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REVIEW ARTICLE

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN: SPECIAL REFERENCES TO MAHILA MANDALS

Impact of Activities of Women: Special References to Mahila Mandals

Ritu Mehla

Research Scholar, Singhania University, Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan)

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times women were given an important place in Indian society. They were treated as Goddess and their presence was essential in family functions especially in Haryana. With the passage of time the status of women in Haryana has been gradually deteriorated. Women especially in rural sector are disorganised resulted in a disadvantaged group despite the glorious tradition of their high status in the family or community. They have been facing discrimination in the male dominated society. The different types of discrimination namely violence at home and in society, sex trafficking, unequal pay and denial of property rights and restrictive customs on account of gender etc. It is important to understand that the only difference between men and women are the gender/biological. All other differences are made socially and sanctioned by the society. Over time it becomes the norm/parampara and the way of life. For example, in some rural as well as in urban areas, it is an accepted fact that:

-A girl child is looked at as a burden upon birth.

-A girl child need not study, but has to learn the household chores and be prepared for marriage.

-A women's place is at home, to give birth to children and to take care of the family. -A women is rarely given the opportunity or encouraged to voice her opinion and/or to make decisions within the family and society with respect to education, financial matters etc.

-Women is paid less than men for the same type and amount of work.

An end to all types of discrimination against women does not mean just improving laws and legislation. More importantly, it calls for changing attitudes within the social, political and economic system. The Government of India declared 2001 as Women's Empowerment Year (WEY) to create and raise large scale awareness of women's issues so that they can take their rightful place in the mainstream of the nation's social, political and economic life and thus to

build an equal and prosperous society in the 20 century.

Women constitute 48.41 % of the total population of the country whereas it is 46.27 % for the Haryana State while 46.44 % of the rural population of Haryana. In rural Haryana they are playing an active role in the household as well as in the farming/non-farming sector. In agriculture, some operations such as transplantation of paddy, cotton picking, weeding and harvesting is mainly done by them. It is a well-known fact that 71 % of the State population live in villages and a State can not achieve the targets fixed for development until the rural women are properly organised and educated. Keeping in view the active participation of the rural women 'Mahila Mandals' were set up in the rural Haryana.

1.2 MAHILA MANDAL:

The Mahila mandals are voluntary organisations of rural women interested in working together with the help of Gram Sevikas, Mukhya Sevikas and Lady Circle Supervisors. Mahila mandal basically aims at empowering rural women and enabling them to reorganise and improve their social and economic status. The purpose of mahila mandal is to initiate and accelerate action to improve access to and control of resources by women. Its objective is also with the active participation and involvement of all women residing in the villages.

This is a plan scheme/programme and has been in operation in Haryana since 1982-83. Earlier, it was implemented by the Development and Panchayat Department, but it was transferred to Women and Child Development Department during 1992 and since then it is under their control. As per the available data, there were 6533 registered mahila mandals spread over in 16 districts during 1992-93, which increased to 6713 during 2003-04. Mahila mandals basically cover four schemes namely i) Promotion and strengthening of mahila mandals, ii) Mahila mandal sammelans, iii) Incentives/Awards to mahila mandals and iv) Inter-State study tours of mahila mandals

1.2.1 PROMOTION & STRENGTHENING OF MAHILA MANDAL SCHEME:

The mahila mandals do work for the promotion of nutrition, education and immunization of children, women crafts center and small saving accounts of women, smokeless chuihas, provision of bathrooms, food storage, balwadies, family welfare etc. A registered mahila mandal has representatives of all classes of societies and their own selected executive committee. The Women & Child Development Department provides cash grant of Rs. 1500/- to the newly registered mahila mandals for providing training to the members, purchase of basic infrastructure items to start some economic activity. A second matching grant of Rs. 750/- can be given to the mahila mandals for some economic activity.

1.2.2 MAHILA MANDAL SAMMELAN SCHEME:

The registered mahila mandals have been involved in various activities but a little opportunity is available to them to exchange their views outside their village. District and State level sammelans are being organised under the scheme for guiding these mahila mandals. Pradhan (President), Secretary and other executive members of the mahila mandals and officers of different departments visit the sammelans for holding discussions on various programmes being carried out by them for the welfare of rural women.

1.2.3 INCENTIVES/AWARDS TO MAHILA MANDALS SCHEME:

The objective of this scheme is to provide incentives and encouragement to the selected mahila mandals for the good work done by them for the society. The incentive is in the form of cash awards of three categories to provide an encouragement for starting economic activities. Under this scheme, every registered mahila mandal in the State has to select 10 projects for promotion of activities of economic welfare in their village. At the end of the year the block level and district level committees assess the work of each mahila mandal. The mahila mandals which perform good results are placed in any of the three categories namely 'A', 'B' or 'C' and be given cash awards of Rs.2000/-, Rs.1500/- and Rs.1000/- respectively through the Bank Draft.

