

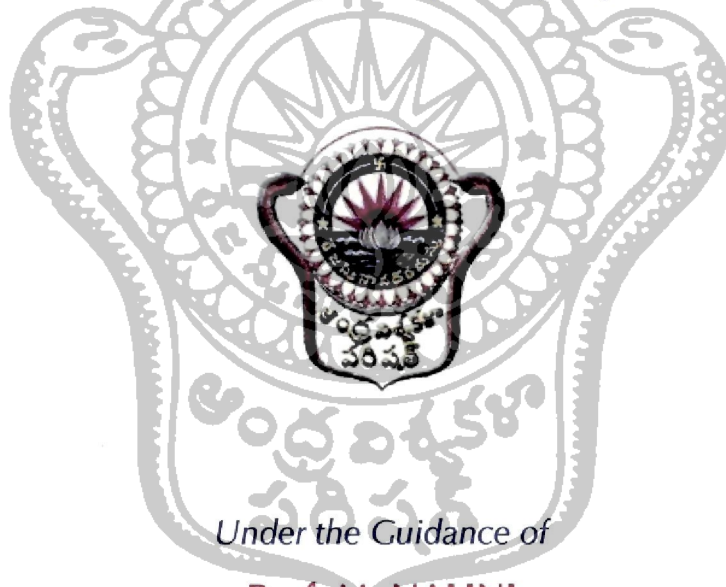
**WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS  
A CASE STUDY OF ANDHRA PRADESH ANGANWADI WORKERS  
AND HELPERS UNION, VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT**

*Submitted  
by*

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# CHAPTER – VII



## CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a brief summary of the objectives and findings of the study and draws conclusion in the light of earlier studies. In the contemporary era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation at a time when working class need to strengthen themselves in all ways possible, trade unions are on the decline weakening the collective bargaining capacity of the workers. Women as late-comers into the fold of trade unions and as a not so active section are comparatively in a worse off position. In such a situation the case of the Anganwadi workers and helpers' union as an agency of empowerment is noteworthy. (Indrani Mazumdar, (2008), K. Shanmugavelayutham and Mss. M.I.F. Nirmala, (2004).

This study has taken-up an enquiry into the, organization and working of the union (from national to local level) and the nature of participation of the members, at the local level.

The objectives of the study are restated hereunder:

- 1) To understand in general the nature of trade union members' participation focusing on women,
- 2) To trace briefly, the history of women in trade unions in various countries and in India,
- 3) To narrate the origin and evolution of All India Federation of Anganwadi workers and helpers and to describe its structure, objectives and workings.
- 4) To present a case study of Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi Workers and



Helpers Union, Visakhapatnam District, and

5) To enquire into the nature of participation of the members in union activities by examining

- a) the quantitative and qualitative aspects of participation like rate and trend in participation.
- b) Type of activities, level of awareness, time spent in trade union activities, and members' perception of trade union benefits.

The main objectives were to study the nature of women participation in trade union to enable to understand why or why not women participate, and when and where they participate, the quality of participation, the impact of participation, problems or obstacles and such other dimensions. Most of the review of the literature sources note that women participation in trade unions is of recent origins and in terms of quality it is passive, lesser in frequency. There are exceptions, some authors pointed out that once women members are convinced, they are more committed, persistent and militant in their participation.

The case study of Anganwadi workers and helpers union of Visakhapatnam district fits into the exceptional category. The Anganwadi workers and helpers union affiliated to CITU is a leftist-oriented union which emerged in 1989. Under the guidance of union, the Anganwadi workers have waged struggles continuously since inception to date to secure decent wages and job security. They succeeded in getting, hikes in their pay/honorarium from the meager Rs.125 in 1975 to Rs.3500 in



2011. They also wrenched protective measures regarding job security; <sup>and</sup> TA, DA, were announced following the pressure <sup>they</sup> put on the government. The discussion of the working of the union at All India level, State level and the District level, presents detailed evidence of the dynamic role of the union and of the members.

