



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
1999 - 2000

**MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA**

**TOGETHER  
TOWARDS  
FREEDOM  
AND  
DIGNITY...**

**THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA TEAM AT THE NEER MANVI JATHRA :  
CUTTING AT THE ROOTS OF THE DEVADASI SYSTEM**



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SANGHAMITRA

# PREFACE

**G**reetings from Mahila Samakhya, Karnataka for the new millennium.

Important changes have taken place in the MS Karnataka programme in the past year. The strenuous efforts of the previous years are showing results - *sangha* women are meeting regularly at *ghataka* level (*ghataka* is a cluster of 10 MS villages) to share information and plan strategies. Women are taking the responsibility of identifying their problems at *sangha* level, travelling to the *ghataka* meeting despite their heavy work burden and working with women from other *sanghas* in their cluster. At the *sangha* level, women are sharing responsibilities by forming issue-wise committees. Two women committees take up tasks related to each of these issues - *sangha* self-reliance and sustainability, education, health, *panchayat* raj, legal literacy, gender, EDP. The *sanghas* are reaching out to more women in the community and to teenage girls. These efforts are highlighted in chapter 3. *Sangha* women have participated in a big way in the Karnataka *grama panchayat* elections held in February 2000. They have participated as voters, as campaigners, as candidates. They have selected their candidates through *sangha* discussions, interacted with those standing for election, negotiated spaces for themselves as citizens of the country (chapter 5). *Sangha* women are working hard to assist enrolment and retention in schools; they are members of the Village Education Committee in several villages. Their work in this area is highlighted in chapter 4. New initiatives in healthcare training have been taken up. The aim is to build up the skills of the *sangha* health committee members as para medical workers for the village community. These women are taking up a wide range of tasks related to health, hygiene, sanitation... from helping villagers understand the evils of frequent child-bearing to getting the area around the borewell cleaned. As citizens, they are exercising their right to demand accountability from mainstream institutions - the school, the PHC, the *panchayat*. Legal literacy is a new area of work that has been started in the past year in all the districts. The economic activities of the previous years have been further strengthened this year. The little relief that women get by taking up these activities must now be used to address gender and social discrimination issues. Will it help them send their daughters to school? Will they be able to spend more on nutrition and healthcare of their daughters? Working in these directions can result in the *sangha* network becoming a strong and self-reliant forum for women's issues.

The acid test of all our work is our continuous gender audit of the programme. The numerous training initiatives of the the past year have resulted in the development of valuable learner-friendly training modules and resource material on a range of issues. Two special achievements of the past year have been

- ¶ Working with MASS (federation of former *Devadasis*), and an NGO team to prevent *Devadasi* dedication at the Neer Manvi *Jathra*, Manvi taluk, Raichur district.
- ¶ facilitating the formation of an all-women *panchayat* at Athanoor, Afzalpur taluk, Gulbarga district

These achievements of *sangha* women and the MS team have come in the face of tremendous odds. The *sangha* women are dogged at every turn by the patriarchal value system. When poor women question and challenge this system, the backlash is severe. The present phase of the MS, Karnataka programme, which is working hard for the formation of grassroot federations, calls for constant skill building and upgradation in the MS team. This challenge is being met with energy and enthusiasm by the MS(K) team **although its efforts remain unrewarded by improved working conditions**. Consistent efforts need to be put in for the next two or three years to ensure that the MS vision is realised in the older project areas. There is also a pressing need to move into newer project areas. Requests to this effect have come from several non- MS districts.

The present phase of the MS programme ends in March 2002. Proper perspective and yardsticks show that the gains of the MS programme are impressive. The new millennium has brought with it the baggage of the past. Social and cultural inequalities persist, economic hardship and misutilization of resources continue to affect poor rural women in this era of globalisation. Much more needs to be done. The need for the MS programme remains, not just in its present form, but with more reach, coverage and support. The MS Karnataka team did a vision exercise to develop a possible design for Mahila Samakhya in its post 2002 phase (See page 3).

As always, the writing of this report provides an opportunity for the MS team to thank the *sangha* women for sharing their time, experience and wisdom with us. We would like to thank the large number of friends of the programme who have enriched the quality of our work with helpful discussion and dialogue. Especially those who have offered constructive criticism of our work- they have helped us remould our work so that it is more effective. We also thank the other variety of critics- they remind us that there are those who will constantly undervalue what women do. They also remind us that the work we are doing is necessary and important for social justice.

  
*Revathi Narayanan*  
State Programme Director.

## 2. MAHILA SAMAKHYA : THE FUTURE, THE PRESENT

### THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME - VISION 2002

Mahila Samakhya (MS) will work from a position of strength in 2002. The unique process oriented approach of MS has helped to develop effective field strategies in its first decade. These can be used to advantage in the next phase. The “unique selling points” of the MS programme are the following:

- Important lessons in mobilisation of poor women have been learnt in MS which must be used to achieve social and economic justice.
- The MS process where successful remains unique in its ability to form effective and sustainable collectives of poor women. The ‘microcredit’ approach to forming collectives is being adopted all over the world. But its ability to bring about social change is still to be established.
- There is a persistent and ever increasing demand for the training and mobilising skills used by MS. The programme can function as training and resource support to Government and Non government agencies. MS has built up a resource pool that can be used for gender and community participation training.

The next phase of the programme needs to be designed in a way that retains its flexibility. Accountability mechanisms, constant skill upgradation and better work conditions can be built into the design.

#### **Developing a project design for the post 2002 phase :**

The Mahila Samakhya team carried out a vision exercise which was shared with several present and past members of the Executive Committee and the National Resource Group. A summary is presented here.

	<b>A</b>	<b>Proposed stage in March 2002 B</b>	<b>After March 2002 C</b>
I	Older project areas (old taluks in older districts) where work has been going on for 5 years and more	Loose networks of sanghas at cluster and taluk level. Initial levels of expertise in various issues in sangha committee members.	Strengthening of sangha networks and federations, training and resource input from MS. DIU functions moves to facilitative from proactive role. It functions as training and resource support for the women's federation (eg. Bidar, Bijapur, Mysore, Gulbarga, Raichur, Koppal)
II	Newer project areas in old and new districts (those where MS has started work since 1996)	More work by MS necessary to reach stage IB.	Direct MS intervention until federations are stable - will be faster and more effective since it will use the lessons learnt in the older project areas. (Eg. Bellary district, Manvi taluk, Raichur district)
III.	Older districts, new taluks	—	Identification of areas and spread of MS programme to achieve "critical mass" for collective action. Work will be taken up with substantial participation of sangha federation. Training and resource support from MS. Older sanghas will play a big role in this process.
IV.	New districts, new taluks	—	Direct MS intervention - will be faster and more effective since it will use the lessons learnt in the older project areas.

## STATISTICAL PROFILE

SL. NO	WE ARE IN...	BELLARY	BIDAR	BIJAPUR	GULBARGA	KOPPAL	MYSORE	RAICHUR	TOTAL
1	No. of Taluks	3	5	6	6	4	6	3	33
2	No. of villages	110	217	199	160	140	186	70	1082
3	No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	50	217	199	167	140	186	44	1010
4	No of <i>sangha</i> Huts	-	107	39	70	48	-	10	274

Facts and figures for each issue are presented in the relevant chapters of this report.

## OUR DOCUMENTATION IN 1999-2000

### REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

#### 1. SAKSHARA SANGATI

A three part record of the experiences of sangha women with literacy

- \* Literacy experiences and experiments with sangha women in Bidar district
- \* Learner friendly methodologies in the literacy camps
- \* Working with adolescent girls (in process)

#### 2. "SUGGI" The Harvest - District Level Mela Report (22/2/1999 to 24/3/99)

This is the detailed report, in 5 parts, of the district level melas of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka held in February - March 1999. The first section describes the preparation and arrangements for the melas. This is followed by details of each subtheme including a training module - Sangha Self-reliance and Sustainability, Gender, Women in Panchayat Raj, Legal Literacy.

#### 3. Hosilu Datuva Hejjegalu - A handbook for Gender trainers developed from the experiences of sangha women (English translation)



## **TRAINING MODULES**

Training modules on Sangha Self-reliance and Sustainability, Panchayat Raj, Gender, Legal Literacy developed for the sangha women and field-tested with 1800 sangha women from the seven MS districts. Materials are learner-friendly, a large number of methods-songs, roleplays, games and so on have been used. The special feature of these modules is that they can be used for groups as large as 100-120 women.

A literacy training module has been developed based on the experiences in the literacy camps.

## **NEWSLETTERS AND BROCHURES**

### **1. SANCHARI ( 7 issues - October'99 to March 2000)**

A monthly newsletter which acts as listening post and forum for sharing information. Contains case studies, statistics, novel presentations of gender issues, ideas that can be used during interactions with the sangha women, articles in simple Kannada that women can read.

### **2. Brochure : An updated brochure of Mahila Samakhya 1999 (English and Kannada)**

## **RESEARCH PAPERS**

**Grassroots, Gender and Governance - Panchayat Raj experiences from Mahila Samakhya Karnataka.**

## **PHOTO DOCUMENTATION**

**Profiles in courage series : Case studies of sangha women with photographs - March 2000**

In addition, a large amount of training and resource material in the form of songs, roleplays, posters, banners and so on have been developed in the last year.

### 3. SANGHA SELF-RELIANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

**SANGHA WOMEN TAKE THE LEAD IN THE EMPOWERMENT PROCESS : BUILDING UP THE SANGHA AS A STRONG, SELF-RELIANT AND GENDER SENSITIVE COLLECTIVE OF WOMEN:**

*“In the old days, only one or two of us used to go for meetings outside the village... now each of us has some important sangha work to do”* sangha women on the formation of issue-wise committees at sangha level.

It was clear to the MS Karnataka [MS (K)] team by the end of 1998, that a major change in programme strategy was needed to ensure the necessary interventions in ALL the sanghas. At that point, sangha strengths remained patchy --- some sanghas were very strong and some were weak despite great effort being put in. Was there a way to create a broad-based understanding in all the MS sanghas on self-reliance and sustainability? Was there a way by which all the sanghas could be involved in similar trainings on the core issues of the Mahila Samakhya goals and objectives? As in any field based process, conceptual clarity often gets blurred because of various pulls and pressures.

Critical questions that needed to be addressed at this point were

What did we mean by sangha sustainability and self-reliance? In this framework, what was the role of sangha and the role of MS(K) ?

► How could we ensure a gender perspective to all our concepts and action in the field ?

In response to this need, District level *Mahiti Melas* were held in February - March 1999. Two or three women each from 850 sanghas in the seven Mahila Samakhya districts attended the melas and participated in discussions on Sangha Self-Reliance and sustainability, *Panchayat Raj*, Gender and Legal Literacy. (See Annual Report of MS(K) 98-99, PP 25-35).

Many women attending the *Melas* voiced the following opinion.

*“Why can’t we have such melas for all the women in our sanghas, not just for the two of us. Our sangha can do much more work then”*

Initially, this seemed like a daunting task - holding melas in each one of the 100 *ghatakas* (clusters)! However, we realised that the MS team had, by then, built up several strengths. Resource teams had been created for four issues during the district melas - Sangha Self-Reliance, Gender, Legal Literacy and *Panchayat Raj*. These state level resource teams had fine-tuned their training skills, as well as the session content, over 16 district *mela* sessions. The subject modules and training methodology had been tested, received feedback from 1800 sangha women in 16 sessions. They had been modified and finalised after all this experience. Effective learner-friendly methodologies had

been devised. The contents had been successfully communicated to large groups of 120 members. The state teams had members from all the districts and consisted of 8-10 members. This meant that there were at least one or two team members in every district who could act as core trainers for new district teams for the *ghataka melas*. Materials - songs, role plays, games, posters, stories - were ready and only had to be replicated for use in each district. Details of *ghataka melas* are given in Table - 3.1 (see page 12).

**TOUCHING BASE WITH THE MS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: THE SANGHA AS A STRONG AND SELF-RELIANT COLLECTIVE WITH A CLEAR AND BROAD-BASED PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER ISSUES.**

During the *ghataka melas*, which were attended by a large number of women from each *sangha*, issue-wise committees were formed. It was decided that two or three *sangha* women would take up *sangha* work related to each of the following issues - *sangha* self-reliance and sustainability, education, health, *panchayat raj*, economic development programmes, legal issues, gender issues. Through this process, the programme gained in the following ways.

- \* The sense of ownership of *sangha* processes and the Mahila Samakhya processes is strengthened.
- \* Responsibility is not concentrated in the hands of a few women but is dispersed over a much larger group.
- \* Collective decision-making and collective action processes and strengthened.
- \* The skills and the knowledge base of the *sangha* is enhanced.

- \* Each *sangha* is able to take up more issues which enhances its image as a forum for women's issues.
- \* The trainings and various kinds of skill building taken up by MS becomes more focused and better linked to action in the field. Details of issue-wise committees are given in Table - 3.2 ( see page 13).

At the *ghataka melas*; the sessions were simplified to some degree and linked to simple, 'do-able' action points for each issue. The action points were decided upon after discussions with *sangha* women. These were such as could be taken up immediately by them. These action points on each issue enhanced the status of the *sangha* as a forum for women's concerns. They addressed immediate concerns of the women and the community. It was vital that the action points gave women a sense of self-esteem, control over their lives and empowerment. We realised that giving the *sangha* women (and ourselves) large and daunting tasks led to a feeling of helplessness and disempowerment. Could these large agendas be broken down into smaller 'bytes' that were easy to handle? This is what we set out to do in the *ghataka melas*.

Another important gain was that the *ghataka melas* proved to be a reliable way of assessing *sangha* strength in terms of a few simple parameters.