1.2.4 INTER-STATE STUDY TOUR OF MAHILA MANDALS:

Under this scheme, 300 outstanding members of mahila mandals of the State visit different States every year to see the implementation of rural schemes in those States. Basic idea of these visits was to give exposure to the rural ladies of the State so that they can also adopt the useful activities, which came through the inter-State study tours. The duration of each tour does not exceed 10 days and the Government provides grant-in-aid for Railway/Bus

fare. The expenditure on boarding and lodging is to be met by the beneficiaries themselves.

Planning Department had submitted the State's Annual Plan Proposals for 2003-04 to the Planning Commission, Govt. of India for approval. In this regard, the Planning Commission has suggested that "the State Government should evaluate the impact of activities of mahila mandals". Accordingly, on the request of Women and Child Development Department, a decision was taken on 26.6.2003 to conduct an evaluation study on the "Impact of Activities of Mahila Mandals" to assess the impact of the schemes of mahila mandals namely promotion & strengthening of mahila mandals scheme, mahila mandal sammelan scheme, incentives/awards to the mahila mandals scheme and inter-State study tour of mahila mandals scheme.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION STUDY:

The main objectives of the Evaluation Study "Impact of Activities of Mahila Mandals" are as under:

- i) . To study the promotion and strengthening of mahila mandals.
- ii) To assess the awareness among rural women through mahila mandal sammelan scheme.
- iii) To ascertain the incentives/awards given to the mahila mandals.
- iv) To assess the impact of inter-State study tour on mahila mandals.
- v) To identify the bottlenecks/shortcomings faced in the implementation of the scheme and to suggest corrective measures.

1.4 METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE OF THE STUDY:

The study is based on the analysis of primary as well as secondary data both in terms of quality and quantity. The secondary data was collected from the offices of the Director, Women and Child Development Department, Haryana at Chandigarh and the offices of Project Officers, ICDS of Faridabad, Jind, Kurukshetra and Sonapat districts and Statistical Abstracts of Haryana. The primary data was collected from the Pradhan (Secretary), one executive member and 3 non-executive/temporary members of each of the randomly and purposively selected mahila mandals.

Mahila mandals basically cover four schemes i.e. i) Promotion and strengthening of mahila mandals scheme, ii) Mahila mandal sammelans scheme, iii) Incentives/Awards to mahila mandals scheme and iv) Inter-State study tour of mahila mandals scheme. These schemes are being implemented in all the 19

districts of the State. Three stage Multiple Random Sampling Technique was used for sample selection of the evaluation study. First stage was selection of districts, second stage was selection of blocks and third stage was selection of mahila mandals.

1.5 REFERENCE PERIOD:

The requisite secondary data was obtained for a period of three years i.e. 2000- 01, 2001-02 and 2002-03. The primary data was collected from the pradhan (Secretary), one executive member and three non-executive members of the mahila mandals for the same three years as of the secondary data. Thus, the reference period for the sample selection was also from 2000-01 to 2002-03.

1.6 SAMPLING DESIGN:

One district from each of the alphabetically arranged four divisions of the State was randomly selected for the survey. Four selected districts were Faridabad from Gurgaon division, Jind from Hisar division, Kurukshetra from Ambala division and Sonipat from Rohtak division.

Two blocks from each of the selected district taking one block having maximum number of mahila mandals and the second having minimum number of mahila mandals were selected. Eight selected blocks were Palwal & Hodal from Faridabad district, Jind & Alewa from Jind, Thanesar & Babain from Kurukshetra and Gannaur & Kathura from Sonipat district.

To analyse the impact of these schemes on rural women, three mahila mandals were randomly selected from each of the selected blocks. During pre-testing of the survey schedules and sampling it was observed that a few sampled mahila mandals had covered schemes ii), iii) and iv). Therefore, to see the actual impact of these schemes two more mahila mandals from each of the selected blocks were purposively selected. Primary data was collected from one Pradhan, one executive member and three non-executive members of the randomly selected mahila mandals.

Following the above sampling design, 4 Schedule-A were canvassed from four selected districts, 80 Schedule-B were canvassed from 40 Pradhans and 40 executive members of the 40 (24 random and 16 purposively) selected mahila mandals and 120 Schedule-C were canvassed from the non-executive members.

1.7 TOOLS OF THE STUDY:

Three types of schedules were framed for collection of field/district level primary data. Schedule 'A' (Project Schedule) was prepared to canvass from the

Programme Officer, ICDS who was looking after the schemes at district level seeking his/her views regarding implementation of the programme in his/her district. Schedule 'B' (Executive Member's Schedule) was designed to be filled in from the Pradhan and one executive member of the selected mahila mandals. Schedule-C (non-executive member's schedule) was framed to be canvassed from the non- executive members of the mahila mandals. All the three schedules i.e. A, B and C were pre-tested in Kurukshetra district. For Schedule-A, the Programme officer, Kurukshetra and his staff were contacted where as Schedule-B and Schedule-C were filled in from Garhi Brahman and Beed Amin Villages of Kurukshetra district.

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