

Hindola (The Swing)

Assessing the extent and nature of desertion in Daund taluka and Ghole road ward of Pune city

Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule Women's Studies Centre, University of Pune

Society for Promoting Participative Eco-System Management (SOPPECOM)

December 2008

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Preface

In November 2005, when the project 'Assessing the extent and nature of desertion' was undertaken by all of us jointly, we as students and researchers in the emerging interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies, were aware of the complexities and rapid changes taking place in the Indian political economy. Assessment of the extent and nature of desertion in Daund Taluka and Ghole Road ward of Pune City is surely an empirical research conducted by separating an issue of desertion, studies at a micro level towards locating the practices of marriage and familial living on material as well as local sites.

This data not only presents desertion across different social groups underscoring the links between violence and desertion, but poses many question marks to various dichotomies such as global vs. local, empirical description vs. theorization and more importantly, it speaks about the overall increasing insecurities and various terrorisms which hide the issues of survival and dignity for 'women' as a marginalized category. We sincerely feel that this local level data provides us with some insights for further explorations.

Generally speaking marriage and family are issues which either get caught in 'unchanging tradition' or we see marriage and family at once glorified as sites of consumption and as spaces of recovering and reinventing 'Hindu practices'. We have accounts of disruptions including violence in the family but it is treated as an aberration. The issue of desertion points to the logic of power and domination as it structures the 'normal' patriarchal marriage and family. Questions such as: 'What are the causes of desertion? How is it named? What continues and discontinues as causes? Are there major changes in this context? How do caste, class mediate in the process of desertion? What are the individual and collective resistances that women forge on this issue? These questions form the substance of our research. Our larger agenda is to throw back the gaze of the 'deserted' women on the institution of marriage and family. This gaze constitutes the insights of both: those who consider themselves as 'victims' and others who see themselves as 'resisting violence'.

As researchers in Women's Studies we understand 'feminism' as a transformative, critical, political consciousness. We understand the category of 'women' as an exploited category constituting and constituted by the structures and ideologies of caste, class, community. Hence our effort in this study was towards creating challenges to the dominant ideologies and interpretations. We do hope that this small step towards creating understanding of complex weave of deserted women's life will take us further towards including many more emerging 'female headed households' in the globalising Indian world. This world of India has today at one level witnessed the fastest growth of high net worth individuals worldwide but at another level Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, Christians have suffered due to an unequal share of this development.

We hope that this report expands the understanding around desertion of women and leads to action and research towards creating gender sensitive, justice oriented emancipatory just Indian society.

Vidyut Bhagwat

Acknowledgement

The project started in November 2005. It has been three long years since the project started and now we are happy to present the report findings before you. Various people have contributed to the successful implementation of this project. The initial support team from the Women's Studies Centre had Sambodhi Deshpande, Ashwini More, Devendra Mohite, Vinayak Lashkar and Sanjay Kamble. For data collection we had specially invited Hasina Mulla from Sangli district. The team from Rawangaon village in Daund taluka from Rashtrasant Tukdoji Krushi Gramvikas Aani Sanshodhan Sanstha (RTKGSS) did the entire data collection in an efficient manner. The data collection for the Pune team was done by young girls from Pandavnagar vasti in Ghole road ward. Many of them belonged to the Bhagatsingh Brigade.

The study would not have been possible without the support or participation of the three organisations working in the study area. One of them was Navnirman Nyas (NN) where because of Vasudha Sardar's support we could take up the study in the taluka. She was supported by Gautam Ovhal from NN. The other organisation in Daund taluka without whose support this may not have been possible is RTKGSS. Here under the leadership of Ravi Pomane a young team from Rawangaon village ably supported us in the data collection process. Our study in Pune city would not have been possible without the active participation of Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana. Medha Thatte, Chandrbhaga Sapkal, Padma Sutar, Rajni Maladkar and Sandhya Phadke put in a lot of efforts to make this possible.

Our entire data entry was managed by various people and it would be difficult to name them all here, but we are thankful to Mayura Kulkarni who did a large chunk of the data entry work. Sugandha More, without whose help the data would not have been in the form that you see in this report needs a special mention. We are also thankful to Sugeeta Roy Choudhry and Vrunda Vaze who did copy editing for English and Marathi reports respectively.

We are thankful to the tremendous support from staff in both the Women's Studies Centre and SOPPECOM for helping us around for all the last minute tasks. Suchita Jain from SOPPECOM who prepared maps for the report needs a special mention.

This project would not have been possible without the financial and administrative support of Centre for social Sciences and Humanities. We would specially like to thank Prof. Sadanand More and Prof. Suhas Palshikar from this centre.

The summary report was shared with four external reviewers Dr. Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Dr. Chhaya Datar, Dr. Sumi Krishna and Dr. Padma Velaskar. Their comments were extremely useful and although we were not able to incorporate all of them in this report we are thankful to them for pointing out what needs to be done in future explorations.

Finally we are extremely thankful to all the people from Daund taluka and Ghole road ward who participated in the study and provided information. We are especially grateful to the deserted women from both these areas who participated in the study. The study was not possible without their support and the trust with which they shared their experiences with us.

We do look forward to feedback from you all and hope this report goes towards contributing to the question of desertion and single-hood.

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Seema Kulkani
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Rationale, background and objectives

Deserted women, cast-away women, thrown away women or *parityakta-taklelya striya*, are different terms used interchangeably for women who are thrown out of their marital homes or in some cases who have chosen to step out themselves. Whatever the term, the implication is often degrading. The numbers of such women appear to be increasing thus reflecting the overall status of women in society. Yet there is little mention about these women in academic literature. The recent NSS data shows the extent of female-headed households¹ to be about 11% according to the 61st round done in 2004-2005. According to the socio-cultural tables of Census 2001 the total percentage of widowed and divorced/separated women to the total female population in the age group of 10 years -80 years is 10.95%. Although both the Census figures as well as the NSS figures do not give us any understanding of desertion, they are indicative of the possible extent of singlehood which is accounted for. The point being made here is if the numbers of deserted i.e. those left by their husbands who are neither widowed nor divorced are added to the above figures we would get a formidable figure.