1. Number of members of each *sangha* who attended the *ghataka melas*.
2. Receptiveness to the training inputs.
3. Receptiveness of *sangha* members to the idea of issue-wise committees.
4. Willingness and ability to take up tasks based on the action points.

Setting up the committees and chalking out an action plan was only one part of the story. Follow-up and regular interactions were essential for the success of this plan. This has been taken up in regular *sabhas* at *Ghataka* and taluk level. Details are given in Table- 3.3 (page 13). The *ghataka sabhas* have been taking place regularly in all the districts. The work of the various committees is reviewed in these meetings by *sangha* women and the MS team. Problems at *sangha* level are shared. Women who have successfully tackled similar problems share their strategies with the group. If a particular *sangha* needs additional inputs and support, women decide how to go about it in the *ghataka* and taluk meetings.

Another important feature is that women and the *sanghas* bear more than half the cost of the *ghataka sabhas*. More and more, these are becoming meetings arranged by *sangha* women. The MS role is more of facilitation and much less of direct intervention. The increased feeling of empowerment is palpable.

#### **INCREASING THE REACH OF THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME : SANGHA WOMEN WORK FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND SANGHA SUSTAINABILITY.**

Two to three women in each *sangha* from the SSR committee.

- \* Making sure that *ghataka sabhas* are held regularly.

**Among their tasks (based on action points of the SSR session at the *ghataka mela*) are the following:**

- \* Motivating more women to join the *sanghas*
- \* Facilitating the formation of new *sanghas*
- \* Strengthening weak *sanghas* (Their own *sangha* or other *sanghas* in the cluster)
- \* Ensuring proper documentation of *sangha* processes.

**Table - 3.4** (page 14) highlight the efforts put in by women.

Literacy at *sangha* level continues to be stumbling block. Women are making valiant efforts to learn to read and write. In the meanwhile, they take care of *sangha* documentation in various ways a) by persuading literate women and teenage girls to join the *sangha*. b) documentation is carried out by the relatives of the *sangha* women c) starting a *kishori sangha* so that young girls can help with *sangha* documentations. The *sangha* women, in turn, give the adolescent girls inputs on gender, health and other issues.

A lot of discussion has taken place on the size of the *sangha*. In many *sanghas*, women expressed the opinion that it was easier to work in a small and cohesive group. However to make some kind of impact on the community, a group of about 25-30 would be necessary, it was felt.



*Women of the Masibanaal sangha, Mudhebbal taluk, Bijapur district had been promised by an official that the PWD office would get their sangha mane exterior plastered. However, before this could be implemented, the official was transferred. Although the decision to help the sangha had been put down on file, the new official kept on delaying the work. Tired of making repeated requests, the women decided to stage a dharna outside the BDO office where the PWD office was located. Women from Yevangi and Hanchanaal villages happened to visit the BDO's office for some other purpose. There was a new sangha in Yevangi. However in Hanchanaal the sangha had run into problems because of the caste factor.*

*There was a long discussion outside the BDO office with the Masibanaal sangha women on the changes that the sangha had brought to their lives. The result... the Masibanaal sangha mane was plastered by the PWD, the new Yevangi sangha was inspired and became stronger. In Hanchanaal, women decided to bypass the stumbling block of caste, and start a new sangha.*

### **Maintaining their own documents**

Increasingly women are realising the importance of maintaining their own documents and how this is related to empowerment. Added impetus has been given to this process because it is one of the main criteria for loans from financial institutions. (See table 3.5 on page 14) Women try to maintain records, or arrange for local help.

In the remaining *sanghas*, *sahayoginis* take on most of the documentation responsibility. However, the situation is changing in these *sanghas* and women are trying to be independent.

### **REACHING OUT TO THE YOUNGER GENERATION - WORKING WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

During the past year there has been a concerted effort to reach out to adolescent girls in the *sangha* villages. The details given in Table - 3.6 (See page 15).

Further, a conscious effort is being made to include young girls in workshops on health, gender and so on. As mentioned earlier, young girls who have some formal education, help out with *sangha* documentation. Those who have attended the health camp in Koppal district have been successful in stopping menarche rituals and child marriage in their villages.

### **THE SANGHA AS A PRESSURE GROUP**

*The Buknatti sangha women in Yalburga taluk of Koppal district have waged a year long struggle for justice. The sangha was started by 17 sangha women in 1998. Among the members were two women married to a man called Sharanappa. Since most of the women were illiterate, Sharanappa handled the sangha documents. About a year ago, Sharanappa offered to help the group to get loans through the DWCRA scheme. Forms were filled up and applications made by this man on behalf of the women. To their surprise, a few weeks later women received letters asking them to start repaying the loan. They had however not received any money. Suspecting some foul play, the women went in search of Sharanappa only to find that he had vanished from the village. The women then went to the CDPO's office and caught hold of the gram sevaki who worked in their village. The latter revealed that Sharanappa and the CDPO were hand in glove and had misappropriated the money. The women found out that Sharanappa had gone to his wife's village in Kushtagi taluk. A group of them went there. By this time the women had informed the MS team about the incident and requested them to accompany the group to Kushtagi. They confronted Sharanappa in front of some of the villagers and questioned him about his misdeeds. He tried to tell them that they could not touch him because he had the protection of the CDPO. After a lot of argument and shouting, he had to acknowledge his guilt and agree to return the money. Once he had confessed, the CDPO also had to return the money. Sharanappa had to sell his fields and return the money. The women finally got the loan and started the sheep rearing activity that they had planned a year ago.*

Table - 3.1 : gives a picture of the *ghataka melas* and the tremendous effort put in by the MS (K) team<sup>\*a</sup>, <sup>\*b</sup>.

### GHATAKA (CLUSTER) LEVEL MELAS

District	No. of clusters	No.of melas	Date	Participants
Bellary	5	5	June'99 to Jan 2000	550
Bidar	20	16	-''-	2720
Bijapur	20	18	-''-	2952
Gulbarga	17	17	-''-	2550
Koppal	14	14	-''-	1624
Raichur	6	6	-''-	1080
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>76</b>		<b>11476</b>

<sup>\*a</sup> "Mop-up" melas were held for women who could not attend because of family problems, bad weather - women from Bijapur could not reach the *mela* venue because of heavy rain.

<sup>\*b</sup> *Ghataka melas* in Mysore were postponed to 2000 - 2001 because more preparation was needed.

**Table - 3.2 : Issue - based sangha committees**

District	Total No. of sanghas	SSR		Panchayat Raj		Gender		Health		Literacy		Legal Literacy		EDP		No. of sanghas where committees have not been formed
		①	②	①	②	①	②	①	②	①	②	①	②	①	②	
Bellary	50	35	70	35	70	35	70	35	70	35	70	35	70	35	70	15
Bidar	217	183	365	183	366	183	370	183	353	183	370	183	370	183	303	34
Bijapur	199	192	368	192	370	-	-	192	362	192	361	192	350	192	362	7
Gulbarga	167	124	314	124	299	124	289	124	288	124	280	124	287	124	233	43
Koppal	140	106	324	106	310	106	300	106	293	106	303	**		106	311	34
Mysore	186	100	200	-	-	-	-	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	86
Raichur	51	29	62	29	61	29	62	29	58	29	68	29	63	29	64	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>1010</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>1703</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>1476</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>1091</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>1624</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>1652</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>1340</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>1543</b>	<b>241</b>

**Table - 3.3 : Details of ghataka, taluk and district level meetings**

SLNo.	District	No. of Ghatakas	Total No. of Ghataka Sabhas	No. of taluka Mahasabhe	No. of District Mahasabhe
1	Bellary	5	27	-	-
2	Bidar	20	114	5	-
3	Bijapur	20	90	24	-
4	Gulbarga	17	41	2	-
5	Koppal	14	50	-	-
6	Mysore	18 Cluster 2 taluk <sup>o</sup>	45 Only in Nanjangud, Chamrajnagar, HD Kote, Kollegal	17	2
7	Raichur	6	21	3	-
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 3.2 <sup>o</sup> No. of sanghas where committees are formed, <sup>o</sup> No. of committee members

\*\* Gender and Legal literacy committees are one and the same.

Table 3.3 <sup>o</sup> In Periyapatna and Hunsur taluk of Mysore district, no cluster level meetings are held; instead taluk level meetings are held



**Table - 3.4 :** records the work done by *sangha* women in the various districts during the last year to strengthen the *sanghas* (New *sanghas* are told very clearly that they will get “*Mahiti*” but no “facilities” when they form the *sangha*)

Sl.No.	District	Increased strength of the <i>sanghas</i>		No. of new <i>Sanghas</i> formed*	Weak <i>sanghas</i> that have been rejuvenated by the women from strong <i>sanghas</i>
		No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	No. of Women		
1	Bellary	4	32	4	2
2	Bidar	64	206	20	8
3	Bijapur	33	165	5	10
4	Gulbarga	18	125	4	8
5	Koppal	2	30	4	13
6	Mysore	4	80	11	50
7	Raichur	7	101	8	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>93</b>

**Table - 3.5 :** Women take the responsibility for *sangha* documentation

District	Women	Others
Bellary	6	6
Bidar	20	115
Bijapur	25	13
Gulbarga	7	38
Koppal	15	29
Mysore	15	85
Raichur	5	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>310</b>

**Table - 3.6 :** Details of *Kishoris sanghas*

Table 3.4 \* These fall into two categories- women from strong *sanghas* have persuaded other women to form new *sanghas* in new villages, groups of women have experienced or heard about the Mahila Samakhya processes and written to the District Implementation office asking for inputs and trainings.

SL.No.	District	No.of villages	No.of members in <i>Kishori Sanghas</i>	Kishori camps/ other trainings
1	Bellary	7	70	3 camps Literacy, Gender, Health, Social issues
2	Gulbarga	5	57	2 camps 1. Tailoring training 2. Tailoring and Embroidery
3	Raichur	13	126	Informal meetings and discussions on gender and empowerment issues
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>5 camps</b>

*Kishori sanghas* have been formed in H.Veerapura, Gangammahalli, Kalkamba, Palyanakote, K.Veerapura, Lingadevanahalli, Nadumavinahalli in Bellary district ; Bellur, Aurad, Athanoor, Suliepet, Thugoa in Gulbarga district, Masarkal, Chintbalagunda, Shivangi, Dharmanathanda, Musutur, Hunagundhabada, Kurkundha, Patakanadhoddi, Mallat, Hosapet, Nugdonicamp, Merched, Ekklaspura in Raichur district.



## 4. EDUCATE, ENLIGHTEN, EMPOWER...

### THE *SANGHA* EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Two or three women from each *sangha* take up tasks related to education, literacy and documentation. They constitute the *sangha* '*shikshana*' committee. *Sangha* women have to tackle a wide range of problems- their own literacy levels, sending their children, particularly daughters, to school, helping to enrol and retain them in school by interacting with the school management and the community. These activities represent important social changes at personal and community levels.

For example, *sangha* women have become members of the Village Education Committee (VEC) set up under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) programme. The VEC acts as a support and accountability

mechanism for the village school. It acts as a link between the school and the community. (See Table- 4.1 on page 19).

- Other than their membership in the VEC, *sangha* women (Education committee members) visit the village schools to find out how children, particularly girls, from the poorer communities, are coping in school. They discuss problems that are being faced by students and teachers.

This is, in itself, the beginning of an important social change when poor women raise questions and demand accountability from mainstream institutions. The school master who is usually a 'power' in the village, is often outraged when poor women question him or ask for information about the school. Women have to tackle such hostility and negotiate this space for themselves so that they are recognised as members of the community. [See table 4.2 on page 19]

### ☒ LOCAL RESOURCES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

*Women of the Dothihaal sangha, Kustagi taluk , Koppal zilla found that the cooks and helpers in the SC -ST hostel were from other villages. They requested their superintendent to give an opportunity to the local people. They were promised that this would happen as soon as a vacancy arose. Women were aware that for certain positions, suitable local persons had preference over outsiders. However whenever there was a vacancy, their claims were ignored. They took the matter upto the taluk office but did not get any response. Agitated by the callous attitude of the officials, the sangha women went early one morning and locked the premises. To make sure that the children in the hostel did not suffer, women got provisions and utensils and cooked food for the children. After sometime the superintendent was forced to come to the spot and discuss the matter with women. After a lot of discussion, he finally accepted their demands in writing. For the past seven months, Kariamamma from Dothihaal village is working as a cook in the hostel. The sangha women are proud of their achievement. "We have got justice for people of our village."*

During the past year *sangha* women have worked hard to enrol children from the NFEs, Creches and from the community in schools. Table - 4.3 (on page 20) gives the picture of these effects.

The problems related to enrolment continued to plague poor rural families. Poverty and consequently child labour, sibling care – these continue to be the main reasons for poor enrolment and retention. *Sangha* women are trying hard to tackle these problems but it remains a daunting task.

