are the activities that are undertaken by the Chamber for social welfare:-

**Table no. 4.12 Noteworthy activities undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber for social welfare in the last five decades**

| Sr. no. | Purpose   | Amount (Rs.) |
|---------|---|--------------|
| 1       | Constructing six primary schools each in Anjar and Gandhidham at the time of earthquake in Kachchh            | 10,00,000    |
| 2       | Financial Assistance to the organisation ‘Virayatan’ situated in Bhuj, Gujarat                                | 8,00,000     |
| 3       | Donation to Maharashtra State Relief Fund   | 2,00,000     |
| 4       | Donation in the form of food grains to Maharashtra State Relief Fund  | 3,18,000     |
| 5       | Providing fodder and water to animals in drought relief camp at Morgaon in Pune District                      | 4,10,000     |
| 6       | Providing fodder and water to animals in drought relief camp at Pabal, Indapur, Ambai, Nira in Maharashtra    | 2,79,000     |
| 7       | Constructing water tank in Shree Kshetrapal Pratishthan, Lonikand   | 2,00,000     |
| 8       | Constructing water tank in Jeevraksha Pratishthan, Pabal  | 2,00,000     |
| 9       | Financial Assistance to 14 families of martyrs of Indian Army – Rs. 11,000 each                               | 1,54,000     |
| 10      | Financial Assistance to the flood affected small traders and businessmen of Chiplun, Sangameshwar and Khopoli | 2,25,000     |
| 11      | Donation to Sheth Tarachand Hospital  | 5,00,000     |
| 12      | Financial Assistance to the cyclone hit schools of Konkan   | 1,25,000     |

Source: Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

In addition, the Poona Merchants Chamber organises the following activities every year which are financed from the fund:-

- a. Organisation of blood donation camps
- b. Providing help for education of the wards of the ‘stree kaamgaar’ (female workers), ‘Hamaals’(porters) and other poor and needy people.
- c. Providing medical help to female workers at concessional rates through tie- up with the Poona Adventist Hospital, Salisbury Park, Pune.
- d. The members of the Poona Merchants Chamber also jointly providing lodging and food facility to ‘warkaris’ during their ‘Pandharpuryatra’.
- e. Also the Poona Merchants Chamber has donated to other organisations like the ‘Sakal India Foundation’.

The following are the details of contribution from the Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund for the past five years:-

**Table no. 4.13 Details of contribution from the Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund for the past five years:**

(Amount in Rupees)

| Year    | Purpose                |              |                    |  | Total    |
|---------|------------------------|--------------|--------------------|--|----------|
|         | General social welfare | Medical help | Help for education | Other  |          |
| 2014-15 | 8,000                  | 27,500       | 26,000             | -  | 61,500   |
| 2013-14 | 16,000                 | 36,000       | 57,000             | 5,00,000<br>Scholarship<br>scheme of ‘<br>Sakal India<br>Foundation’ | 6,09,000 |
| 2012-13 | 97,885                 | 51,500       | 19,000             | -  | 1,68,385 |
| 2011-12 | 1,09,000               | 61,000       | 75,000             | -  | 2,45,000 |
| 2010-11 | 1,11,951               | 24,500       | 29,201             | -  | 1,65,652 |

Source: Annual Reports of Poona Merchants Chamber

## 6. Image building

The function of image building refers to the Chamber’s activities to enhance its image among the stakeholders and in the society. A Chamber of Commerce can

enhance its goodwill and image among the members by effectively fulfilling the basic functions of Representation, Information and Promotion. A Chamber of Commerce can fulfil the function of Image building by undertaking various activities of social service.

The function of image building is especially important in a democracy, because if the Chamber has a good image in the society, it can build its credibility before the government also, and in turn it can help in effectively fulfilling the function of Representation and Promotion too.

The Poona Merchants Chamber has consistently adopted the following practices, which has contributed to building its positive image among the members and in the society:-

- a. Promotion of ethical practices in the wholesale grocery business.
- b. Building up systems to reduce the disputes among the traders and other stakeholders in the wholesale grocery business.

For example, 'Dispute Redressal committee' and 'Stree Kaamgaar KalyanYojana' of the Poona Merchants Chamber, also providing support to the 'Hamaal Panchayat' of the wholesale grocery business.