### Findings:

Some distinctive findings . . from the case Study:

- On an average around 30 percent of the union members have reported 'Nil' participation.
- So nearly 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the members have participated in the union activities. This is a very high proportion of participation. It is notable that on an average nearly 50 percent of the total respondents reported medium frequency of participation in all the three modes of activity. This indicates a very significant level and quality of participation by the members in trade union activities.
- The members have a strong conviction that participation in the union programmes is conducive to secure <sup>hike</sup> in salaries (honorarium) and <sup>2</sup> job security. They also refer to non-material benefits like personality development, improvement in social status and self-confidence. A number of earlier studies also have highlighted that the economic and security motive are the most important factors for unionization.



- Participation in training classes across the three regions is similar. A high percentage has reported nil participation in tribal, rural and urban regions. There is no respondent under minimum participation. There is a high proportion of respondents under medium frequency of participation in all three categories.

Participation in training classes is meant for selected members who are active and have leadership qualities. As participation in training classes is a full-time programme of two to three days, requiring staying away from home, there are higher number of non-participants. But, because the selected members are committed activists they participated more than minimum times.

- So, the figure is high under medium frequency. At the same time the number of members is lesser under maximum frequency, because even an active member cannot always participate in full-time programmes <sup>as</sup> women have household and child care responsibilities.
- With regard to participation in active mode of programme, a very high percentage in each region reported nil participation in submission of memoranda.
- On the other hand '0' percentage are reported under non-participation in Dharna and Rasta Roko in all these regions. It is explained that submission of memoranda is mainly seen as the responsibility of leaders and <sup>activists,</sup> ~~activities,~~ whereas participation in other activities require the participation of maximum number of members. Therefore, there



is a special drive to mobilize participation in such activities, which reduces non-participants figure.

- As already mentioned there is special mobilization drive to participate in activities like dharna, rasta roko, bandh, muttadi and strike, because their success depends on strength in numbers. That is why there is a higher proportion of participation in such activities in all the regions.
- Participation under Chalo reports lesser <sup>number of</sup> members under medium and maximum frequency for the three regions. This is because Chalo requires the members to travel and go to district headquarters or state capital or national capital. Obviously it is very difficult for women. Apart from leaving home and children, finance and security act as inhibitions. ~~inhibition~~ Usually the members participated in Chalo to district headquarter which is nearer their region of residence.
- Participation in bandh and strike has the highest proportion of respondents in all the three regions under medium frequency of participation. Organisers and leaders seek more or less total participation. Exceptions are due to family problems, health reasons, etc.
- On the whole, respondents' participation in active mode of programmes is on an average around 64 percent under medium frequency of participation. The members' <sup>are away</sup> ~~participation~~ of the need to show their strength to <sup>ise</sup> ~~pressurise~~ administration to respond to their demands.
- The largest proportion of non-participants is reported under extraordinary mode of participation, around 30 percent averagely for all the three regions. Compared to the other modes of activity, higher



proportion of respondents reported minimum frequency of participation in extraordinary activity.

- The members reported under medium frequency is much lower under extraordinary mode of activity than for the others.
- Participation in support of women organisation activity is extremely low with a high proportion reporting nil participation (90%, 84%, 57%) in tribal, rural, and urban regions, compared to participation in programmes in support of CITU affiliated unions, other trade unions and in people's organisations.
- As the Anganwadi workers and helpers union is affiliated to CITU, there appears to be fraternal support to CITU and also to other trade unions.
- Workers and employers join unions to increase their collective bargaining strength and secure economic and material benefits for themselves. Participation in support of other organisations occurs very rarely. Individual joins union out of instrumental than ideological consideration. Yet, the fact that women of the Anganwadi Union are lending support to other organisations <sup>to a certain</sup> ~~to a certain~~ extent is noteworthy. ~~Also, such good example is not that participation of labour movement women in union is not about the organisation. For example, during the 1980s, the women's movement was under the leadership of the Indian Women's Federation.~~
- Anganwadi workers are recruited on the conditions of local residence and preferably from local communities. The percentage of ST\* <sup>those in the</sup> respondents is very high, because apart from tribal region there were

\* ST – Scheduled Tribe





tribal respondents in rural and urban regions also. Therefore, the percentage of respondents with a QOL is very low. There is high importance of QOL in rural and tribal regions.