#### Improving literacy and numeracy at *sangha* level

Women realise that for the *sangha* to be recognised by the community, they must have basic literacy and numeracy skills, maintain their own documents (See Table 3.5 from SSR Chapter)

#### Several strategies are being tried in parallel.

- ✓ Women and adolescent girls are being trained in residential literacy camps.
- ✓ During any MS training, some time is devoted to helping women recognise and write alphabets and words related to the particular issue.
- ✓ Some *sahayoginis* are devoting time in their villages to teaching a few *sangha* women to read and write.
- ✓ Education committee *sangha* women train the other *sangha* women after they have learned something new in the training.
- ✓ Some *sanghas* have arranged for a teacher in their village ; often they take the help of adolescent girls who have gone to school.
- ✓ *Sangha* women who have basic literacy and numeracy capabilities are being trained to handle *sangha* documentation

### **POSESSED BY LITERACY DEVIL**

*Neelamma belongs to Navachetana sangha, Aurad taluk, Bidar district. The 15 day literacy camp which she attended made a great impact on her.*

*She told her husband "I shall do the household work, you please look after the farm work for a couple of days". Neelamma's husband was very supportive and cooperative. He helped her with the domestic work as well as the daily wage work while she explored her new found world of literacy. Neelamma, who couldn't stand looking at the alphabets, fell in love with them. She could be found writing her precious alphabets on every available surface at any time of the day! She began writing on rice and grains, on all the vessels. Even the cowdung spread out for drying became a surface to practice the alphabets. Such was her obsession that people began saying "she is not well, it is better to take her to a doctor... she is possessed by an evil spirit". To this Neelamma replied "this is not just any devil, this is the literacy devil".*

*By the end of three months Neelamma could write her own name, the names of her village and taluk and those of other women. She is now able to maintain the sangha documents. Since she can do simple arithmetic, she can handle bank transactions. "The literacy devil" has changed her life!*

**Table - 4.1 : Sangha Women as members of the Village Education Committee**

Sl. No.	District	No. of Sanghas/villages	No. of women who are VEC members
1	Bellary	5	5
2	Bidar	11	11
3	Bijapur	26	41
4	Gulbarga	2	2
5	Koppal	44	73
6	Mysore	2	2
7	Raichur	20	41
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>175</b>

**Table - 4.2 : Sanghas that have visited schools to collect information**

SL. No	District	Sanghas	No. of women
1	Bellary	9	36
2	Bidar	63	63
3	Bijapur	66	180
4	Gulbarga	17	34
5	Koppal	50	50
6	Mysore	-	-
7	Raichur	20	40
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>403</b>

**Table - 4.3 : School Enrolment Table (1999-2000)**

District	No. of Villages	From NFE		From Creche		Community		Total
		Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
Bellary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bidar	18	8	7	-	-	20	17	52
Bijapur	12	5	11	33	25	-	-	74
Gulbarga	13	7	7	20	17	10	-	61
Koppal	34	-	-	-	-	654	540	1194
Mysore	16	12	7	14	12	-	-	45
Raichur	22	-	-	-	-	33	32	65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>1491</b>



## 5. SANGHA WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

*“Once she (the sangha woman) loses the elections, everyone loses heart. What else can we do?”*

This remark during an MS team meeting in Bijapur led to a great deal of discussion and an important change in programme strategy. Elections and contesting them was only one part of the story. *Sangha* women could play many more roles. The diagram on the facing page summarises these roles. For several years, women activists have seen the entry of women into political decision-making as the principal way of tackling women's subordination. Thus the political role of the *sangha* is the core of the MS empowerment vision.

Strengthening the wider political roles of the *sangha* women via the *gram panchayats* has been the major achievement of the MS programme during the last year. The experience of the *sangha* women during the *gram panchayat* term from 1993 to 1998 showed that the *sangha* had a key role to play in the effective participation of women in *panchayat raj*.

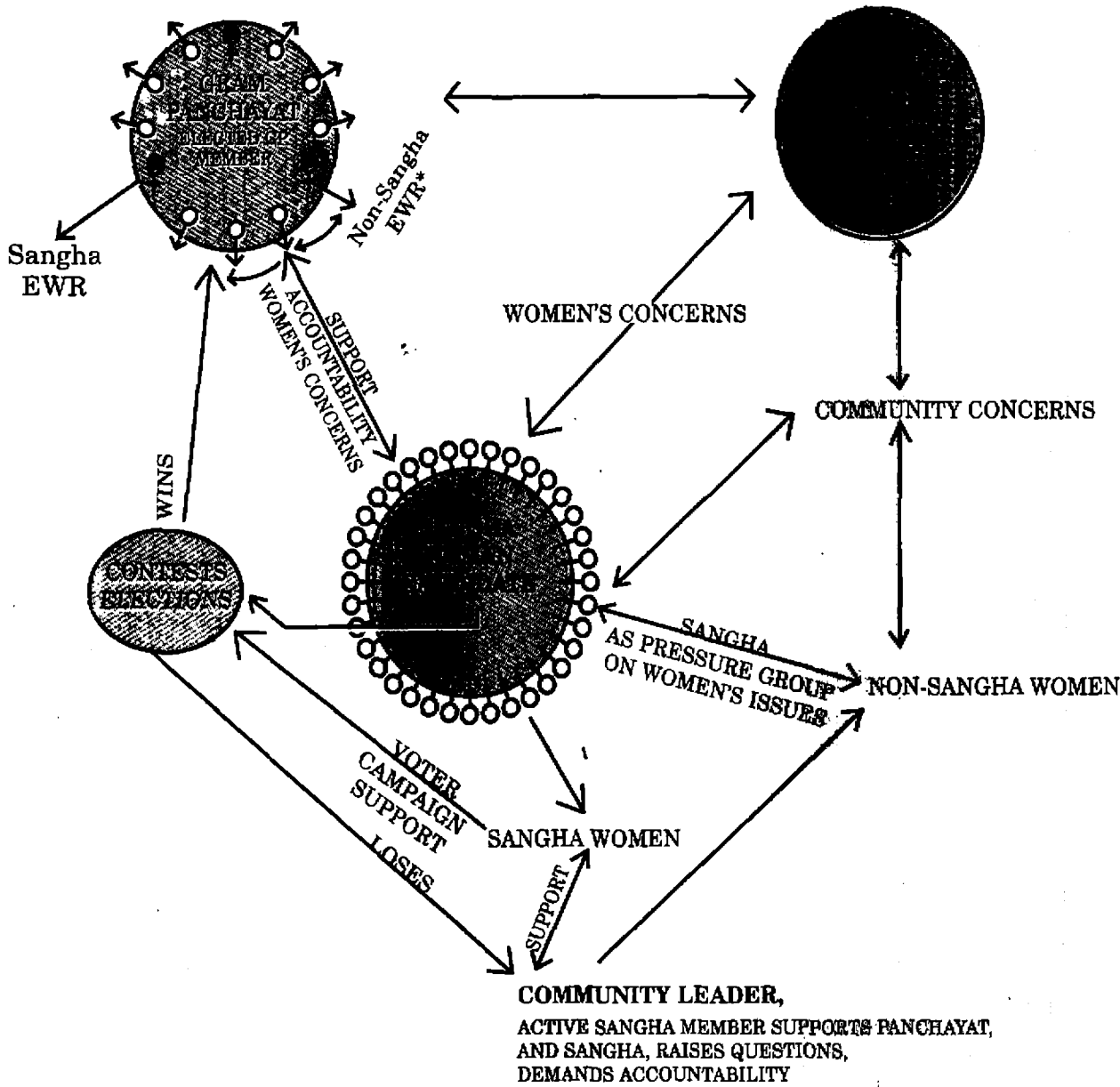
As shown in the diagram on page 22, contesting elections form only one part of the political roles played by *sangha* women. Some of the other roles are the following:

\* The *sangha* women play a crucial role in selecting and campaigning for the *sangha* woman candidate.

- \* In the run-up to the elections, the candidate becomes known through the work that the *sangha* has done for the village and the community. If she wins, the *sangha* becomes a support and accountability mechanism for the candidate.
- \* Through constant interaction with the *sangha*, the elected women representative (EWR) is able to bring the concerns of the poor woman on to the *panchayat* agenda.
- \* If she loses, she can still become a community leader and support the woman members in the *panchayat*. Her participation in the election process helps the *sangha* to project her as a community leader.
- \* The election process helps to involve non *sangha* women in *sangha* activities.
- \* It is always easier for the *sangha* women to contest from the SC women reserved seats. If the reservation does not allow for this, *sangha* women adopt the strategy of involving the non *sangha* elected women representatives from other communities in *sangha* discussions and activities.
- \* In some cases, the non *sangha* elected women representative, who is isolated in the *panchayats*, becomes a member of the MS *sangha*.
- \* Irrespective of electoral results, *sangha* members are active in the *panchayat* as well as in the *gram sabha*.



# POLITICAL ROLES OF SANGHA WOMEN



\*EWR - ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE

Some *sanghas* were carrying out some of the activities shown in diagram on page 22. The important change made was in understanding these tasks in terms of what *sangha* women could do to bring a gender perspective to governance. These roles were further broken down as action points and incorporated into the training programmes at the *ghataka melas*.

There were important political events in Karnataka in 1999-2000. The *gram panchayat* elections were announced in April'99 but were finally held only in February 2000. General elections to the state legislature and the Parliament were held in September'99. This gave the *sangha* women an important opportunity to put their learning into practice. Table - 5.1 (On Page 26 ) shows the effort by *sangha* women to put names on the voter's list. This was an action point in the *panchayat raj* training. Women realised that because the names of eligible voters from the poorer sections were often not on the voter's list, candidates from their community lost several possible votes. *Sangha* women also make sure that those who had migrated for work came back on election day to cast their votes. The *sangha* became an important forum for raising women's issue with the candidates. Table -5.2 (On Page 27) shows the active role played by many *sanghas* during the *gram panchayat* elections:



*Sangha Women work as a Pressure Group during the elections*

*Sangha worked as pressure group for women's issue during their general elections in September'99. Women of Somasagara sangha, Gangavathi taluk in Koppal district had discussions with candidates from three national level parties seeking their votes. "What will you do for our sangha if we vote for you?" One candidate gave a contribution to the sangha fund, while another donated 50 bags of cement to the sangha. When asked what they did with the 50 bags, Neelamma of Somasagara sangha said "We divided the cement in three portions. One was used to repair the temple, another to repair the mosque and the third was used for our sangha mane".*

*When we asked " And who did you vote for finally?"*

*"Why should we tell you? After all our vote is supposed to be secret"! was their reply*

*This episode shows how far sangha women have travelled on the road to empowerment.*

*Sangha* women interact constantly with the *gram panchayat* and have participated in the *gram sabhas* whenever they are held. (Details in Table -5.3 on page 27)

#### ***Sangha* women as candidates and elected representatives**

Table - 5.4 (on page 28). shows how many women contested and how many won in the *gram panchayat* elections. Although the number of *sangha* women elected to the *panchayat* has not gone up dramatically in comparison to the 1993 *gram panchayat* elections, the quality of participation in the electoral process has been very different. A high degree of political awareness and concern for women's issues has marked the participation of the *sangha* women in the elections. Further, in comparison with the 1993 *gram panchayat* elections, the community in general has been far more under the influence of political parties. It has been a struggle for women and weaker sections to make their voices heard. Money and muscle power during elections have permeated to the village level. In spite of this environment, *sanghas* have been able to participate in a big way. However, with the positives, certain negative trends can be seen. This is to be expected given the corrupt state of mainstream politics

In spite of the active role played by the *sanghas*, a few women candidates have been intimidated or cheated into withdrawing their nominations. Details are given in Table - 5.4. Several

reasons have emerged for withdrawing the nominations. In the Nadumavinahalli *sangha*, Kudligi taluk, Bellary district, Hanumakka was pressured by her son-in-law to withdraw. In Chandranpalli of Chincholi taluk, Gulbarga district, Budihalla, Sindagi taluk, Devaranebargi, Indi taluk of Bijapur District women were persuaded to withdraw their nominations with promises of seats during the taluk *panchayat* elections. In Nikodi village of Manvi taluk, Raichur district Sharadamma who had a small tea stall withdrew her nomination when the village *gowdas* threatened to burn down her hotel. In some cases, candidates withdraw because of lack of *sangha* support. This was because they had not worked effectively as *panchayat* members in the past.

Table - 5.5 (see page 28) gives details of the reservation of seats contested by *sangha* women. The interesting insights are...

- A few women have contested and won from general seats against male candidates.
- Very few former members have contested and been reelected. This is mainly because of the reservation roster.
- Several women have been elected without a contest.
- Discussions with the community revealed that the public at large is tired of the election environment and does not mind a consensus candidate.