There have been a few studies done in the past, which have tried to understand the plight of these women. However, despite the growing numbers, there is little systematic work done to understand both the extent of desertion and the forms of exploitation.

The women's movement in Maharashtra however has systematically taken up this issue since the mid-eighties. In fact most of the autonomous women's groups were set up around that time and worked on the question of patriarchy. While working with women on the question of violence, work and dowry, many of these groups encountered extreme forms of violence against women leading to desertion. Stree Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal in western Maharashtra, Samajwadi Mahila Sabha in

¹ These are defined as households headed by women and do not necessarily include deserted, widowed and single women.

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Northern Maharashtra and Samajwadi Jan Parishad in Ahmednagar district were a few groups that decided to take up this issue at a campaign level after the initial surveys they undertook, indicated a high extent of desertion and widowhood. In Sangli, every other village had about 35-40 deserted women and a similar number was seen elsewhere too. This then led to organizing of various events like the large conference in Vita, Sangli district in 1987, the *parityakta mukti yatra* from Pune to Mumbai in 1991, the conference in Aurangabad² attended by almost 50,000 women etc. These events and the persistent follow-up by each of these organizations in their areas brought the question onto the public policy agenda. Several gains did come about after these major rallies and struggles. The movement did achieve success. Some of the gains were issuing of ration cards in the names of women, recognition of women's identity as a parent in school, granting of housing plots of 2000 sq. ft. each in Sangli district. However, such a vibrant movement failed to attract the attention of many of the women's studies centres that had started coming up around the same time. The fact remains that today there is very little systematic documentation done of these movements or of the question itself.

Our references show that there is no study done so far on the extent of desertion in Maharashtra or for that matter, elsewhere in the country. Jagori, Samata Andolan, Vanchit Vikas and more recently, Ekal Nari Sanghatan etc. have done studies which are more by way of understanding the nature of singlehood rather than understanding the extent.

Most of these studies have been either anecdotal or as narrations of the lives of single and deserted women. There has been little analytical work in trying to place desertion in the broader framework of women's exploitation in a society ridden with inequities resulting due to caste, class and religion.

The present study of course does not try to fill in all these analytical gaps, but is a small effort to look at the extent of desertion and to achieve a better understanding of the social and economic conditions of singlehood thrust upon women through desertion. Through this study we hope to contribute to public action and policy

² The Socialist front organized this state-level conference where about 50,000 women participated. A declaration was brought out and this was reflected in the first ever women's policy brought out by the state.

formation for deserted women. We also hope to draw attention of the feminist academia to this question to further explore the different dimensions of singlehood. For example, little work has been done to understand the changing political and social context and its relation to singlehood, environmental degradation and singlehood or understanding how singlehood is experienced by women belonging to different castes, religions and tribes. The list of the unexplored dimensions of singlehood could be further expanded.

This study draws on one of the more recent studies of SOPPECOM (Society for Promoting Participative Eco-system Management) done along with Women's Studies Unit of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Stree Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal in Sangli district³.

The **general objective** of the present study is to contribute to the larger campaigns and movements working on the question of desertion through an understanding of the extent and nature of desertion in Pune district.

The **specific objectives** of this study are:

1. To map the extent of desertion in the selected areas
2. To understand the nature and form of desertion across caste.

Study area

The study was jointly done by the Women's Studies Centre of the University of Pune and the Society for Promoting Participative Eco-system Management (SOPPECOM) along with Navnirman Nyas, Pargao, Rashtrasant Tukdoji Krushi Gramvikas Aani Sanshodhan Sanshta, Rawangao (RTKGSS) and Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana.

While identifying the location of the study, the researchers were clear about the fact that the study should be located in an area where there is a strong women's

³ This study, which was completed in 2005 mainly, looked at the nature of desertion and widowhood by talking to 150 such women who were associated with the struggle led by Stri Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal in Western Maharashtra since 1988. For the detailed study report you could visit www.soppecom.org

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organization that would use the data meaningfully to pursue the issue at the programmatic and policy level. The different groups that were approached were the Kagad Kach Kasthikari Panchayat⁴, Janwadi Mahila Sanghatana⁵, Shramik Mahila Morcha and Navnirman Nyas. From among these the Molkarin Sanghatana, a front of the Shramik Mahila Morcha⁶ and Navnirman Nyas thought that it could be linked to their existing programme. A youth group, RTKGSS, which was newly formed in one of the villages in Daund taluka, also joined in and in fact their members took the lead in collecting the huge quantum of data. The young blood charged with bringing about a change in the village handled the data gathering process very sensitively.

Navnirman Nyas, Pargaon

In 1985, Abasaheb Karmarkar, a socialist leader, set up Navnirman Nyas in Pargaon village of Daund taluka of Pune district. The main objective of setting up this organization was to work on the ideals set by the leaders of his era of a democratic society. Although the *sanstha* (organization) was set up in village Pargaon, the work spread to other areas as well.

The main aims of the sanstha are as follows:

1. Working with the downtrodden communities
2. Working with the people and not for the people
3. Giving priority to people's needs and problems
4. Building awareness about issues and exploitation which people are not aware of
5. Focusing more on change-oriented work rather than welfare alone
6. Every issue must be understood in its social, political and economic dimensions
7. The organization is guided by a political change motive.

⁴ Kagad Kach Kashtakari Panchayat (KKKP) is a union of the ragpickers working in and around Pune city. A large number of ragpickers are women and they largely belong to the scheduled castes. The union has raised several issues for the rights of this group.

⁵ This is the women's front of the CPM and it has a strong mass base in Pune.

⁶ This is the women's front of the Lal Nishan Party or the red flag part one of the left-wing parties.