- c. Organising many activities for social welfare like the 'Ladoo Chivda Program' and starting the Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund, through which medical help, educational help is provided to the needy. Also, the 'Ladoo-Chivda' Program' gained entry in the Limca Book of records in the year 2007 under the category 'Largest Sale'. After that the program scaled new heights and in the year 2012, the Chamber gained entry in the Guinness Book of World Records for 'Largest serving of ladoos'. This enabled the Poona Merchants Chamber to get state and national level publicity and contributed to its image building.

- d. Institution of Award for Ideal Businessman- 'Adarsh Vyapari UttamPuraskar' and Award for Excellent Reporters 'Adarsh Patrakar Puraskar'.

- e. Organisation of annual State-level Conference and inviting delegates from all over Maharashtra.

- f. Providing guidance to other trade associations of Maharashtra

g. Felicitation of meritorious children of members, ‘hamaals’ and female workers

This practice of the Chamber promotes image building among the members.

h. Obtaining ISO-9001-2008 certification

The Poona Merchants Chamber has to represent its members interest at the local, state and national level. It is important to build credibility in the society and at the government level to effectively fulfil the function of representation. In this context, it was important to obtain ISO 9001-2008 certification. The Poona Merchants Chamber obtained this certification in the year 2009-10.

i. Monthly magazine ‘VanijyaVishwa’-

‘VanijyaVishwa’ is the monthly mouthpiece of the Poona Merchants Chamber, which provides information to traders regarding the current changes in the wholesale grocery business, different laws and changes therein, as well as changes in direct and indirect taxes. In addition, it also has expert columns on the problems and issues in the wholesale grocery business and solutions thereto. The magazine also has other columns on health, humour and other articles on current changes in the financial markets of India and others. There is also a special issue of ‘VanijyaVishwa’ every year at the time of Diwali. ‘VanijyaVishwa’ is provided to all members of the Chamber, free of cost.

j. Celebration of important events of the Poona Merchants Chamber on a large scale and publication of souvenir.

The important events in the history of the Poona Merchants Chamber like the shifting to new building, completion of 50 years have been celebrated grandly. Important people from trade, industry and the state and Central government have been invited to visit the Chamber on such occasions. On such occasions, souvenir has also been published which gives detailed information about the Chamber. Such kind of activities give publicity to the Chamber and effectively contribute to its image building in the society.

k. An important point to note is that the Poona Merchants Chamber enjoys such credibility with the government that when there was a shortage of ‘tur dal’ in October 2015, and the prices reached Rs. 200 per kg. the government decided to confiscate the ‘tur dal’ with the black marketers and sell it to the common public

at Rs. 100 per kg. At that time, the government provided the ‘ dal’ to the Poona Merchants Chamber and entrusted the responsibility of selling it at Rs. 100 per kg. to the common public.

## **7. Maintaining relation with other trade associations and chambers of commerce**

Any Chamber of Commerce or Trade Association does not work in isolation. It is important to maintain relations with other trade associations and Chambers of Commerce, in order to effectively fulfil its other functions.

The Poona Merchants Chamber also organises State level Conference every year, in which delegates from trade associations of places like Sangli, Kolhapur, Chiplun, Hingoli, Jalgaon, Ahmednagar, Shirur, JatTaluka and other towns of Maharashtra are invited. . This conference is organised with the objective of discussing the current issues pertaining to the wholesale grocery trade and then deciding on a plan of action for resolving those issues.

The Poona Merchants Chamber provides guidance to other trade associations of Maharashtra on various matters concerning the grocery business. Right from its inception, it has never limited its role to wholesale grocery business, but whenever the need arose, it has provided leadership to other trade associations of Maharashtra. In fact, other trade associations also take guidance from the Chamber, regarding their method of conducting elections and such matters. Thus the other trade associations consider the Poona Merchants Chamber to be a role model.

The following are the issues on which the Chamber has provided guidance to other Trade associations of Maharashtra:-

- a. Current issues and problems relating to the wholesale grocery business.
- b. Direct and indirect taxes in the wholesale grocery business
- c. . Rates of ‘hamaali’i.e. wage rates for ‘hamaals’ or porters in the wholesale grocery business, and rates of deduction or levy therein.
- d. Rates of TDS (Tax deducted at source) on payment to the Mathadi Board

- e. Regarding implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- f. Correspondence with the government regarding maintaining the office of the Additional Commissioner of Sales tax (Appeal) at Nanded or associating it with the office at Aurangabad
- g. Regarding ban on the sale of unpacked or loose edible oil.
- h. Process of election at the Chamber.