## THE ATHANOOR ALL WOMEN PANCHAYAT

One of the most interesting efforts of MS Karnataka in the past year has been our work for the formation of an all-women panchayat



*“Why political power for the hands that clean the Thogari Bele\* ?”*

*The all women panchayats of Maharashtra were discussed with Gulbarga sangha women during the ghataka melas. Women were enthusiastic about the idea. The Gulbarga Mahila Samakhya team worked hard to facilitate the formation of all women panchayats in Athanoor in Afzalpur taluk and Madbol in Chitapur taluk. In Athanoor, the three women members of earlier panchayat had never stepped into the panchayat office during their tenure because of strong gender bias of the community and other panchayat members. Registers were sent for their signature to the local temple. The atmosphere was politically highly charged when MS Gulbarga started the campaign. They talked to the leaders of the different communities and it was decided that all communities would put up candidates. It was decided in the gram sabha that families without political connections would be given a chance first. It was also decided that the women members would be persuaded to contest again.*

*As expected there was fierce opposition from several quarters.*

- *How can women contest from men's seats? Show me the law that says that you can have an all women panchayat.*
- *How can illiterate woman manage the panchayat ?*
- *You have cast us out of the sangha, now you want to throw us out of the panchayat also.*

*The team focused on persuading the community to put up women candidates and requesting the men to withdraw their nominations, informed the Zilla Parishat and the EO of the taluk, collected the gazette notification on seat allocation, talked to prominent political personalities in the area. Finally the effort was successful in Athanoor where a 16 member all women panchayat was elected uncontested. However efforts were not successful in Madbol.*

*Interesting changes can be seen in the Athanoor panchayat members and the community. Caste barriers have weakened as all 16 women are very keen to work effectively in the panchayat. The community reactions tell a story of their own. “We were so busy talking about this brand new idea of the all women panchayat that arrack did not flow during these elections.*

\* Thogari Bele Thuvar daal : Toor daal

**Table - 5.1 : Sangha women work towards including the names of legitimate voters in the voters' list**

**Total names which are included in voters' list recently**

<b>Sl.No.</b>	<b>Name of the District</b>	<b>No. of villages</b>	<b>No. of names added to voters' list</b>
1	Bellary	5	70
2	Bidar	70	397
3	Bijapur	76	374
4	Gulbarga	38	80
5	Koppal	8	8
6	Mysore	5	-
7	Raichur	11	20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>949</b>

**Table - 5.2 : Sangha women participate in electoral processes**

No. of *sangha* women who have a) worked as pressure group b) helped others to vote c) involved in campaigning d) discussed issues with contestants

Sl.No.	Name of the District	(a)	(b)		(c)	(d)
			G/P	MP/MLA		
1	Bellary	8	5	-	5	3
2	Bidar	63	31	-	33	36
3	Bijapur	22	42	43	39	38
4	Gulbarga	152	88	8	100	13
5	Koppal	53	8	4	53	26
6	Mysore	1	-	-	37	6
7	Raichur	10	10	1	15	11
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>133</b>

**Table - 5.3 : Sangha women work as a Pressure Group after the elections**

Visit to *Gram Panchayat* to get information and the support for their *sanghas*

Sl.No.	Name of the District	<i>Sanghas</i> that have visited <i>panchayat</i> for information and support	<i>Sanghas</i> that have participated in the <i>gram sabha</i>
1	Bellary	12	1
2	Bidar	36	96
3	Bijapur	36	66
4	Gulbarga	98	57
5	Koppal	102	5
6	Mysore	8	-
7	Raichur	16	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>230</b>

**Table - 5.4 : Sangha women contest the gram panchayat elections of February 2000**

Sl. No.	District Name	No. of women filed nomination			Nominations (withdrawn, Rejected, Cheated)				Won			Lost		
		Ex	New	Total	With drawn	Rejected	Cheated	Total	Ex	New	Total	Ex	New	Total
1	Bellary	-	14	14	-	2	1	3	-	1	1	-	10	10
2	Bidar	-	84	84	-	2	7	9	-	45	45	-	30	30
3	Bijapur	3	100	103	1	12	-	13	3	60	63	-	27	27
4	Gulbarga	3	95	98	1	2	3	6	3	40	43	-	49	49
5	Koppal	2	54	56	-	3	-	3	-	30	30	-	23	23
6	Mysore	8	44	52	1	-	1	2	3	23	26	7	17	24
7	Raichur	1	34	35	2	-	3	5	-	17	17	-	13	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>176</b>

Of the 225 women who won the elections, 145 won through a contest while 80 were elected unopposed.

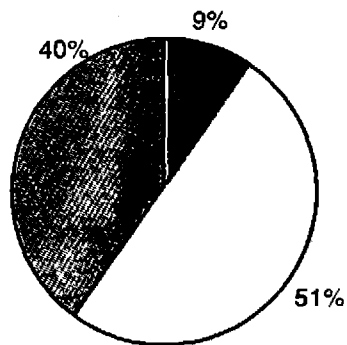
**Table - 5.5 : Reservation of seats**

Reservation	Contested and won								Unanimously elected								Lost							
	Bel	Bdr	Bjp	Glb	Kpl	Mys	Rch	Total	Bel	Bdr	Bjp	Glb	Kpl	Mys	Rch	Total	Bel	Bdr	Bjp	Glb	Kpl	Mys	Rch	Total
General Seat	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	3	-	2	-	15	-	-	-	17	2	6	-	3	2	-	-	13
Women general	-	2	5	-	3	-	3	13	-	-	7	-	-	-	2	9	5	-	6	-	-	-	6	17
SC women	-	34	20	23	5	9	5	96	-	4	28	4	6	1	-	43	2	21	20	46	8	17	4	118
ST general	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
ST women reservation	-	2	1	-	-	11	3	17	1	-	2	-	1	3	-	7	-	-	1	-	-	7	1	9
B.C.	-	-	-	-	11	-	4	15	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	13	-	2	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>176</b>

Bel - Bellary, Bdr - Bidar, Bjp - Bijapur, Glb - Gulbarga, Kpl - Koppal, Mys - Mysore, Rch - Raichur.

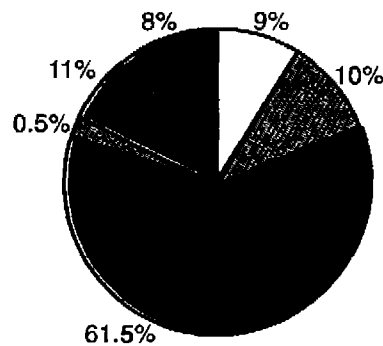
**WOMEN WHO FIELD THEIR NOMINATION**

■ No. of women withdrew, rejected, cheated	- 40%
□ No. of women won	- 51%
■ No. of women lost	- 9%



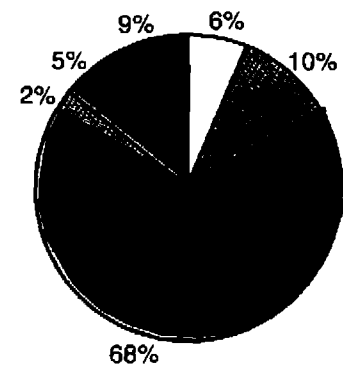
**WINNERS**

□ General Seat	9%
■ Women General	10%
■ SC women	61.5%
■ ST general	0.5%
■ ST women reservation	11%
■ B.C.	8%



**LOSERS**

□ General Seat	6%
■ Women General	10%
■ SC women	68%
■ ST general	2%
■ ST women reservation	5%
■ B.C.	9%





## 6. HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE FOR SANGHA WOMEN

*"I am past the age of child bearing but I can give this information to my younger sister and daughter"* participant in training for sangha health committee members.

### Giving a Gender perspective to Healthcare

The highlight of the MS (K) work on health during 1999-2000 was the project (sponsored by World Health Organisation) entitled "Training of Women Health Leaders". This training was carried out in Bidar, Koppal and Bellary districts. It provided Mahila Samakhya the opportunity to give quality inputs to the newly formed *sangha* health committee members. Some of the participants were traditional birth attendants (*dai*), several had undergone training in the use of herbal remedies, some had taken up community health issues in their respective villages.

431 women from 164 *sanghas* in Bellary, Bidar and Koppal have been given high quality input in healthcare. Details are given in Table - 6.1 (on page 35). The plan this year is to extend this training to health committee members of other *sanghas* in Bidar, Koppal and Bellary and to the other districts of Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur and Mysore. Table - 6.2 (See page 35) gives a picture of the *sanghas* where follow-up action has been taken up by sangha women after the health training.

The most important aspect of this training was the range of issues covered. Participants acquired a holistic and gender - sensitive

information base on a range of health issues. From our earlier emphasis on herbal medicine, we were able to make a shift to holistic healthcare for women.

### The topics covered included

1. Listing by the participants, of diseases related to women
2. The definition and the importance of healthcare.
3. Women and nutrition
4. Community participation
5. Women and the issues of water and sanitation
6. Malaria and TB
7. Gender and self esteem
8. Adolescence and the changes it brings
9. Physiology of menstruation and conception
10. Conception and pregnancy
11. Childbirth
12. Reproductive tract infections in women
13. Abortion, infertility, sex determination and cancers
14. Family planning
15. Menopause
16. Women and violence
17. Mental health and women
18. Women's health and *panchayat raj*
19. Women and their access to the government health facilities
20. Women's work and health.

## Feedback from the women

*"We have realised for some time that chronic aches and pains are not relieved by the doctor's medicine. Now we also see the relationship with the stress and the mental problems. We must reconsider what kind of help we need."*

*"Our ancestors never had to suffer poverty like we do, There was always enough basic foodstuff and milk in the house. Milk was never sold outside the house, it was for the family's consumption".*

*"So many greens are available, we can eat everyday, but we have grown too lazy to pluck and cook it. We are beginning to see the impact of lifestyle on the diet".*

There was a marked interest expressed by the women on the issue of building toilets. Unfortunately their past experience has been negative *"whenever we ask for toilets to be constructed, there is no proper response from the concerned officials. So we had to run from pillar to post. Also, there are often technical difficulties... how deep should the pit be, what material is most suitable... Added to all this, the entire system is corrupt."*

*"We now realise the value of our work and how it has been undervalued in the past".*

*"There is a proverb - For a man there can be many wives. We used to accept this uncritically. But now we realise that rules and customs are the same for women and men-equally right or equally wrong."*

*"We have to train and teach our children that all children should be treated equally, whether boys or girls. In particular, we must encourage our girls to find their freedom and identity."*

*"'Don't go to the temple during this time'. How many times we have been told. I have now understood clearly all the myths attached to menstruation, this training has helped me to separate the facts from the myths".*

*"We shared a lot of our knowledge. This session helped us to clear certain beliefs and taboos about foods to be eaten and avoided during pregnancy and about breastfeeding."*

*"We have understood the role of the condom not only in preventing pregnancy, but also for protection from STD and HIV / AIDS. Now we can motivate our husbands to use Nirodh. We also understand that for these diseases both partners need treatment". "We must take steps to prevent this sort of thing from occurring, help people by counselling them."*

*"We learned some of the causes of abortions, this information was entirely new for us. All along we thought that abortions were the result of curses from previous births. Now, we can take some measures instead of feeling helpless."*

*"Until now, we always blamed the woman for the problem of infertility, now we understand the role of the man. May be with this new information, we can prevent second marriages. From now on we will definitely send both partners to the doctor."*


*"We have learned the legal procedures to handle the issue of rape and feel much more confident of handling the problem. We can take some precautions. Rather than feeling helpless because of the stigma, talk openly about the problem so that the wrong doer can be caught and punished."*

*"As a single woman, I have never been able to live my life confidently, for fear of what society would say. This fear has*

*haunted me continuously."*

*"We will put pressure on the panchayat to see that the facilities are allocated according to the need and not siphoned off as now. Also the sangha members can support the elected panchayat member in these activities."*

*"Nowadays we give ORS as the first step for treating diarrhoea, then we take the child to the hospital."*

 *An interesting thing happened in Bidar when the video on childbirth was being screened. As it was in the open space of the temple, a male pilgrim who was staying there began to watch unobtrusively from the back. Conscious of his presence, the women became uncomfortable and finally requested to him to leave. They were pleasantly surprised when he told them "without understanding all that you go through during the birth of a child, we men cannot change our attitudes. The more you share this with us, the more sympathetic we can be to your problems." They let him watch the rest of the video!*

#### **Some Action Points for sangha Health Committee Members**

1. To construct toilets
2. To construct soak-pits and grow kitchen gardens
3. To maintain environmental hygiene by cleaning up the water sources.
4. To bring up girls and boys from early childhood in an unbiased fashion.
5. To start including in their diets, healthy foods such as greens, sprouted gram, seasonal fruits irrespective of age.
6. To create awareness about community health and women's health issues with other women members and with the community.

7. To identify Malaria and TB patients also possible cases of HIV / AIDS and ask them to go to the PHC.
8. To list the number of women who complain of white discharge and reproductive tract infections.
9. To list out the names of the infertile couples and suggest that they go for investigations. The aim of this exercise is to clear misconceptions on the causes of infertility, sex of the child and to prevent second marriages.
10. To promote a healthy environment for women in the village by
  - training the *sangha* members, adolescents, community about the impact of violence on health of women.
  - counselling the victim in cases of sexual abuse and rape
  - seeing that the culprit is punished.

11. To maintain menstrual hygiene.
12. To keep a vigilant eye on the personnel of the health dept.
13. To stop child marriages and puberty rituals.
14. To help women to identify risk factors in pregnancy and send them to the appropriate level of medical care.

**Change in the attitudes of the *sangha* women when they came back for the second phase of training.**

- Follow up of personal hygiene - menstrual hygiene, women had internalised the messages and started purchasing undergarments for themselves and younger women in the family.
- Some groups had constructed soak pits near the house. Many had done *shramdaan* to keep the area near the water sources clean. After the training, *Sangha* women have taken up several health related issues in their villages. *Sangha* women in H.Veerapura, K.Veerapura and Yelapura villages of Bellary district get the '*dangura*' (drum) beaten to tell the community about cleanliness and hygiene near the borewell.
- During the Ghatakasabha, they had invited the doctor to give a health talk in Rampur and Nagalapura villages, Koppal district.
- In Hanumasagara and Irkalgada villages, Koppal district with the support of the *panchayats*, the cleaning of the environment has been done.

- In one village they had sent the water for testing because they found that the water was causing health problems.
- Improving their diet by eating locally available greens. Many women also tried out the '*laddoo*' made of lentils that was demonstrated during the training.
- In Malkanmaradi village, the women went to the PHC and raised questions about the irregular attendance of the ANM and got her to improve her work.
- Women have realised the importance of exercise for good health and taught other *sangha* members. Although unable to do it daily, they are following it up at meetings of the *sangha* once a week.
- *Sangha* members have visited the PHCs to avail of some of the facilities. Women of the Dharmannan Thanda and Aldatti *sangha* had a doctor posted to their PHC after writing to the *Zilla Parishat*.
- They have also visited *anganwadis* to monitor the process of preparation and distribution of energy foods for children, explaining the reasons for this at the visit.
- Some of the women have decided to stop the puberty rituals for their daughters.
- In Sasthapur and Kaudgaon *ghatakas* of Aurad taluk, Bidar district, *sangha* women have planted 5000 saplings.
- Women of the new Hanumasagara *sangha*, Kushtagi taluk, Koppal district approach the *gram panchayat* for spraying their lands.