The initial years of the sanstha's work focused on the proper and effective functioning of local institutions such as the gram panchayat, co-operative societies etc. The sanstha also worked hard to ensure participation of women and the youth in village affairs. In fact, it actively encouraged the youth to fight the panchayat elections. It also raised awareness about the duties and the functions of the gram sabha and called on the active participation of the people in the village affairs. It led a campaign to address issues of corruption at the gram panchayat level in Pargao. The village often faced a severe drinking water problem. There was a demand to purify the Bhima river water and this issue was taken upto the district level. This movement was a fine learning ground for building awareness amongst people on what good leadership is.

While engaging with this work, the local youth also took up the problem of alcohol. In fact Navnirman Nyas took a lead in the struggle against alcoholism at the state level as well. A large number of women from different organizations joined in this struggle, and a few of their demands were fulfilled at the state level. The local youth went from house to house in several villages. While they spoke to men and women who opposed alcohol that was sold in the villages, they also spoke to men who consumed liquor and thus managed to understand the various dimensions of the problem.

From 1990 onwards, the sanstha started its work on self-help groups. Apart from the economic aspects of these groups, the sanstha made an effort for women to come together and share their other problems. Women were now increasingly becoming independent and their bargaining power increased within the household. This was also useful in the struggle against liquor. This work spread to the neighbouring villages and strengthened the movement against alcohol in that area.

The organization's main work has been in the area of education where it has made its own land available for a hostel for the *Zilha Parishad* School. The school drop-out rate has considerably dropped as a result of this hostel.

The sanstha also started its work in other districts of Maharashtra. The sanstha also spread to a few other areas. For example in Nanded district, it took up a programme on *Adarsh Gaon Yojana* for watershed development. The organization has also taken up work with the young girls. Girls of this age group are entering a

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new phase of their lives and they need a lot of guidance and support. The sanstha organized several *shibirs*⁷ for this group of girls.

When it started its work the sanstha realized that there were a large number of single and deserted women in the villages. These women needed support and the sanstha thought of imparting some skill-based training. There was not much support for this question at that point of time, but the organization did plan to focus its work in this area too. The question of desertion indicates that women are still treated as secondary citizens. The organization therefore has been keen to be involved in a detailed study of the situation and then take up the movement at the local level.

The organization believes that the question of singleness and desertion is more related to the way society looks at women. Although our demands need to be addressed to the state, what is perhaps more important is to work in society to change attitudes of men and women towards the question. Though demands to the state have to be more in the nature of rehabilitating the women, our aim should be that there will never be desertion in the manner it presents itself today. Our efforts must be in this direction. Our strategy therefore has to be a long-term strategy where we should address the larger concern of patriarchy and women's exploitation within it.

Rashtrasant Tukdoji Krushi Gramvikas Aani Sanshodhan Sanstha, Rawangaon

A few local youth from village Rawangaon of Daund taluka of Pune district came together to set up this sanstha. The main aim of this organization is to work towards the development of the village by involving the local youth in the village development work.

The sanstha believes in the following:

1. Struggle against any kind of addictions like alcohol, gambling etc.
2. Non-political party participation
3. Equality of men and women

⁷ Workshops or discussion meetings, usually on pre-decided themes.

Introduction

The local youth have been trying to bring in change in their own village and for that they have taken up several programmes at the village level. They have organized *shibirs*, *sammelans* etc. to bring in awareness about exploitation.

In 2005, when the state was affected by floods, the young people from this group got together and collected about 25 Q of food grain and distributed it in the flood-affected areas, particularly to the single and deserted women living there. In fact this inspired the youth to do something together as a collective and therefore they set up this sanstha.

One of the important areas of their work has been to reform the education standards of their village. They ran a signature campaign and set up a charter of demands. Many of the demands were met and change was visible. On one of the remote *vastis* (settlement), there was no pre-school, so the sanstha fought for it and got the pre-school proposal accepted. The school is now running in the vasti.

The sanstha believes that change can occur at a younger age and hence they have started various activities at the school level. These activities include debate and essay competitions on social issues. Birthdays of key leaders are celebrated so that children know and understand their history. Similarly, it was thought important to inculcate the habit of reading among them. A library was started to make good books available to the kids.

The other area of the sanstha's work has been to fight against alcoholism. The village has a severe problem and the local youth made several attempts to close the alcohol shops. Initially there was some success but it could not be sustained for long. The organization now feels that the problem has to be handled in a different way through changing people's attitudes and building awareness in them.

The organization has been encouraging and appealing to the villagers to participate in their own developmental projects. People have contributed their own labour to build the village temple, plant trees and also develop a sports area.

They propose to launch a total sanitation campaign in their village and make it open defecation-free within a year's time.

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The organization got involved in the present study as it wanted to work towards the upliftment of women. In its work, it realised that the number of desertions were increasingly growing. The main cause for this situation is the patriarchal system. Women have complained of violence and alcoholism as the main causes for desertion. Campaign against this therefore has to be taken up as an important step in addressing the problem. Women's education is also an important long term goal that needs to be taken up by the organization if this problem has to be addressed.

Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana

The *sanghatana* (organization) was started in 1980 with a major strike that came up spontaneously in some of the prosperous localities in Pune. The domestic workers had come together spontaneously to demand for better wages and better working conditions. The sanghatana lacked a guided leadership which they later found in Bhalchandra Kerkar who was then leading the Insurance workers union. Looking at the problems of the domestic workers, several senior activists of the women's movements like Leelatai Bhosale of the Lal Nishan Party or the Red Flag Party, Vasudha Sardar, a socialist and others held vasti-level meetings with the domestic workers and provided the much needed leadership. The struggle got a lot of visibility and immediately after, the domestic workers got organised under the name of the Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana. Some of their demands then were:

1. Increase in salary
2. Two salaried holidays in a month
3. Salary should not be cut when the person is on sick leave
4. Diwali bonus equivalent to the monthly salary or a gift equivalent to that amount be given.
5. Domestic workers to be treated with respect.

Many of the women came from the *vadar* community and many were also from the Konkan region. They were working to supplement their husband's salaries. Many of their men were working as daily wage earners or as rickshaw drivers etc.

The sanghatana has organised and participated in several mass struggles and rallies along with other toiling workers groups. It has grown stronger with a membership recorded at over 5000 in 1999.