- Tribal communities' response to union leaderships: Tribal communities' response to union leaderships is much more loyal. Tribal respondents' participation <sup>has</sup> been similar and even higher compared to rural <sup>respondents</sup> despite limitations of road connectivity level of education, economic status and family background.
- Recruitment as Anganwadi workers require educational qualification. Therefore, all the respondents are at least high school educated. Variation in levels of education coincides with region; more urban respondents have higher qualification, tribal respondents have the least education <sup>at</sup> qualification. There was no direct linkage between level of education and quality of participation.
- As per Indian tradition, women are married at an early age. In the study, 85 percent of the respondents reported <sup>at</sup> married status; there are 9 percent widows, 2.5 percent divorced or separated, and 3 percent unmarried women. The overall level of participation for the Anganwadi members indicates that marriage has not hampered their participation in union activities.
- As per the details of income of the respondent families, nearly 73 percent reported <sup>at</sup> Rs.2000/- and below income per month and 0.7 percent reported <sup>at</sup> Rs.5000/- and above per month. Three-fourths of the respondents <sup>at</sup> depend upon the honorarium of Rs.2000/- per month of the Anganwadi workers for the maintenance of



their families. This income status of the respondents is assumed to be a determining factor in the family's acceptance and non-hindrance to their role in union activities.

- A larger proportion of respondents are from middle age groups (63.16%). The number of young is more in urban and tribal regions. We note that comparatively the overall participation of rural respondents is logging behind. Age factor is hypothesised to be a significant reason. Norms of marriage, marriageable age, child bearing and child care are usually cited as fetters during younger age for women, comparatively women are more active in public roles in middle age and beyond. At the same time younger persons are accepted <sup>as</sup> being more radical, modern, physically more energetic and mobile. In our case study, more tribal and urban respondents reported active participation more frequently. This is attributed to presence of younger respondents <sup>in these regions</sup> compared to more members of middle age/among rural respondents.

- The length of service of 53 percent of the respondents is below 10 years and 13 percent have more than 20 years of service, the rest (33.83%) have 10-20 years of service. There are significant variations in length of service by regions. This is because the ICDS projects started in rural and tribal regions first and only later extended to urban regions. Urban respondents have joined later than the rest in all modes of participation.

Urban respondents have scored better than the rest in all modes of participation.



## Conclusions:

While the findings of a micro-level case study, as in the present project, are not automatically applicable as generalisations, they are nevertheless significant to understand the role of trade unions, role of members within them and specifically the nature of women's participation in Trade Unions.

Some of the findings concur with the main ideas of earlier studies that (a) individuals <sup>form</sup> unions out of instrumental than from ideological considerations (T.A.Kochan, 1979), (b) the economic and security motives are the most important factors for unionisation (Sinha, D. and Paul, M.V. (1963); K.N. Vaid, (1960), P.P. Arya, (1982), E.A. Ramaswamy, (1977) and S.M. Pandey and Vikran, C.M. (1979), <sup>†</sup> that workers unite for non-work benefits also, like health, insurance etc. because of the social values of the workers (Y. Harberfeld, 1995).

Regarding the specific issue of the nature of women's participation, the findings of the present study reinforce M.Crain's observations that female workers are <sup>very</sup> receptive to organising <sup>themselves</sup> and that it takes women longer to commit to unionisation, but once they do so, they are unshakable (Marian Craien, (1994).

The working of the Anganwadi union and the quality of participation of its members is a remarkable example of the potential of women to play their role in public decision-making and implementation which is instrumental towards women's empowerment.



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