*Women of the Hulallhalli sangha in Nanjangud taluk, Mysore district found that the doctors in the Government hospital were taking bribes. When confronted by the women, the doctor said that the money was meant for buying syringes. Women decided to buy the syringes themselves. This episode was shared in the ghataka sabha and women of two sanghas decided to complain to the DHO about the doctor. They also decided to ask for and were successful in getting a lady doctor in the hospital.*



*During the health training programme, the empowerment experienced by women when they acquired knowledge about the female anatomy was quite remarkable. After some initial shyness and hesitation, the health committee members asked to handle the model of the uterus that was being used by the resource person. They have asked for this model so that they can explain to other sangha members. In the Yelapur sangha of Bellary taluk, women were able to prevent a second marriage by giving a scientific explanation of infertility.*

Health as an issue, appeals to most sections of the village community. Armed with information and practical knowledge

on health issues, the status of the *sanghas* is considerably enhanced in the eyes of the community. More and more, the *sangha* is being seen as a valuable resource for the community.

**Table - 6.1 : Training for *sangha* health committee members**

Sl.No.	District	<i>Sanghas</i>	Participants
1.	Bellary	25	54
2.	Bidar	64	223
3.	Koppal	75	154
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>431</b>

**Table - 6.2 : Health related activities taken up by the *sangha* women**

District	Visits to PHC by Health Committee members <sup>1</sup>		Women using Family Planning methods		Water and Sanitation work		Toilet facilities for <i>sangha</i> members <sup>2</sup>							
	No. of <i>sanghas</i>	No. of women	No. of <i>sanghas</i>	No. of women	Preparing Soak Pit	Shramadhana <sup>3</sup>	Making Efforts		Completed		Uncompleted		Using <i>sangha</i>	
							No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	No. of women	No. of <i>sanghas</i>	No. of women	No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	No. of women	No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	No. of women
Bellary	8	16	4	6	3	4	6	6	1	4	1	1	1	1
Bidar	12	125		34	20	116	2	34	13	108	-	-	11	66
Bijapur	38	62	51	301	21	6	23	187	8	52	1	2	6	18
Gulbarga	41	63	16	32	-	30	95	122	-	84	4	14	3	41
Koppal	31	155	5	14	-	19	56	805	-	-	7	7	-	-
Mysore	20	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	4	20	-	-	2	18
Raichur	25	125	12	24	3	16	18	218	1	15	-	-	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>1372</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>147</b>

**Table 6.2**

<sup>1</sup> PHC visits for medical examination, medicine, *sangha* health committee members have taken pregnant women to PHC for examination, getting iron tablets. etc.

<sup>2</sup> Women are building toilets under the Nirmala Karnataka Yojane.

<sup>3</sup> Women are cleaning up area surrounding the borewell in their village.

## 7. WOMEN AND LEGAL LITERACY

This is relatively new area where MS(K) has started sharing information regularly with *sangha* women. This is a response to a long felt need. During the *ghataka melas*, 11476 women from 1010 *sanghas* discussed problems related to violence, legal rights and related issues.

The *sangha* women constantly face problems of violence, both within the family and from the community. Other problems include property disputes, bigamy, *Devadasi* dedication, child marriage, discrimination because of caste and gender. Some *sanghas* have been able to successfully tackle these problems but they are constantly hampered by their poor knowledge of laws and the faulty implementation of the legal system. Starting with the district level *melas* of Feb – March '99, systematic inputs on legal literacy have been taken up for all the *sanghas*. This process became more broad based with the *ghataka melas*.

Linkages and interactions with legal and paralegal agencies like the Free Legal Aid Board were explored. Women's own experiences were used as case studies during the trainings. Sometimes women were able to find solutions to long standing legal problems, as in Chinnamma's case (see box item on next page)

It was further strengthened by the interaction of the MS Karnataka *sangha* women and team with their counterparts from Mahila Samakhya Gujarat during "Sanghamitra"- the Mahila Samakhya National *Mela* held in March 2000. The latter has done important work in setting up the *Nari Adalat*. *Sangha* women constitute these forums which act as Community Dispute Resolution Mechanisms. The remarkable achievement of the *Nari Adalats* is that they have created a public forum, where women who have problems, are heard with respect, patience and understanding.

*Chinnamma is a member of the legal committee of Hullali A sangha. She owns two acres of fertile paddy field which she has cultivated over the years. Starting with a barren patch, she has put in back-breaking work to make her fields fertile. Adjoining her fields was a rich land owner who wanted to acquire her land. He started pressuring her to sell. He managed to acquire the fields on the other side from its drunkard owner. Chinnamma had discussed the problems in the sangha. Last year, the sangha women came to help her with the harvesting. The rich landlord waved a piece of paper in front them telling them that it was a Court Order that they could not harvest the crop. Chinnamma lost the entire crop. However, this year when this problem was discussed with the resource persons from the Free Legal Aid Board during a training for legal committee members, Chinnamma found people to help her. She discovered that the landlord had no right to stop her from harvesting the previous year's crop since the court injunction had given a status quo. With the help the Free Legal Aid Board and the sangha women she filed a case in the Taluk Court. When she won her case, the landlord appealed in the High Court but Chinnamma won over there too.*

*This case has strengthened the belief of the sangha women that with some knowledge and help, they can tackle and solve even the largest of problems.*

After the *ghataka melas*, various actions points were taken up by *sangha* women to increase awareness and knowledge about the law and its implementation. *Sangha* legal committees were set up. These women have collected details about violence against women, visited the nearest police stations to get acquainted with the police officials. In some cases, they have

complained about violence against women and have got assistance. This have been compiled in Table - 7.1. (See page 39) Other than the *melas*, legal literacy training has taken place in Bijapur, Mysore and Raichur (See Table - 7.2 on Page 39) Women have made an important transition in that they recognise and question violence against themselves.



- \* *Sangha* women in Mysore complained in the consumer forum about their fair price shop. "*How can our quota be missing when we have not collected it*".
- \* Chitramma of Bachepalli *sangha* Aurad taluk complained to the police about her drunken husband harassing her.
- \* Women in Kaudgaon village Aurad taluk complained to the police about men playing cards and creating disturbances in the village.

**On the issue of legal literacy, the following general trends can be seen.**

- \* There is an increased awareness in *sangha* women about their legal rights after the district and *ghataka melas* and the setting up of the *sangha* legal committees.
- \* Discussions in the *ghataka* and taluk *sabhas* in Bidar and Mysore district center around "solving as much as possible by themselves"
- \* Women seems to have got over their initial fear of interacting with the legal systems. Women in Mysore are willing to follow cases all the way upto the High Court if necessary. They are not willing to compromise.
- \* There is an increasing trend for women from the community to come to the *sangha* for help to solve their problems.

**Table - 7.1 : Work done by *sangha* legal committee members**

Sl. No.	District	No. of <i>sanghas</i> that have visited Police Station for general information	No. of <i>sanghas</i> collected details about violence against women from the community	No. of <i>sanghas</i> that have complained in Police Station about violence against women
1.	Bellary	9	3	5
2.	Bidar	48	35	6
3.	Bijapur	49	72	11
4.	Gulbarga	36	10	16
5.	Koppal	23	23	6
6.	Mysore	4	23	9
7.	Raichur	2	8	14
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>67</b>

**Table - 7.2 : Other legal awareness camps were held in 3 districts, in addition to the information shared during the melas.**

Sl.No.	Name of the District	No. of training	No. of <i>Sanghas</i>	No. of Women
1	Raichur	4	60	303
2	Mysore	4	49	101
3	Bijapur	8	10	75
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>479</b>



## 8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (EDP)

### **MY STATUS IN THE FAMILY HAS IMPROVED ...**

*“When my family members scold me, treat me badly and ask me what I have contributed to the household, I say “After all this buffalo is mine and because of it, your expenditure on other things has become less.”*

*Five sangha women in Kaudgaon village, Aurad taluk Bidar district shared Rs.5000/- each from the DCC bank loan of Rs.25000/- . Four women bought buffaloes and one woman bought a cow. All the women are making profits and paying back interest and principal regularly. The women feel that a dream has been realised.*

*“We are able to pay back 75% of loan from the sale of milk. My husband use to go on criticising me when I went to the sangha meetings. Whenever other men in the village questioned him about my comings and goings, he would come home and take out his anger on me. Now he keeps quiet. I am now confident of raising 1000/-, 2000/- on my own. I don't have to go and ask him for money. I would like to take another loan and start a small business. Samakhya has given me the mahiti that my parents should have given me.*

Women favour dairying as an economic activity. The returns are usually good and they are able to fit in the extra work into their busy schedules.

Not only has their status increase in the household, *sangha* women are able to improve their own nutrition levels as well as those of their children. A good amount of the milk produced is kept for home consumption. Further, because of the plentiful availability of milk and milk products, the expenditure on other food items is reduced.

Table - 8.1 (See page 43) gives a detailed picture of *sangha* economic activities in the different districts.

Further details on the *sangha* common fund are given for Bidar district in Table - 8.2 (See page 43)

The challenges for MS in this area are

- To see that misunderstandings and rivalries over money issues do not weaken the *sangha*
- To help women take up economic activities that will bring continued and long-term profits.
- To help women retain control over these new assets
- To help women use these assets to tackle the causes for gender discrimination - ensuring that they send their daughters to school, improve nutrition and healthcare of themselves and their children particularly girls.

### **SOLIGA WOMEN EXERCISE THEIR ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

*Sangha women of the Soliga tribe in Kollegal taluk, Mysore district were being exploited by traders from Kerala. Each Soliga family had been given two tamarind trees by the Government. The traders persuaded the Soligas to mortgage the trees to them for Rs. 2000/- to 3000/- per tree. This usually happened in the rainy season when the Soliga families are in dire need. The mortgage is taken when the tree is in full bloom. The irony of the situation is that the traders employed the Soligas themselves to guard the tree and pluck the fruit for a paltry sum of Rs.25/- per day for 30 days in the year. This came up for discussion in the sangha and ghataka meetings. Women of Alambadi, Gorasane, Kumuddiki and Danthalli sanghas calculated that the traders would have made a profit from the sale of tamarind of about Rs.1,80,000/-. And this was just on 4 trees for 4 years! They decided that it was high time to change the situation. Some women took individual loans from the sangha to 'free' their trees. The Alambadi sangha women took a group loan of Rs.10,000/- and bought the mortgage from one woman who had 4 trees. The sangha made a profit of Rs.8000/- in one year.*

*They are planning to take up this activity for more trees. When some other families tried to release the mortgage, they got into a dispute with farmers nearby, from Tamilnadu, over the ownership of the trees. Sangha women however brought the pattas and established that they were the owners.*

## NO SHORTCUTS TO SOCIAL CHANGE: EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

### “INSTANT” *SANGHAS* - A BIG PROBLEM IN THE FIELD.

In its approach to economic empowerment issues, the Mahila Samakhya strategy differs in one important respect from many other field programmes and government departments. From the beginning, the Mahila Samakhya approach has been to strengthen the *sangha* on gender and social discrimination issues before taking up economic activities. *Sangha* women develop a common concern through discussion and analyses about the causes and manifestations of gender bias and patriarchy. Together they plan and carry out various strategies to counter these biases in family and the community. At the same time, one of the main reasons for their low status in society is their poverty. This is one of the main causes for their marginalisation from education and all other opportunities. *Sangha* women need some economic relief if they are to free themselves from the vicious circle of illiteracy, early marriage, multiple child bearing, poor nutrition and health status, violence and gender discrimination. However, the thrust of the MS programme is that the *sangha* must take up social discrimination issues in a strong way for lasting changes to occur. Social change cannot come about by forming collectives around money alone. At best, this strategy might provide temporary relief. Forums that question the reasons for marginalisation need to be developed.

The trend in the past few years both from the government as

well as in the NGO sector has been the formation of “instant” *sanghas*, where the incentive for women coming together is money, in the form of government schemes or loans from banks under various poverty alleviation schemes. It is rare that such *sanghas* are able to question social and gender biases. More often than not, these *sanghas* leave the existing divisions of class, caste and gender untouched and unchallenged.

The Mahila Samakhya strategy has been to spend the early-months of the *sangha* formation in strengthening ideas on social and gender issues and take up action in these areas. It is only after *sanghas* develop this as the common concern, do they start savings activities. At this point, strong *sanghas* are given a small amount from Mahila Samakhya as seed capital which they can use to access outside grants for various economic activities. Women themselves decide the guidelines for lending and borrowing, they decide on the economic activities that they want to take up and as far as possible manage the money themselves. However, despite such careful planning, the MS experience has been that even strong *sanghas* can break up on money issues. Special efforts have been constantly made to see that the focus of the *sangha* remains on gender and social issues and that the *sangha* agenda is not hijacked by the money issues.

With the field environment being what it is today when various parties from government, the NGO sectors and financial institutions vying with each other to set up SHGs, it is becoming increasingly difficult to continue with the process oriented approach of MS. The challenge for the MS *sanghas* has been to keep a balance between social issues and economic issues.