In 1997, the sanghatana began the process of setting up an Act for protecting the rights of the domestic workers. Their demand has been that domestic workers are part of the unorganized sector and hence they need to be paid minimum wages, need weekly and annual holidays as paid leave, bonus, etc. To protect these rights and legitimize their demands, the sanghatana had pressed for an Act in this direction.

The sanghatana's demands are changing with the times but the relevance remains even in this day and age.

Conceptual framework and methodology

We approach the question from a feminist framework, which would see desertion and singlehood as part of the patriarchal context rather than some problem exclusive to a category of women. Deserted, widowed or never married would fall into this broad category. We refer to this term as *Ektya Vanchit*. The term *Ektya Vanchit* or single deprived women was first used by a women's collective that got formed recently and held its first shibir in February 2008. This term is inclusive of not only deserted, widowed, never married women but also devdasis, sex workers etc. who are forced to remain single. The term *Ektya Vanchit* however signifies women's agency, survival, and not merely their victimization. The use of the term would make the campaign more inclusive both in terms of numbers as well as in terms of the deprivation each of them faces because of certain conditions. Though the intensity and nature of the problems would vary for each of these single women groups (E.g. the widows, the never married, the divorced, the deserted, the sex workers, the devdasis etc.), they nevertheless share several experiences. Our understanding of singlehood therefore encompasses all these categories although in this study we choose to focus on those thrown out of the marital relationship largely in circumstances of violence.

A study done by Sylvia Chant in the Latin American context defines desertion as 'a conflict induced by their partners' disengagement from household commitments and or pursuit of outside activities for example, socializing with male peers, drinking, gambling, extra marital affairs.' (Chant, 1997)

In the Indian context, the reasons for disengagement would also include inability to produce a male child, infertility, not bringing in dowry from the natal home, or simply the inability to fulfil the role of a *sati savitri* or the normative woman.

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The identity of womanhood or the normative woman is determined not only by caste, class and ethnicity but also by her marital status. Marriage and family play a very important role in the construction of womanhood. The institution of marriage and the baggage that goes along with it (patrilocal residence, motherhood) has been able to control women and perpetuate exploitation. The status of the husband ultimately determines the status of the woman. The death of the husband, absence of a husband or desertion often changes the life of the woman drastically.

Moving on to how we look at deserted women-are they victims or are they survivors? Our analysis understands these women not only as victims of patriarchal structures but also agents for challenging patriarchy and the normative woman. Although distressed by their own struggles, these women have in fact emerged as independent persons taking charge of their own lives. Women's agency is less understood in the context of desertion or any form of deprivation. So although women may not have chosen to get out of these martial relationships if they had not been so violent, they nonetheless have made a statement by saying that they will tolerate no more.

We have broadly analysed the situation of single and deserted women by looking at their residence and living arrangements, access to property, their health and educational status, remarriage norms and practices, access to employment opportunities and livelihoods, issues of maintenance and of course, the social stigma and the isolation faced by deserted women.

Sample selection

In Daund, our sample consisted of 10% of the villages in the taluka. Daund has 102 villages, large and small. The criteria for selection of the villages were: a) population of scheduled castes b) child sex ratio and c) irrigated or unirrigated area

A systematic procedure for sampling was attempted mainly to be able to make projections of the extent of desertion for the entire taluka. However, while stratifying the villages based on these criteria, we encountered several problems such as insufficient data on irrigation; need to exclude larger villages like Kedgaon, because the research team and the resources available with it were simply inadequate to handle data collection at those scales. The other reason was also to choose villages

from within these broad criteria where our collaborating organisations had some contact. Using a combination of these criteria, we then selected a 10% sample, which comprised of 11 villages of Daund. These villages were therefore a combination of large and small, accessible and non-accessible, those with a dalit population of more than 20% and with child sex ratio varying from 600 in some villages to about 950 in others. (For the detailed information about the selected villages see Annexure 1 at the end of this chapter)

Our initial idea was to make projections for the extent of desertion in Daund taluka based on a 10% sample, but since the sampling procedure could not be followed very systematically, we are now only showing the indicative trends for a taluka. From these 11 villages we covered 5558 households i.e. every single household from these 11 villages.

In Pune city, the task was anyway massive and given our resources there was no possibility of making any projections for the city hence we had decided to select our sample in an area where a local organization was strong. By this rule, we selected 18 vastis (settlements) in the Ghole Road ward office area of Pune city where the Pune Shahar Molkarin Sanghatana has a stronghold. Here we covered 4402 households.

Choice of methods and data analysis

This was primarily an extent study and hence the tools had to be designed accordingly. However, our second objective was also to look at the nature of desertion and the differences across castes. For this, we had to do a more detailed study of the deserted women themselves.

Given these two objectives, we had planned for a three-staged investigation method. The first was to understand the extent of desertion, the second was to understand the socio-economic deprivation of all the deserted women identified through the first stage survey and the third level of investigation was to do oral narratives of a few deserted women across caste and religion to understand the nuances in experiences and contexts. However, we were not able to do the third level of investigation due to certain obstacles during the project period. We therefore used a two-staged investigation method. The first stage of investigation was to understand the extent of desertion and the second stage was to do a detailed study of the

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nature of desertion. A sample was selected from within the deserted women identified through the first stage of investigation. For the first stage, we used a structured questionnaire, which was a page long and which was mainly to locate the deserted women and the households they belong to.

The second stage study of the deserted women had a detailed semi-structured interview schedule, which tried to understand the socio-economic conditions of the women and the reasons and contexts for desertion. Here we also wanted to understand the differences across castes, religion and age.

As is evident from the nature of the study, we had two sets of data before us. One set was largely quantitative in nature, and the other was a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. All of the quantitative data was entered in the Microsoft access format, but analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) package. The qualitative data was read thoroughly and analysed using the variables on caste, religion and age.

Our data analysis has been around the variables of caste, religion and age primarily, but we have also looked at the village context for certain aspects in our analysis particularly when we look at reasons for desertion. We have done this by looking at their work opportunities, earnings, incomes, their access to various government schemes, and social security measures, ownership of property, living arrangements etc.

