CHAPTER - V

WELFARE PROGRAMMES
MAHILA MANDALS

In 1954-55 it was observed that women lack of participation in the community development programme was to be considerable extent responsible for the programme not making the necessary impact. In keeping with the approach of the programme, i.e., ensuring people's participation in community development activities. Co-operation of women was sought to be realized through institutions like mahila mandals. The mahila mandal was conceived as an institution for bringing our new ideas and skills to village women. They were supervised by other women known as mukhya sevikas. They are excepted to teach village women certain practical skills (better home making techniques crafts, sewing, knitting, embroidering, kitchen, gardening etc). The agents of change were women workers known as 'Gram Sevikas' who work directly with the women at village level. They were supervised by other women certain practical skills and once they had interested women in improving themselves, the Gram Sevikas were supposed to help them organize for collective action. Their main objective is
the assist village women to develop and understand their role and responsibilities as individuals, as members of a family and as members of the community. In the present study, all the villages had mahila mandals and the attitudes of the members are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>36.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was found that 25.56 per cent of the respondents are not even aware of the presence of mahila mandal in their village and in case of 36.11 per cent respondents, level of knowledge about Mahila Mandal was low. There were only 13.33 per cent of respondents having high level of knowledge about mahila mandals who knew all about it and had very clear idea about all the objectives and activities of mahila mandal.

**Women Participation**

Participation of women in mahila mandal was studied under different heads: membership position held attendance in meeting, initiating discussion, participation in discussion participation in decision making and follow-up. Table 5.2 indicate the level of participation in mahila mandal
Table 5.2
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN MAHILA MANDAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>74.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 finds that only 74.44 per cent of respondents were the member of mahila mandals and 25.56 per cent of the respondents are not even aware of the presence of mahila mandal.

Knowledge of the respondents about mahila mandals was measured on the basis of their knowledge about (i) presence of mahila mandal, (ii) its President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Treasurer Members of Executive, (iii) its objective and (iv) its in-charge and activities.

Table 5.3
ROLE OF WOMEN IN MAHILA MANDAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Member</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>69.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Secretary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>25.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 shows that the role of women in mahila mandal.
It was found that 69.17 per cent of the respondents are ordinary members and the other 93 per cent of respondents are executive members shall act as treasurer, Joint Secretary, Secretary, Vice-President and President and 25.83 respondents are not members in mahila members.

Table 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DWCRA</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>36.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indira Kranthipatham</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>38.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop loan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indira Awajs Yojana</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>61.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 shows the distribution of respondents benefited under different programmes implemented by the government.

The number of respondents benefited by the different programmes implemented by the government. It shows that 36.11 per cent of the respondents benefited under DWCRA, 38.05 per cent under Indira Kranthipatham (Velugu), 4.16 per cent under crop loan and 61.11 per cent of respondents under Indira Awajs Yozana.

LEGISLATION AND EVALUATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Role of Legislature and Executive

There are a host of legislations enacted from time to time to protect the rights of women. There is no dearth of enactments in this direction. Each enactment is perfect in its tone and tenor to
achieve the desired results but the problem is successful implementation of the enactments in day-to-day life.

**Pre-Independence Legislations**

It prohibits arrest or detention of women in civil prison in execution of a decree for the payment of money.

**The Legal Practitioners (Women) Amendment Act, 1923 (23 of 1923)**

Under this Act, no women can be disqualified from being admitted as a legal practitioner by reasons of her sex.

**Indian Succession Act, 1925 (39 of 1925)**

Under this Act, the woman has the same right to the property as the husband has on the death of his wife.

**The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (19 of 1929)**

It fixes the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for boys and 15 years for girls.

**Bombay Prevention of Hindu Bigamous Marriage Act 1946**

It imposes penalty for the offence of bigamy up to 7 years of imprisonment and fine.

**POST INDEPENDENT LEGISLATIONS**

**The Special Marriage Act, 1954**

This Act permits marriage of (a) people from different religious faith without changing their religion and (b) stipulates minimum age of marriage as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

**Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**

This Act fixes (a) minimum age for marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. The salient feature of this Act is that it makes monogamy as universal. The Hindu Marriage act, 1955 and
Special Marriage act, 1954 were amended in 1976 to provide for
the right of a girl to repudiate, child marriage before attaining
maturity whether the marriage has been consummated or not
cruelty and desertion were added as grounds for divorce and
mutual consent was recognized.

**Hindu Succession Act 1956**

This Act confers the right of absolutes ownership over
property and the women can make a “will” leaving her share of
property to the heirs. Section 17 of the Act provides for the
property of an intestate being divided among the heirs in
accordance with certain prescribed rules for the benefit of women.

**Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956**

This Act makes it permissible to any female Hindu (a) who is
of sound mind and (b) who is not a minor and who is not maimed
or if maimed whose marriage has been dissolved or whose husband
is dead or his completely renounced the world or has ceased to be
Hindu or has been declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to
be of unsound mind, to take a son or daughter in adoption. The
consent of father and mother is necessary for giving the child in
adoption unless otherwise.

**The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**

The Dowry Prohibition Act was first legislated in 1961 and
amended in 1984 to make the offence cognizable, to enhance the
penalty both in five and imprisonment and to widen the scope of
the Act to make it more effective. The Act was further amended in
1986 to make the penal provision more effective. The Act was
further amended in 1986 to make the penal provisions more
effective and stringent. A new offence of dowry death has been
included in the Indian Penal Code consequential to the amendment
in the Act.
The Maternity Benefit Act (1961)

This Act is applicable to every establishment, plantation factory of mine and provides for payment of maternity benefit at the rate of average daily wage for the period of women's actual absence.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971

This Act makes it possible to have legal induced abortion by a qualified doctor on humanitarian and medical grounds. This is primarily a welfare measure to protect the health of women, though, it has also a family planning aspect.

The Factories Act, 1976 (As Amended)

This Act provides for establishment of crèche where 30 women are employed (including casual labourers or contract labourers) as against one of every 50 hitherto.

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

This Act provided not only payments of equal wages for same work of a similar nature, but also for a machinery for its implementation and advising the government on measures to ensure increased employment to women.

The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1978

This Act provides minimum age for marriage for girls to 18 years and for boys to 21 years. The offence under this Act has been made cognizable.

The Contract Labour (Regulation) Act, 1978

This Act regulates working conditions of contact labour payment of wages and provides for welfare facilities and crèches for the children of working women engaged in construction work.