**Table - 8.1 : Economic Development Programmes in the sanghas**

District	Total No. of sanghas that have taken up savings	Sanghas that have bank accounts	Sangha woman as account holder	Sahayogini and sangha women as joint account holders	Total savings	Using sangha money for economic development		No. of sanghas that have got various sources						No. of beneficiary
						Ind. activities	Group activity	Bank (a)	DWCRA (b)	SJSY (c)	SHG (d)	DIC (e)	Others (f)	
Bellary	25	23	23	-	73504	4	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	39
Bidar	179	217	50	202	1296217	203	-	-	23	5	15	-	3	2500
Bijapur	197	197	197	-	775787	54	-	1	4	-	2	-	9 DRP 2 IRDP	328
Gulbarga	167	165	160	114	1846589	157	4	-	27	-	10	4	-	3594
Koppal	114	104	104	61	672198	71	22	-	7	1	4	-	-	617
Mysore	80	186	62	124	222717	8	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	268
Raichur	40	29	29	19	243473	9	2	-	3	-	3	-	Udyog ini 1	72
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>5130485</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7418</b>

**Table - 8.2 : Common fund statement of Mahila Samakhya sanghas of Bidar unit to the end of 31.3.2000**

Sl. No.	Taluk	Membership Fee	Total Savings (Bank + Money in loan)	Honorarium	DWCRA	Loan	Repayment	Loan Interest	Bank Interest	Bank Balance	Sangha expenses	Sangha contribution	Penalty	Total Amount
1	Aurad	3649	326652	964800	250000	1188908	597368	140782	23066	684918	19931	-	42	1689060
2	Bhalga	1005	240828	196800	325000	276726	214669	243191	13914	254185	13500	-	150	1007388
3	Hunahad	915	298559	758400	225000	91800	44720	40194	39478	838958	7582	1605	-	1356569
4	Bidar	3490	227996	576000	225000	449155	243842	57030	21207	534170	1534	-	486	1109675
5	Basavakalyan	2476	354345	460800	300000	428985	187543	39649	3020	384654	13817	1550	1363	1149386
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11535</b>	<b>1448380</b>	<b>2956800</b>	<b>1325000</b>	<b>2435574</b>	<b>1288142</b>	<b>520846</b>	<b>100685</b>	<b>2696885</b>	<b>56364</b>	<b>3155</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>6312078</b>

## 9. TACKLING SOCIAL EVILS:

*One of the most serious problems in the districts of North Karnataka is the Devadasi tradition. Despite concerted efforts from several quarters, this deep-rooted evil persists. Our own experiences at the Neer Manvi Jatra (An annual event in Raichur where dedications take place routinely) were bitter. (Annual Report, MS (Karnataka), 1998-99, page 22) It was almost impossible to make a dent. Police and the public watched the MS(K) programme (to create awareness about the evils of the Devadasi system) with interest but refused to take any action to stop it.*

*This experience made the MS(K) team determined to find some way. During the last year, one of the most fruitful partnerships forged was with MASS (Mahila Abhivrudhi Mathu Samrakshana Samasthe ). This is a federation of former Devadasis from Belgaum who have been rehabilitated largely through the efforts of MYRADA. This federation is proactive in preventing further dedications.*

*During the Neer Manvi Jatra in February 2000, MS (K), MASS and 13 other NGO's organised a protest march against the dedications. One of the key events was the cutting off of the matted hair of would be Devadasis. This fungus, which infects the hair, is supposed to be a divine sign that the owner should be dedicated! The MASS team with the MS(K) team helping, got women to come forward to cut and clean their hair. Finally the infected hair of 72 women was cut off. (Photograph on page inside front cover). Women were relieved, some were diffident, some scared. But they had broken a serious taboo. (See MS in the News, page 59-60)*

*The sangha women of Sanganatti village, Mudhol taluk, Bagalkote district discovered a plan to dedicate 14 girls as devadasis. "Don't do this, the devadasi practice is a very bad one". Sangha women begged, pleaded and tried to persuade the parents and guardians of these unfortunate girls. However they remained adamant. Left with no option, the sangha women went to the police station only to find the PSI unmoved by their complaint. They met the women from the sanghas at the Maddebhavi, Budnipidi and Maligapura and told them about the problem. Representatives from sanghas went to district headquarters at Bagalkote and appealed to the DC and SP.*

*This worked and the PSI in Sanganatti met the parents of the girls and told them what would happen if they went ahead with the dedication of their daughters. Finally convinced, they promised the sangha women that they would not dedicate the daughters.*

This is an evil that is being tackled in several ways. *Sanghas* are constantly vigilant as the example given below show (The MS(K) team plans to take up the issue on a large scale with the help of organisations like MASS).



## 10. SANGHA MITRA - THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA NATIONAL MELA

For the first time since the inception of the Mahila Samakhya programme, a National *Mela* was organised in Delhi in March 2000. *Sangha* women and the MS teams from eight states joined together to celebrate the First International Women's Day of the new Millennium. Information and strategies were shared and plans were made in 10 parallel sessions. The issues covered were Education (*Jyothi*), Legal Literacy (*Insaaf*), Health (*Arogya*), *Balika* (Girl child), Resource Mobilisation (*Kalpavriksh*), Environment (*Jeevan*), *Panchayat Raj*, Economic Development (*Nidhi*), Gender (*Samarthan*) and Self-Reliance and Sustainability (*SWASHAKTI*).

One hundred and seventy *sangha* women from the seven MS (K) districts and a 30-member MS team participated. MS (K) was able to share its experiences of the district *melas*. Our team learnt a great deal - information, issues, strategies and methodologies - from the MS programmes in other states.

On the last day, the MS (K) team shared their learning through this song which was composed specially for the occasion. A special issue of the *sangha* newsletter "Sanchari" was brought out to share the experience with other *sangha* women.

### SONG



Oh women! What will you do, what do you plan to do?  
What will you do after you go back to your village from Delhi?  
We shall provide a good life to other women  
We will sing and rejoice at the birth of a girl child  
The rapist will be punished severely  
All the work will be shared equally by women and men.  
What will you do after you go back to your village from Delhi?  
We shall learn to read and write the *sangha* documents,  
Our children will be sent to schools

We shall definitely join the Village Education Committee  
To spread the light of knowledge in the schools.  
What will you do...

We shall take up a door to door legal awareness campaign.  
We will raise a strong voice against the dowry system.  
The Devadasi system shall be completely uprooted  
And we shall emerge as a legal decision making forum.  
What will you do...

More and more facilities will strengthen our village.  
We will work towards using the Government  
resources...  
To make sure our property rights is one of our goals,  
To find our own resources and become self- reliant, is  
our aim.  
What will you do...

Good health is our main need  
To get mahiti on health is equally important  
A village health clinic will be set up  
A lady doctor, we definitely have.  
What will you do...

Grain by grain, we will fill our barrels  
We will make good use of them,  
We will develop skills to use the available resources,  
We will strengthen the habit of self help

You will do everything, you will do everything  
But how will you achieve and how will you do it.

How is it possible...!  
We shall do like this, listen to us  
We shall go step by step to become self reliant

Sangha to Ghataka  
Ghataka to Taluk  
And taluk to District  
We shall strengthen ourselves  
and finally form a "Mahasangha"  
Issuewise committees will be formed  
to stand on our own feet

In remembrance of our Delhi visit, we shall grow a  
plant  
We shall get all the women together  
More and more new sanghas will be formed  
A new society shall be formed by all we women.

You are performing well, you are doing well  
You have done a great job, continue your work  
Yes, we are performing well, we will do well  
We will do a great job, we shall continue our work.

**LIST OF GENERAL COUNCIL (GC) AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC) MEMBERS**

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
1.	SRI. GOVINDE GOWDA Hon'ble Minister for Education Government of Karnataka BANGALORE.	PRESIDENT GC
2.	SRI. SANJAY KAUL I.A.S Ms. ANITA KAUL I.A.S (22nd Oct'99 to 8th March 2000) SRI. AGWANI, I.A.S (8th March 2000 to 16th April 2000) SRI. R.N. SHASTRI I.A.S (17th April 2000 to date) Secretary, Primary & Secondary, Education Department, GOK M.S. Building, BANGALORE.	CHAIRPERSON, EC & MEMBER GC
3.	Ms. SHALINI PRASAD I.A.S National Project Director Mahila Samakhya, Department of Education, Ministry of HRD, Shastri Bhavan NEW DELHI.	MEMBER, EC, GC & GOI Representative
4.	PROF. NAYANATHARA Indian Institute of Management Bannerghatta Road BANGALORE.	MEMBER, GC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
5.	Dr. SHOBHA RAGHURAM HIVOS, Flat No.402, Eden Park, BANGALORE - 560 001.	MEMBER, GC
6.	Dr. GAYATHRI DEVI DUTT Deputy Director, DSERT, B.P. Wadia Road, Basavanagudi, BANGALORE - 560 004.	MEMBER, GC
7.	Deputy Financial Adviser Representative Integrated Finance Department Government of India Ministry of HRD Department of Education Shastri Bhavan, NEW DELHI.	MEMBER, EC, GC & REPRESENTATIVE GOI
8.	Ms. KAMESHWARI, J Consultant, National Office Mahila Samakhya NEW DELHI.	MEMBER, EC & GC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
9.	Ms. S. RAMESHWARI VARMA Ex Director Centre for Women's Studies Mysore University MYSORE.	MEMBER, GC & EC
10.	Dr. VIMALA RAMACHANDRAN Visiting Faculty, Educational Research Unit, C/o. P.K. Sethi, B-10, Vivekananda Marg, JAIPUR - 302 011	MEMBER, GC & EC
11.	Ms. UMA MAHADEVAN I.A.S SHRI. BHARAT LAL MEENA I.A.S (16th Sept '99 to 18th Dec '99) Ms. KALPANA I.A.S (19 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2000 to date) Director, Mass Education, IMA Building, AVR Road, Chamarajpet, BANGALORE - 560 018.	MEMBER, GC & EC
12.	Mr. N.C. MUNIYAPPA I.A.S Director, Women & Child Welfare Dept. Government of Karnataka, M.S. Building, BANGALORE	MEMBER, GC & EC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
13	Ms. ANITA KAUL (Upto Sept '99) SHRI. VIJAYBHASKAR I.A.S (Oct '99 to March 2000) SHRI. MADAN GOPAL I.A.S (March 2000 to date) Director, DPEP, Next to Govt. Press Building Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, BANGALORE.	MEMBER, EC & GC
14.	Dr. MALAVIKA KARLEKAR Editor, Centre for Women's Studies Consultant & Editor, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, E-54, Sujan Singh Park, NEW DELHI.	MEMBER, EC
15	Dr. SHANTA MOHAN Fellow Gender Studies Unit, NIAS, IISc Campus, BANGALORE	MEMBER EC
16.	Ms. SOBHA NAMBISAN I.A.S Managing Director, Karnataka Handicrafts Development Corporation, BANGALORE.	MEMBER, EC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
17.	Mr. VIVEK KULKARNI I.A.S Finance Secretary - II Vidhana Soudha, GOK Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, BANGALORE.	MEMBER, EC
18.	Ms. SUMAN KOLHAR Ex. Zilla Parishat Vice President, Behind Godavari Lodge Shastri Nagar, BIJAPUR	MEMBER EC & DRG member, Bijapur
19.	Ms. LEELA HIREMATH H.No. 7-6-75/24, Shiva Chama, Vasavi Nagar, RAICHUR	MEMBER EC & DRG member, Raichur
20.	Ms. V.VANAJA Research Officer, Centre for Women Studies Manasa Gangothri, MYSORE.	MEMBER EC & DRG member, Mysore
21.	DR. REVATHI NARAYANAN State Programme Director Mahila Samakhya Karnataka No.68, 1st Cross, Ind Main, HAL 3rd Stage, J.B.Nagar, BANGALORE.	MEMBER - SECRETARY, EC & GC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
22.	Ms. UMA WODEYAR District Programme Co - ordinator Mahila Samakhya Karnataka No. 8-6-145, Bishan Mansion, Upstairs Syndicate Bank, Udgir Road, BIDAR.	MEMBER, EC & GC
23.	Ms. Nirmala Shiraguppi District Programme Co-ordinator, Mahila Samakhya Karnataka 190, "Sai Hrudaya" Shastri Nagar, Behind Godavari Lodge, Sainik School Road, BIJAPUR - 586 101.	MEMBER, EC & GC
24.	Ms. PARIMALA District Programme Co - ordinator Mahila Samakhya Karnataka MYSORE.	MEMBER, EC & GC
25.	Ms. JYOTHI KULKARNI District Programme Co - ordinator Mahila Samakhya Karnataka No 94, KHB Colony, MSK Mill Road, GULBARGA.	MEMBER, EC & GC
26.	Ms. SOWBHAGYAVATHI District Programme Co - ordinator, Mahila Samakhya Karnataka, No.88, Maruthi Colony, Kinnal Road, KOPPAL.	MEMBER, EC & GC

SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP	SL. NO.	NAME AND DESIGNATION	STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP
27.	Ms. LEELE KULKARNI District Programme Co – ordinator Mahila Samakhya Karnataka No. 1-9-3, Azaad Nagar, RAICHUR.	MEMBER, EC & GC	28.	Ms. GOWRI (Upto Oct'99) Ms. SHEELA KHARE (Nov'99 to date) District Programme Co - ordinator Mahila Samakhya H.No. 30, A.C. Street, Gandhinagar, BELLARY.	MEMBER, EC & GC
	29.	Sahayoginis - two (by rotation)			MEMBER, EC

## 12. GLOSSARY / ABBREVIATION

Dai	Traditional birth attendants	SSR	Sangha Self Reliance
Devadasi	Girl dedicated to Goddess Yellamma	VEC	Village Education Committee
Dangura	Drum		
DHO	District Health Officer		
DIC	District Industrial Centre		
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme		
DWCRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas		
EDP	Economic Development Programme		
EWR	Elected Women Representative		
Ghataka	Cluster of 10 villages		
Gram Panchayat	Village level governance body		
Gram Sabha	Village level meeting		
Jathra	Fair or procession, usually for religious purpose		
Kishoris	Teenage girls		
Laddoo	Sweet made out of lentils		
Mahiti	Information		
Mane	House		
Mela	Fair		
MS (K)	Mahila Samakhya Karnataka		
Nari Adalat	An informal court set up by the MS Gujarat team		
NFE	Non Formal Education		
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation		
PHCs	Public Health Centres		
Sahayoginis	Field Workers		
Sangha	Collective group of women		
SC	Scheduled Caste		
Soliga	Name of the tribe		
ST	Scheduled Tribe		
SHG	Self Help Group		
Shramdaan	Voluntary labour or work		
SJSY	Swarnajayanti Swarozgar Yojana		

**I.S.PRASAD & CO.,**  
**CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS**

**I.S.PRASAD, B.Sc.,LL.B.,F.C.A.**

☎ 6706749 / 6709069

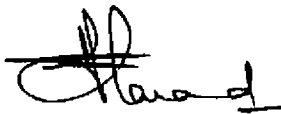
# 47, J.C.Road,  
Seetharama Buildings,  
Bangalore - 560 002.