Whereas the quantitative data gives us a sense of numbers and the scale of deprivation, our qualitative data leads us to an understanding of desertion, its reasons and importantly, women's own actions to struggle and make their lives meaningful.

The data has not been assessed over a period of time and hence we are not able to understand the changes in marital relations, family relations and material aspects over time. The oral narratives would have helped us with that level of analysis.

Limitations of the study

The main emphasis of the study was to understand the extent of desertion in a predefined population, which was to be used to make projections at the taluka and ward level. The identified deserted women were then interviewed in detail to get an understanding of their social and economic status. We had further planned to do oral narratives of some of the deserted women for a more nuanced and detailed analysis into the caste and class variations in experiences and also to understand women's agency, the choices they made and stuck by. This was also to help us map changes in women's own perceptions about themselves over time and the changing marital and familial relations. But for various practical reasons we were not able to do this third level of investigation. The extent study itself was an intensive one and took up a lot of our energy and resources.

As part of this study we were not able to look at the marital context of the deserted woman. An understanding of the marital context would have helped us make taluka level projections with reference to how village and regional contexts do play a critical role in the process of desertion. It would be important to see the links between the socio-cultural and economic context of the husband and desertion.

The criteria used for sampling would have helped us establish these linkages as to whether factors like irrigation, child sex ratios or Dalit population influence desertion in any way. So although the sampling criteria gave us a fair representation of women from different areas, we need to also look into the marital contexts if we want to understand how these contexts affect desertion.

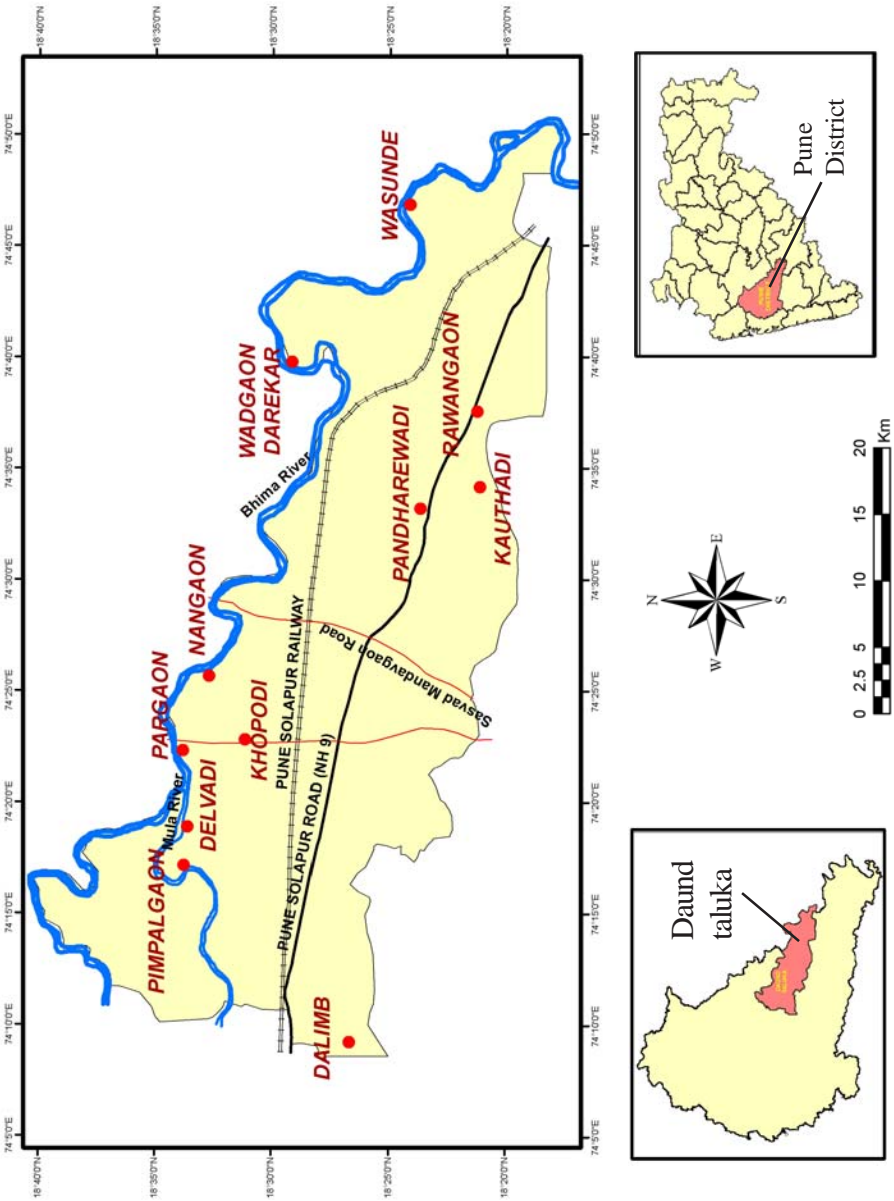
Annexure 1**Information about villages selected as sample, Daund taluka**

Village	No. of households	Population	Sex ratio	Child sex (0-6 age group)	Percentage of SC ratio of Population	Percentage of ST Population	Literacy rate Population	Female literacy rate
Dalimb	451	2284	947	1100	8.4	0.3	72.3	58.5
Delvadi	634	3320	924	746	18.9	0.4	73.8	62.3
Kauthadi	232	1093	931	931	15.6	0	65.4	49.8
Khopodi	153	841	1036	1094	5.8	0	74.5	63.4
Nangaon	505	2547	1013	1047	19.9	2	73.0	63.3
Pandharewadi	462	2146	748	815	3.4	0.1	76.2	66.0
Pargaon	1547	7724	967	939	12.5	4	71.0	62.3
Pimpalgaon	1032	5100	958	883	16.1	1.9	69.2	58.6
Rawangaon	803	4026	937	886	14.9	0.2	71.1	57.0
Wadgaon								
Darekar	386	1631	932	790	8	2.1	69.3	58.0
Wasunde	308	1456	918	672	8.6	0	87.7	82.4