The table given on the following page shows the gist of the various functions and activities of Poona Merchants Chamber.

**Table no. 4.14 Functions& Activities of Poona Merchants Chamber**

| <b>Representation</b>   | <b>Information</b>   | <b>Common Service functions</b>   | <b>Promotional function</b>   | <b>Social welfare work</b>  | <b>Image building</b>  | <b>Maintaining relation with other trade associations and chambers of commerce</b>   |
|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>a. Removal of certain grocery items from the purview of the APMC Act</p> <p>b.Reduction of transfer fee in the grocery department of the APMC</p> <p>c.Exemption of essential food items from the purview of LBT</p> <p>d. Court Stay on VAT for essential food items</p> <p>e. Opposition to Local Body Tax in the limits of Pune Municipal Corporation</p> | <p>a. Library</p> <p>b.'VanijyaVishwa'</p> <p>c. Organising State Level Conference every year</p> <p>d. Guidance to other trade associations</p> <p>e.Inviting experts to deliver lectures on contemporary issues and problems</p> | <p>a.Stree KaamgaarKalyanYojana'</p> <p>b. Co-ordination with the 'HamaalPanchayat'</p> <p>c.Initiating Licensing system for 'Dalals'</p> <p>d. Solving day-to day problems in the market yard.</p> <p>e. Renewal of lease contract of shops</p> <p>f.Providing Centrax facility free of cost</p> | <p>All activities ultimately result in the promotion of wholesale grocery business in Pune city</p> | <p>a.'Ladoo-Chivda Program'</p> <p>b.Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund</p> <p>c. Felicitation of meritorious children of members, 'Hamaals' and female workers</p> <p>d. Medical help at concessional rates</p> | <p>a. Promotion of ethical practices in the wholesale grocery business.</p> <p>b. Efforts for Reducing disputes-'Dispute Redressal committee', Co-ordination Committee and 'StreeKaamgaarKalyanYojana'of the Poona Merchants Chamber</p> <p>c. Organising many activities for social welfare like the 'LadooChivda Program', Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund, providing medical help, educational help</p> <p>d.'Ladoo-ChivdaProgram'gained entry in the Limca Book of records and Guinness Book of World Records.</p> <p>e. Institution of Awards 'AdarshVyapariUttamPuraskar', 'Adarsh Patrakar Puraskar'.</p> | <p>a. Guidance to other trade associations of Maharashtra</p> <p>b. Organisation of 'State level Conference'every year</p> |

| <b>Representation</b>   | <b>Information</b> | <b>Common Service functions</b>   | <b>Promotional function</b> | <b>Social welfare work</b>   | <b>Image building</b>   | <b>Maintaining relation with other trade associations and chambers of commerce</b> |
|---|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|--|---|--|
| <p>f. Representation to Central Government against unfair provisions of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006</p> <p>g. Representation against Revised provisions of the Shop Act</p> <p>h. Representation against reduction of commission in the Jaggery business</p> <p>i. Opposition to Foreign Direct Investment in Retailing</p> <p>j. Representation for getting the sheds of the jaggery shops regularised</p> |                    | <p>g. Publishing telephone diary</p> <p>h. Organising picnic and seminars on general topics</p> |                             | <p>e. Help during floods, earthquakes and natural calamities</p> <p>f. Organisation of blood donation camps</p> <p>g. Donation to 'Sakal India Foundation'</p> | <p>f. Organisation of annual State-level Conference</p> <p>g. Providing guidance to other trade associations of Maharashtra</p> <p>h. Felicitation of meritorious children of members, 'hamaals' and female workers</p> <p>i. Obtaining ISO-9001-2008 certification</p> |  |

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher has explained in detail the objectives of the Poona Merchants Chamber, its history, organisation and working. In addition, the various functions of the Poona Merchants Chamber, along with the activities in recent years have also been explained. The vast scope of activities of the Poona Merchants Chamber has ensured its sustained goodwill not only in the state of Maharashtra, but also in the entire country.

In the next chapter, let us understand, study and observe the special initiatives undertaken successfully by the Poona Merchants Chamber over the last several years.