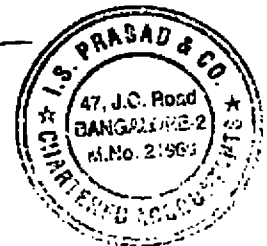
### AUDITOR'S REPORT

I have examined the attached Balance Sheet of Mahila Samakhya Karnataka as at 31st March 2000 and the Statement of Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended on that date and report that:

1. I have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of my knowledge and belief were necessary for the purpose of the Audit.
2. Proper books of accounts have been kept by the Society so far as appears from my examination of the Books.
3. The Balance Sheet and the Statement of Income and Expenditure referred to in this report are in agreement with ~~the Books of Account~~;
4. In my opinion, and to the best of my information and according to the explanations given to me, the said accounts, subject to observation report, gives a true and fair view:
  - (i) In the case of Balance Sheet of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31.03.2000 and
  - (ii) In the case of the Statement of Income & Expenditure, of the excess of ~~Expenditure~~ *in* ~~Income~~ *Income* over ~~Income~~ *Expenditure* for the year ended on that date

for I.S.PRASAD & CO.,  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

  
(I.S.PRASAD)  
Proprietor.



PLACE : BANGALORE  
DATE : 17/08/2000




**MAHILA SAMAKHYA, KARNATAKA**

**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH, 2000**

	SCHEDULES	AS AT 31.03.2000 Rs.	AS AT 31.03.1999 Rs.
<b><u>SOURCES OF FUNDS:</u></b>			
<b>CAPITAL FUND:</b>	1	4,435,308.00	2,862,936.96
<b>UN-UTILISED LOCAL GRANTS:</b>			
Grant from HKDB, Gulbarga		135,000.00	
W H O Programme		47,231.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<u>4,617,539.00</u>	<u>2,862,936.96</u>
<b><u>APPLICATION OF FUNDS:</u></b>			
<b>FIXED ASSETS:(As per schedule)</b>	2		
Gross Block		5,968,676.20	5,350,924.20
Less: Depreciation		3,705,798.20	3,137,347.20
Net Block		<u>2,262,878.00</u>	<u>2,213,577.00</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS, LOANS &amp; ADVANCES:</b>			
<b>Cash and Bank balances:</b>	3		
Cash on hand		5,849.05	23,935.25
with Scheduled Banks		1,723,759.95	514,949.71
Amount in Transit		200,000.00	-
		<u>1,929,609.00</u>	<u>538,884.96</u>
<b>ADVANCES &amp; DEPOSITS:</b>			
Advances & Receivables	4	87,153.00	166,449.00
Prepaid expenses			20,971.00
		<u>87,153.00</u>	<u>187,420.00</u>
<b>DEPOSITS:</b>			
Others	5	542,687.00	558,137.00
		<u>542,687.00</u>	<u>558,137.00</u>
Total Current Assets		2,559,449.00	1,284,441.96
Less: CURRENT LIABILITIES:			
Outstanding Liabilities	6	204,788.00	635,082.00
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>2,354,661.00</u>	<u>649,359.96</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<u>4,617,539.00</u>	<u>2,862,936.96</u>

AS PER MY REPORT OF EVEN DATED

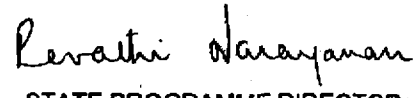
for I.S. PRASAD & Co.,  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

  
(I.S. PRASAD)  
PROPRIETOR  
M.No.21968



Bangalore  
Date: 17/08/2000

for MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA

  
STATE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR  
State Programme Director  
Mahila Samakhya (Karnataka)

**SCHEDULE 1 :**

**SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL FUND**

	<b>AS AT 31.03.2000 Rs.</b>	<b>AS AT 31.03.1999 Rs.</b>
<b>CAPITAL FUND:</b>		
As per last Balance sheet	2,862,936.96	5,188,255.61
ADD: Grants received from GOI towards Capital Expenditure	<u>620,636.00</u>	<u>865,332.00</u>
	<u>3,483,572.96</u>	<u>6,053,587.61</u>
 Add: Excess of Income over expenditure	 951,735.04	
Less: Excess of expenditure over income		 <u>(3,190,650.65)</u>
	<u><u>4,435,308.00</u></u>	<u><u>2,862,936.96</u></u>

**NOTE:**

Grants Received from GOI during this financial year	17500000
Amount utilised towards Capital Expenditure	620636
Amount utilised towards Revenue Expenditure	<u>16879364</u>
	17500000



*Revathi Narayanan*  
**State Programme Director  
 Mahila Samakhyas (Karnataka)**

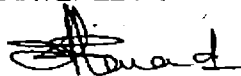
**MAHILA SAMAKHYA, KARNATAKA**  
**STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR**  
**THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 2000**

	YEAR ENDED 31.03.2000 Rs.	YEAR ENDED 31.03.1999 Rs.
<b>INCOME:</b>		
Grants received from GOI towards revenue Expenditure	16,879,364.00	16,534,668.00
Local Grants:	-	219,800.00
CBCS Grants	-	33,382.00
KWDC Grants	-	30,000.00
HKDB for Hut Construction	135,000.00	-
Jagruthi Shibir	10,455.00	-
KMF STEP Programme	289,745.00	-
W H O Programme	252,769.00	-
<b>Interest received:</b>		
On Deposits with banks	15,425.00	47,189.00
From Savings Bank accounts	26,323.00	31,353.60
Income from sale of assets	616.00	16,436.00
Sangha Honorarium	-	52,800.00
Sangha Hut	-	15,000.00
Miscellaneous Income	101,172.00	6,328.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,710,869.00</b>	<b>16,986,956.60</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>		
Honorarium	3,754,556.00	3,604,167.00
Provident Fund - Employer	577,572.00	821,237.00
PF Administration Charges	89,611.00	74,895.00
PF Arrears	-	2,201,685.00
Reimbursement of medical expenses	156,498.00	129,765.45
Rent, Electricity & Water	687,703.00	602,908.00
Fee and honorarium	-	6,971.00
<b>Repairs and Maintenance:</b>		
Vehicles	659,152.00	500,354.05
Computers	56,719.00	12,376.00
Postage and Telephones	310,193.00	459,711.80
Printing and Stationery	170,267.50	169,234.10
Travelling and Conveyance	471,917.50	497,377.75
Electricity and water	-	83,350.00
Advertisement expenses	27,100.00	33,715.00
Bank Charges	14,471.00	4,458.50
Audit Fees/Legal Fees	102,100.00	20,000.00
Office Maintenance/Contingency	319,865.00	417,299.35
KWDC Expenses	-	39,702.00
Depreciation	568,451.00	644,554.00
<b>ACTIVITY COSTS:</b>		
Training and documentation	339,468.00	328,809.80
Workshops and Meetings	3,012,214.96	2,526,139.90
C/F	<b>11,317,858.96</b>	<b>13,178,710.70</b>

B/F	11,317,858.96	13,178,710.70
External Evaluation	153,194.00	-
Publication of Information	301,965.00	107,978.10
Resource Centre	21,771.00	54,579.00
CBCS Workshop	-	33,382.00
KMF STEP Programme	289,745.00	-
W H O Programme	252,769.00	-
Jagruthi Shibira	10,455.00	-
<b>SHAYOGINI'S EXPENSES:</b>		
Honorarium	1,681,531.00	1,961,084.50
Stationery and books	-	3,180.00
Contingencies	52,590.00	46,345.00
<b>MAHILA SANGHA:</b>		
Honorarium	102,000.00	-
Hut Construction	340,000.00	918,000.00
Hut Construction - H.K.D.B.	135,000.00	135,000.00
Hut Construction - Z.P.	-	200,000.00
Stationery and Contingency	46,256.00	15,857.00
Books and Journals	-	688.00
Durries, desks etc.	84,200.00	48,750.00
<b>ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION:</b>		
Honorarium	263,277.00	469,137.25
Stationery and Contingency	92,668.00	190,197.00
Educational Materials	-	14,988.00
<b>CHILD CARE FACILITIES:</b>	492,758.00	906,329.00
<b>MAHILA SIKSHANA KENDRA:</b>		
Honorarium	362,919.00	532,784.00
Rent	247,638.00	366,158.00
Contingency	51,008.00	124,319.30
Maintenance Expenses	314,810.00	606,628.75
Educational Expenses	48,155.00	75,465.05
Medical facilities	14,335.00	60,334.35
Stipend/Fee etc.	82,231.00	127,712.25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,759,133.96</b>	<b>20,177,607.25</b>
Excess of income over expenditure	951,735.04	
Excess of expenditure over income		(3,190,650.65)

AS PER MY REPORT OF EVEN DATED

for I.S. PRASAD & Co.,  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

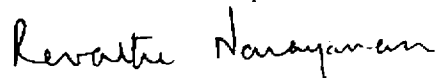


(I.S. PRASAD)  
PROPRIETOR  
M. No.21968



Bangalore  
Date:17/08/2000

for MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA



STATE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

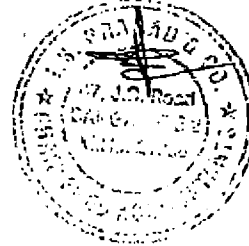
State Programme Director  
Mahila Samakhyas (Karnataka)

**MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA**

**SCHEDULE 2 - SCHEDULE OF FIXED ASSETS**

(in rupees)

Description	GROSS BLOCK				DEPRECIATION				NET BLOCK	
	Cost as on 1.4.99	Additions during the year	Deletions during the year	Cost as on 31.3.2000	Upto 31.3.1999	On deletions	For the year	Upto 31.3.2000	Written-down value as on	
									31.3.2000	31.3.1999
Vehicles	2,468,152.00	392,605.00	-	2,860,757.00	1,398,772.00	-	316,421.00	1,715,193.00	1,145,564.00	1,069,380
Office equipment	1,384,241.55	54,331.00	-	1,438,572.55	1,054,701.55	-	93,838.00	1,148,539.55	290,033.00	329,540
Computers	775,375.60	137,725.00	-	913,100.60	392,999.60	-	113,182.00	506,111.60	406,919.00	382,376
Furniture and fixtures	723,155.05	35,975.00	2,884.00	756,246.05	290,874.05	-	45,010.00	335,864.05	420,362.00	432,281
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,350,924.20</b>	<b>620,636.00</b>	<b>2,884.00</b>	<b>5,968,676.20</b>	<b>3,137,347.20</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>568,451.00</b>	<b>3,705,788.20</b>	<b>2,262,878.00</b>	<b>2,213,577</b>
Previous year	4,699,512.20	865,332.00	213,920.00	5,350,924.20	2,687,949.20	195,156.00	644,554.00	3,137,347.20	2,213,577.00	2,011,563



## MAHILA SAMAKHYA KARNATAKA

### A. Significant Accounting Policies :

1. The Accounts have been prepared as per historical cost convention and on accrual basis. Except Grants- in-Aid received, which is accounted on actual receipt basis and whatever Capital expenditure incurred, the equivalent amount considered in the Capital Fund and the remaining considered as revenue grants as the grants are received mainly for Activities account only.
2. Fixed Assets are disclosed in the accounts at historical cost less accumulated depreciation.
3. Depreciation on all assets is computed on the written down value and provided at the rates prescribed by the Income-Tax Act, 1961.
4. Previous year figures have been regrouped/rearranged wherever necessary to suit the Current year's presentation.

### B. Notes on Accounts:

1. Rs.1,28,000/- paid towards tally package has been capitalised.
2. Out of Rs.2,70,000/- received from HKDB for hut construction, Rs.1,35,000/- is treated as Income to the extent of expenditure incurred balance amount shown as unutilised local grants.
3. Out of Rs. 3,00,000/- received from WHO programme Rs. 2,52,769/- is treated as Income to the extent of expenditure incurred balance amount shown as unutilised local grants.
4. Out of Rs.10,455/- expenditure incurred towards Jagruthi Shibira, Rs.4,539/- yet to receivable from KSWDC - Raichur is shown as receivable.



## Cult girls

Continued from Page 1

Yet an arrack shop owner, openly selling arrack sachets on the 24th, says this was 'old stock'. SP (Superintendent of Police) CB Patil says arrack sale had special permission from the Excise department. "I personally believe alcohol should be banned during the festivities, but we are helpless." As if endorsing this, a young man drunkenly jumps off a first-floor balcony and remains swaying and moaning on the ground, covered

in bloody bruises.