(Source: Census of India, 2001)

Sample villages, Daund taluka

Map 1



Extent of Desertion in Daund Taluka

Introduction

Maharashtra is one of the most rapidly expanding and ‘developing’ states in India. It is considered as one of the most prosperous states of the country with a high per capita income. Paradoxically it is also a state with high rates of crime and violence against women and a fast declining sex ratio. A large number of suicides have affected a large part of the state indicating a crisis in the agricultural sector as a whole. As if these were not enough woes, the state has now opened its doors to the different international/national corporations to invest and set up their own SEZs. It is one of the leading states to offer its land and other infrastructure to such industry. Pune district is one of the two districts along with Raigad which boasts of a large number of such SEZs coming up. There have been protests by farmers from different villages in the district. In this seemingly rich state, we find an increase in the disparities in incomes, skewed land ownership patterns and poverty.

Pune district

Pune district is one of the more prosperous districts of the state, but we see a clear difference in the eastern part of Pune, which is the rain shadow region and therefore a drought prone area, and the western part of Pune, which has better sources of irrigation. Proximity to Pune city makes migration a very important aspect of people’s livelihoods. In fact livelihoods of most of the households in some manner or the other are linked to the city of Pune.

Profile of Pune district

No. of households	1517041
Total population	7232555
Sex ratio	919
Sex ratio 0 to 6	902
Proportion of SC population	10.53
Proportion of ST population	3.62
Literacy rate	86.10
Total working population	2954482
Percentage of main workers	89.54
Percentage of marginal workers	10.46
Percentage of cultivators	26.86
Percentage of agricultural labourers	12.68
Percentage of workers in household industries	2.67
Percentage of other workers	57.79

(Source: Census of India, 2001)

Daund taluka

Daund is one of the prosperous talukas of Pune district in Maharashtra. The taluka has 102 villages. It is largely an irrigated taluka with 58% of the area being classified as irrigated and 42% as unirrigated as per the District census handbook 2001, Pune. The total population of the taluka is 299,184 covered over 59,449 households. The sex ratio for the taluka is 923. The total SC population of the taluka is 13.21%.

If we look at the census data most of the villages in the taluka have the basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, schools etc. The taluka does seem to have some of the basic amenities as per the census data. However, as we shall see later from people's responses, several households have complained of a lack of drinking water facilities, schools etc. in their villages.

One of our stark observations which does corroborate with data on child sex ratio is the widespread use of sex selective abortions. The taluka boasts of several

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mobile vans which are present in the small towns of Kedgaon, Choufula and Daund. In our discussions with the Anganwadi workers who maintain a record of the pregnancies, births and deaths, we were told candidly by a worker that there are several instances of female foeticide taking place in the village. In fact she is pressurized not to maintain a record of pregnancy until the sex of the child is known by the 3rd or 4th month. These are stark revelations considering that the taluka is prosperous and so close to an urban satellite. They only re-emphasize the point that instances of violence against women are on the rise especially in the more prosperous parts and in the more prosperous households of the taluka.

It is against this backdrop of prosperity that we hope to understand desertion among women.

Profile of Daund taluka

No. of households	67697
Total population	341388
Sex ratio	927
Sex ratio 0 to 6	889
Proportion of SC population	14.18
Proportion of ST population	1.98
Literacy rate	62.62
Total working population	161883
Percentage of main workers	89.17
Percentage of marginal workers	10.83
Percentage of cultivators	41.66
Percentage of agricultural labourers	27.96
Percentage of workers in household industries	2.34
Percentage of other workers	28.04

(Source: Census of India, 2001)

Basic infrastructure and civic and social amenities

Education

All the villages have educational facilities. Every village has primary schools. The taluka has 20 villages without a middle school. Forty-five villages have a secondary school and only 10 have senior secondary schools. It has 2 towns having colleges. A large number of students also come to Pune city to pursue their higher studies. Despite this picture, we have seen that the Rawangaon group was formed with the express purpose of giving better educational opportunities to its citizens.

Health facilities

The taluka has very good medical facilities with a lot of private practitioners around. Perhaps this is also the reason why Primary Health Centres are there in such few villages. Of the 102 villages, only 4 villages have Primary Health Centres and in fact none have a sub-centre. Surprisingly a large number of villages have a TB clinic. The taluka has several large and small hospitals.

Drinking water and sanitation

According to the district census handbook 2001, drinking water is available in all the villages. Of the 102 villages in the taluka, 78 have drinking water through taps. Hundred villages also have wells as a source of drinking water. Four villages have tanks as a water source and 13 have tubewells while 86 villages have handpumps. However, in summer, the major source of drinking water for most of the villages is the well. Only in 4 villages does the tap water scheme function during summer.

Roads and other infrastructure

Despite a good road network, 27 villages (26%) are yet to be connected to the bus service of the State Transport. They need to go to a nearest village to board the bus.

Credit societies and banks

Almost 81% of the villages do not have any banks. Co-operative banks are there in 19 villages. Every single village however has a credit society and also agriculture credit co-operative societies.

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Panchayat revenue

Being one of the prosperous talukas of the district, its income collection is more than its expenditure. This is of course true of the average and in many villages of the taluka, the expenditure exceeds the income. The income of village panchayats together in Daund taluka is Rs. 20,614,800 averaging to about Rs. 2 lakhs per village. The total expenses are Rs 18,576,000 or about Rs. 1.8 lakhs per village.

Land use

The total geographical area of the taluka is 137,553 hectares of which 6.1% is under forests. Irrigation is fairly high and the total irrigated area through wells, canals, and tube wells is 46209 ha. The unirrigated area is 33009 ha. Cultivable waste land is about 20975 ha and area not available for cultivation 17644 ha. Of the total cropped area as available in the census data, 58% comes under irrigated land and the rest i.e. 42% is unirrigated. These figures do give us a sense of the prosperity of the taluka which is also evident when one visits the villages. However there are pockets of poverty which one does see especially in the more remote villages of the taluka.