In 1999, says Kulkarni, MS volunteers saw young girls being handed over to men at the arrack shops lined at the rear end of the fair. The matter was reported to the then DC and the tahsildar, but was disbelieved, according to Kulkarni. This year, plainclothes policemen and social workers quietly stalk the night, but nothing illegal is detected. "Many now get their dedications done

quietly in their homes, due to the vigilance at the temples,' say NGOs. There are strong suggestions though, that prostitution prevails.

There is also a powerful business angle to the festival. The coconut wholesale seller sells one lakh coconuts, making another lakh as profit. Hussain, the sweet-vendor, says he earns Rs 15,000 as net profit, while the best decorated arrack pandal cost one lakh to

erect! Profits will be about 15 times more, says its salesman. Prices are steep. With over 100 stalls and two lakh customers, both turnover and profits are considerable.

But Mallikarjun's (the pujari) wife, says that earnings are meagre: "I cannot even buy clothes," a statement that makes the NGOs laugh. M Duttu Rao, the Tahsildar, who heads the temple committee that auctions out contracts and stall sites, denies rumours of corruption, saying that contract-earnings were Rs 2.95 lakh. After costs, one-third went to

the priest and the remainder to the government.

Why then, were there no proper environmental measures taken for such a festival? With hundreds camping for the Jatri, the entire place becomes an open toilet. There are no drinking water facilities, no drainage and only two latrines to serve over 2 lakh visitors. With crowds cleaning utensils and washing in the one canal and small well, the health hazards from contaminated water seem immense. "We are slowly beginning to get organised," is the Tahsildar's reply.

## News

BANGALORE TIMES. THE TIMES OF INDIA 3

# Sensitising men, empowering women

Introducing a weekly feature which focuses on initiatives to better lives

**G**ender and empowerment. It is a most always assumed that these terms pertain to women alone. Consequently, almost all programmes related to women — be they government-generated ones or by non-government agencies, have women as their focus. Women being the target of these programmes, these programmes are created and function in isolation.

During this process, one important fact that is lost sight of is that the world is made up of another 50 per cent — the male half. This strong half has to be reached if the aims of women's programmes are to be fulfilled. The male half of our population has to be made aware or, rather, sensitised to the need for the empowerment of women. They need to be told that empowerment of women is a necessity for the simple reason that women make up half the human race and it is a ridiculous anomaly if they are to be left behind. Civilisation would become lame with one leg amputated.

But what has so far taken place is that women are being coaxed to come out and cross the threshold. But those who dare to do so, find themselves isolated in a hostile world. A world which does not understand why this change came about, a world which does not comprehend how and why the threshold was crossed. Bewildered, they push back the women within the confines of walls and prohibit their stepping out.

This is the major lacunae in all our women's programmes. Enthusiastic, self-immersed and totally involved in their work, those involved with women's programmes did not look around to see how their programme was being received by the other half of the population, what effect it had on the totality and how the target group itself fared in these circumstances.

With the result that the attending reactions of these programmes varied from indifference to outright hostility and even sabotage. Therefore, these groups involved with programmes relating to women and their empowerment had to sit up, remove their blinkers and look around. When they did that they realised

## The Good Work

that they too had made the same mistake the rest of the world had made: they had amputated a part of themselves in their bid to rush forward and realised that they could not do so for they were limping. It was then they decided to look for a cure.

This attempt can be seen in the gender sensitisation programme of the Mahila Samakhyas, a government of India project established with the aim of empowering women through education. Among its activities is the non-formal education programme. The main objective of the NFE programme is to bring to the mainstream drop-out students, particularly girls. The Mahila Samakhyas has 350 NFE centres spread throughout the state and these centres are meant to provide educational opportunities for children from economically deprived homes, especially rural girls who are denied access to education because of poverty, gender discrimination and

the rigidity of the mainstream education system.

While the NFE scheme was launched three years ago with these ambitious aims, three years later it was seen that the scheme was plagued by the very problems common to the mainstream education system. The dropout rate of the girls was high even in the NFE centres, more so after the girls reached puberty. Close scrutiny revealed a single major drawback in the programme: the majority — 96 per cent — of the tutors in these programmes were male and they came into the programme with their conditioned attitudes and values. They brought in their teaching styles and in-built gender discrimination. It was not deliberate. It was merely the way they were conditioned. But it was threatening the survival of the project.

Before it was too late, however, the organisation realised what had happened. They began a programme of gender sensitising the tutors who are involved in the NFE programme. It was intended to make them aware of the needs of the women and to make them internalise the concept of empowerment of women through education. Training modules

were developed and one programme led to another.

Gender sensitisation is now an important aspect in the agenda of the Mahila Samakhyas. The training modules for the tutors underscore the need for a change in teaching styles. The male tutors are being taught to consciously avoid those teaching styles which discriminate on the basis of gender which are imbibed by the students, translated into attitudes and perpetuated through their reactions to social situations.

It is a small step and a pointer to the reasons why gender issues are becoming non-issues. It is time this method is taken up at the macro level in all aspects of life itself. It is no longer a question of 'us' against 'them'. Those working with women's issues need to realise that this human rights issue cannot exist in isolation and for the women's movement to get an impetus it needs to join hands with the male population. Men have as much responsibility to see that this empowerment is achieved. If this effort succeeds, then it will be a victory for civilisation and the human race itself.

Syed Shoab

## Cult girls



**The Devadasi cult at Saundatti is banned - so it has just been rammed underground, finds out KEYA ACHARYA**

**S**ITTING on that temple ledge, at the threshold of youth and life, tremulously upset at all the attention, she looked tentatively at the camera, not knowing that she was already a victim.

"Ever since I got dedicated (three years ago at Huligi), nobody in our family has fallen sick. Goddess Yellamma looks after us," says 14-year-old Mudamma, earnestly.

Mudamma is 'married' to her maternal uncle, who already has a wife and children. Her mother is angry at the social workers who want to cut Mudamma's matted hair, a symbol of devotion to Yellamma.

"Two of my children died. Then I dedicated this girl, and since then nothing bad has happened. How can you tell me that this (devadasi system) is wrong?"

All around the temple, there are women moaning and dancing as though demented. The clash and din of cymbals and drums rend the air; men and women circle the temple, prostrating themselves at each step, covered in mud and muck, there are milling crowds everywhere. Everywhere, a slushy carpet of

coconut husks cover the ground.

This is the Yellamma temple at Noor Manvi, 30 kms from Raichur city, which is seeing an influx of around two lakh devotees for the five-day Yellamma Jatri, celebrated after the full moon each February.

About a decade ago young girls were dedicated openly as devadasis to the goddess inside the temple. But the legal ban has apparently had some effect. Men and women in the bus to the Jatri became uncomfortable when asked if there are devadasi dedications. "Not anymore," they say.

"It has stopped about 75 per cent," says 62-year-old Hussain, a sweet vendor who comes each year from Sholapur in Maharashtra. (But when asked if there is prostitution at the fair, Hussain has quite another reply. "Yes," he says simply.)

Mahila Samakhya (MS), a Union Ministry of Education ini-

tiative, to help educate women towards empowerment, known more as non-governmental, says the practice has now gone underground. "It has been curbed in Belgaum district, but it is widespread in Manvi," says Leela Kulkarni, MS Co-ordinator, Raichur district.

Kashinath Rao, a police officer, says, "I have complaints bandilla". The problem lies in the region's backwardness, says Rao. Illiteracy and mindsets still perpetuate the problem. (See box 2).

"My son will throw me out of the house if I cut my hair," says an old jogti, usually a retired devadasi. By the evening of the first day, the MS stall looks like a barber shop, as women coming from Sindhanur, Ghatkopar, Gabbur, Beleganur and places around are brought, some unwillingly, to have their jattis or matted hair cut by Lakshmi Bai, a volunteer from MASS, an organisation of ex-devadasis from Belgaum, who have come to Manvi to spread awareness. Lakshmi Bai says, "Sometimes the lice crawls up our hands. We find it difficult to eat if we think of it." This year there has been

unprecedented co-operation from the authorities and social organisations to help curb covert dedications. Raichur's DC, Kumar Nayak, says that he took his previous experience of working with devadasi-NGOs from Belgaum to help form Ekkatha, a federation of 15 organisations. Nayak arranged food and stay for 100 Ekkatha volunteers at the temple, who were divided into groups dealing with awareness-building and detection of underhand activities.

All through the day, MASS youth stage small skits against the practice and about the threat of AIDS. 18-year-old Basavaiah from Belgaum, with obvious stage talent and a golden voice draws a crowd fascinated with his rustic humour and wit.

But what is striking is the dichotomy between crowds listening to social workers, and the presence of prostitution, liquor and its related negative aspects on the other hand. "Last year we stayed at the schoolhouse and found that we could not leave our rooms due to drunken brawls in the temple premises," says Leela Kulkarni. The DC said the liquor ban imposed on Feb 23 and 24, due to Panchayat polls, was enforced at the Jatri.

(Top left): Mudamma's mother is angry at NGOs for wanting to cut her hair. Pics by author

**The practice is curbed in Belgaum, but not in Manvi**

### MINDSETS

Kashinath Rao, the policeman who spoke of illiteracy and mindsets, could not have known how close to home his remarks hit. A police constable on duty at the Jatri, who offered me tea, also proffered the information that there was "lots of sex" near the arrack-stalls at the rear, and was I "interested in sex"? The constable, who obviously did not understand the identity card I showed him, then suggested that he would 'pick me up' from the Inspection Bungalow to take me to the concerned place at 7 p.m.

Senior police officials offered both an oral apology and a defense to my written complaint on the incident, saying that one man's misdeeds did not constitute the police force.

But the message on the appallingly deep-rooted malaise of prostitution at the Yellamma Jatri, is loud and clear. Unless the department undertakes to educate and motivate its own staff, mere clamping will not suffice.

There is also the larger picture of education to counter the terrible illiteracy that spawns this culture. DC Nayak, speaking on the region's backwardness, states, "there should be massive investments for identified districts." Nayak believes the recent DPEP (district primary education programme) is a positive step towards education, but the NGOs say his optimism is misplaced. Sister Bridget of Janodaya (run by the Good Shepherd nuns) gives numerous instances of absent teachers, poor facilities and high school drop-out rates.

Continued on Page 11

The ancient system of dedicating a woman, traditionally from a scheduled caste, through rituals, into the service of God at temples, intertwined in various legends that speak of their social prestige, underwent gradual changes through history. Devadasis originally had only religious functions, but began sexually attending to high priests and royal patrons, then later to landlords and chieftains, losing their social privileges and getting linked to prostitution. The northern belt of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra still follow the system. Other than Saundatti, large Yellamma Jatri is also celebrated in three temples in north Karnataka.

Today, families continue to dedicate their daughters, primarily as a source of income through prostitution or patronage.

### Age-old rituals

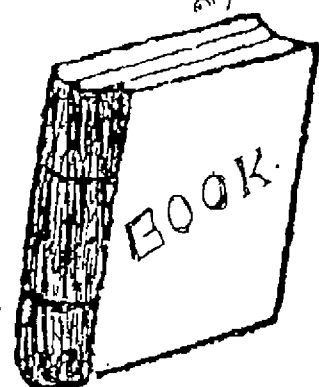


NIAS staffer, Asha Ramesh, who researched the system for Calcutta-based Joint Women's Programme in 1981, says that this

not managed any information on where funds for housing ex-devadasis had been disbursed.



**Campaign material by Mallamma, member of Mahila Samakhya sangha in  
K. Veerapura, Bellary Taluk, Bellary District for contesting the gram  
panchayat election February 2000.**

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<p align="center"><b>ಮತದಾರರದಲ್ಲ ವಿನಂತಿ</b></p> <p>ಪ್ರಿಯಮತದಾರರಲ್ಲಿ ವಿನಂತಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದೇನೆಂದರೆ ತಮ್ಮ ಸೇವಾಕಾರ್ಯಗಳಾದ ನಮಗೆ ತಮ್ಮ ಅಮೂಲ್ಯವಾದ ಮತಗಳನ್ನು ಹಾಕಿ ಮತ್ತು ವಾತಿಸಿ ನಮ್ಮನ್ನು ಜಯವಿಲರಿಸ್ತಾರಿ. ದುಃಖಬೇಕೆಂದು ಪ್ರಾರ್ಥನೆ.</p> <p align="center">— ತಮ್ಮ ಸೇವಾಕಾರ್ಯಗಳು —</p>		

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## STRIVING FOR GENDER JUSTICE

### *About Mahila Samakhya Karnataka:*

*Mahila Samakhya is a programme of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The programme was born out of the emphasis given in the New Education Policy of 1986 to the need for education programmes to play a "positive, interventionist role" in bringing about women's equality.*

### *MS Objectives*

- *To create an environment where women can make informed choices and determine their own destinies.*
- *To facilitate a process of societal transformation through collective reflection, analysis, learning and action with a gender perspective.*
- *To enhance women's economic roles by optimum utilisation, redistribution and rejuvenation of community resources.*
- *To augment women's bargaining powers as members of society by increasing their access and control over household and societal resources.*

### *The MS Strategy*

*The basic strategy of the programme is the building of village level collectives or "sanghas" that are not merely activity oriented, but which enable women to raise their self image and confidence and recognise their own strengths. The programme include initiatives in literacy for adult women, non formal education and creche centres, mahila shikshana kendras for young girls, initiatives for women in health awareness and legal education, participation in local governance bodies of rural women, demanding accountability from mainstream structures and institutions.*

*MS, Karnataka is today working with about 27,000 women in 1082 villages in 7 districts of Karnataka (Bihar, Bijapur, Mysore, Raichur, Gulbarga, Bellary and Koppal)*

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