The present report looks at the extent of deserted women in 11 villages of Daund taluka. As we have seen earlier, these 11 villages were selected on the basis of a sampling procedure which primarily looked at three criteria a) population of SCs b) child sex ratio and c) irrigated or unirrigated area. A systematic procedure for sampling was attempted mainly to be able to make projections of the extent of desertion for the entire taluka. But while stratifying the villages based on these criteria, we encountered several problems (such as insufficient data on irrigation, need to exclude larger villages like Kedgaon etc.) because the research team and the resources available with it were simply inadequate to handle data collection at such scales. The other reason was also to choose villages from within these broad criteria where our collaborating organisations had some contact. Given these limitations we are therefore not aiming to make projections at the taluka level on the extent of desertion.

The present data therefore focuses on the selected 11 villages from Daund taluka in understanding the extent of desertion. It will try and see the linkages of extent with child sex ratio, population of dalits and irrigated area as based on the information of Census 2001.

Our sample: who did we speak to

We have spoken largely to women from within the households to get basic data on the extent of desertion and other socio-economic information on the households. However in this phase we had not made it as a methodological precondition to talk to women because a) of the scale involved b) it did not hold relevance from the point of view of the purely quantitative and objective nature of the data that we were collecting at this stage.

Section 1: Building the profiles of the villages we surveyed

Before we look at the extent of desertion in these villages we need to be familiar with the households and people we surveyed. In all we surveyed 5558 households across 11 villages in Daund taluka. This survey entailed a complete coverage of all the households in these 11 villages. A few households from each of the villages may have been left out as a result of either migration or because none of the members of the household were present during the period of data collection. An effort was made to go back to these households to collect information. Comparing with the census 2001 figures, however, we have covered more than 85% of the households in each of these 11 villages.

Table 2.1 Village wise distribution of the sample, Daund taluka

Village	No. of households	Percentage to the total population
Dalimb	353	6.35
Delvadi	470	8.46
Kauthadi	205	3.69
Khopodi	141	2.54
Nangaon	761	13.69
Pandharewadi	349	6.28
Pargaon	1048	18.85
Pimpalgaon	745	13.40
Rawangaon	768	13.82
Wadgaon Darekar	324	5.83
Wasunde	394	7.09
Total	5558	100

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From the table above we can see that our 11 villages ranged from very small to large. As mentioned earlier, for different reasons we have excluded from our study the very large town-like villages such as Kedgaon. Of the 11 villages, 4 had a household (hh) population of more than 500 and the other 7 ranged from hh size as low as 141 upto 470.

Chart 2.1 Caste wise distribution of the sample, Daund taluka

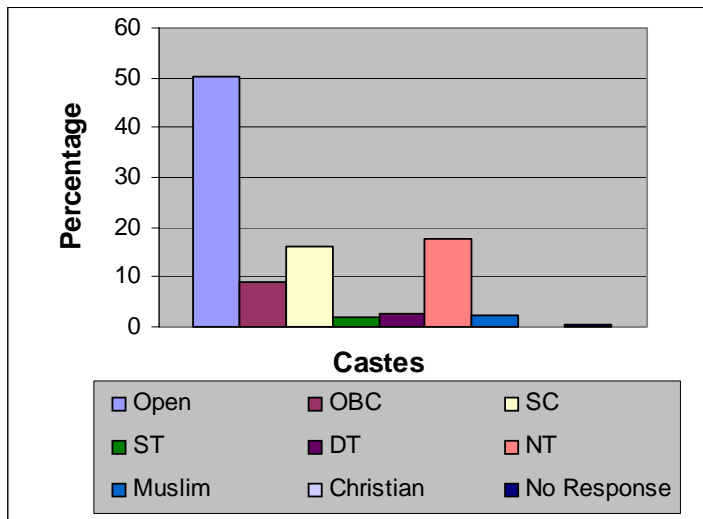


Chart 2.1 gives us the caste profile of the households that were studied. It shows that in the 11 villages studied about 50% of the sample came from the upper castes. The rest of the 50% primarily belonged to OBC, SC, ST, DT, NT⁸, Muslims and Christians. It is important to note here that the percentage of open castes includes Brahmins and Marathas, but the number of Brahmin households is as low as 26 out of the 2795 households and the rest are Marathas. Most of them referred to themselves as Marathas and did not qualify further as to whether they were kunbi Marathas or something else.

(For distribution of castes in all the sample villages see table 1 of Annexure 2 at the end of this chapter)

⁸ OBC (Other Backward Castes), SC (Scheduled Castes), ST (Scheduled Tribes), DT (Denotified Tribes), NT (Nomadic Tribes)

Table 2.2 Religion wise distribution of the sample, Daund taluka

Religion	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Hindu	5282	95.03
Neo Buddhist	134	2.41
Muslim	131	2.36
Jain	6	0.11
Christian	3	0.05
No Response	2	0.04
Total	5558	100

Table 2.2 gives the religion-wise distribution of the households surveyed. A large percentage of the population were Hindus followed by Neo Buddhists or the Nav boudha and the Muslims.

Table 2.3 Sex wise distribution of the population, Daund taluka

Sex	No. of population	Percentage of the total population
Female	13568	48.77
Male	14253	51.23
Total	27821	100

From among these households we see that the sex-wise distribution points to an unfavourable sex ratio of 950 women to 1000 men.

If we look at table 2.4 we will find the sex wise extent of legal separation as well as the extent of widowhood. The figures largely look at the marital status with reference to the total population. If we look at the number of married men and women to the total population then we find that they are more or less the same, but if we look at the unmarried men and women then we find that the proportion of unmarried women to the total population is only 17% whereas the unmarried population of men is about 24%. This reflects the overall strictures on women to marry young.

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Table 2.4 Marital status of the population, Daund taluka

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total
Married	7238	7283	14521
Unmarried	6787	4773	11560
Widowed	190	1160	1350
Separated/Divorced	28	12	40
Deserted	0	329	329
Male who has deserted his wife	16	0	16
No response	2	3	5
Total	14261	13560	27821

We find that of the total number of households (i.e. 5558), 20% have widows while 5.9% are those who have deserted women. A more correct way of assessing these numbers would be of seeing the percentage of widowed and deserted women with reference to the total ever married women⁹. This shows us that of the 8784 ever married women, 1501 include widows and deserted women. This is about 17% of the ever married female population.

An earlier study done by SOPPECOM showed that the nature of problem of the deserted and widowed women is not very different and the forms of violence that they are subjected to do not differ very much. (SOPPECOM, SMS, TISS, 2005) In this study, however, we are focusing on the deserted women alone, not because the widowed are less vulnerable or less exploited but because that kind of a study would have involved a different set of resources and expertise. In the second phase of this study therefore we have held detailed interviews with deserted women.

⁹ Ever married female population is a term used in the census documents for women who are married at some point in their lives. They could be separated, deserted or widowed later. Thus the category includes married, widowed, divorced and deserted women

Table 2.5 Main occupation of the surveyed population, Daund taluka

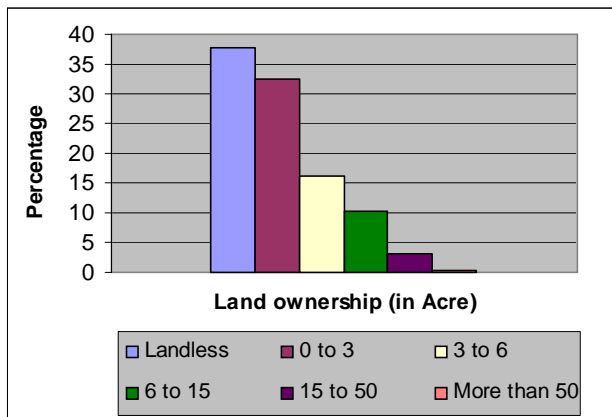
Occupation	No. of people	Percentage
Farming/Cultivation	6370	22.90
Agriculture labour	2426	8.72
Labour other than agriculture	2038	7.32
Animal care	102	0.37
Artisan	44	0.16
Government service	216	0.78
Private service	713	2.56
Self employed	385	1.38
Driver	170	0.61
Pensioner	48	0.17
Household work	4675	16.80
Education	7278	26.16
No Work	3157	11.35
No response	199	0.72
Total	27821	100

Table 2.5 shows us the different economic and other activities that people from across these 11 villages engage in. Around 23% of the people are engaged in agricultural activities and about 16% are engaged in some form of labour. Interestingly we find that 16.80% women are engaged in household work alone. While talking to them, some women insisted that they do only household chores while some said that often they also went to their household fields to work.

Much to our surprise, this area has a large number of landless households. Almost 37.8% of the households own no land whatsoever. Among the landowning families, we see that more than 50% own less than 3 acres of land. As we have seen in the table above, they engage in agriculture or other labour and a few of them are in private service which effectively is the unorganized labour in small scale industries which are coming up in the area. Other landless are engaged in small enterprises or artisan works in the villages itself. (For the detailed village-wise and caste-wise break-up of landownership, see table 2 and 3 respectively of Annexure 2.)

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Chart 2.2 Land ownership, Daund taluka



We would be drawing on this data when we look at the profile of the deserted women and the kind of households they belong to in terms of both occupations as well as landholding.

Table 2.6 Reporting of problem in the village, Daund taluka

Problem in the village	No of households reporting the problem	Percentage to the total number of households
Drinking water related	1700	30.59
Lack of public sanitation facilities	1749	31.47
About educational facilities	1138	20.47
Lack of proper roads	1406	25.30
Lack of public transport facilities	1110	19.97
Problem of electricity supply	870	15.65
Addictions	936	16.84
About health service	535	9.63

Table 2.6 shows us the various problems that people spoke of in each of the villages. Almost 60% of the households have voiced their concerns about the lack of drinking water and sanitation facilities. In fact the census data showed that all the villages in the taluka have availability of drinking water, but our data does not seem to reflect so. The lack of educational facilities have been voiced as a concern by almost 20% households. Other infrastructure problems like road (25.30%)

Extent of Desertion in Daund Taluka

public transport (19.97%) and electric supply (15.65%) have also been voiced as major gaps. Addictions to various vices like alcoholism have been cited as a major problem for the households (16.84%). Health services too are lacking, but the presence of the private sector and proximity to Pune city could be the reasons why health services are not being cited as a problem. Table 4 annexed at the end of the chapter gives a detailed village-wise break of the village level problems as perceived by the people. This is quite contrary to the picture we saw earlier based on the census data which indicated that the taluka had its basic amenities in place.

(For the detailed village-wise break up of the reporting of the problem, see table 4 of Annexure 2)

Table 2.7 Reporting of problems in the family, Daund taluka

Family problem	No. of households reporting the problem	Percentage to the total number
Lack of sanitation facilities	742	13.35
Economic problem	562	10.11
Ration card related	524	9.43
House related	369	6.64
Employment related	212	3.80
Landlessness	131	2.36
Health related	122	2.20
Agriculture related	96	1.73
Domestic problems	39	0.70
Desertion	34	0.61
Alcoholism	27	0.49
Alcoholism and domestic violence	8	0.14
Indebtness	15	0.27
Old age	18	0.32
Domestic violence	2	0.04
Ill treatment by other villagers or community	1	0.02
No problem in the family	2656	47.79
Total	5558	100

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Table 2.7 shows us the problems within the family. A large number of households (47.79%) have said that they have no problem in the family. The others said that their problems were either related to poverty or to ration cards not being under the BPL scheme. Lack of sanitation facilities were also voiced as a problem at the familial level with 13.35% households reporting its lack. This has also got reflected in the problems at the village level.

Section 2: Extent of desertion

Our data shows that 329 women had come back home as deserted women and were part of these 5558 households. This means that the percentage of deserted women across these households is about 5.92%.

Table 2.8 shows us the village-wise break-up of the number of deserted women and their percentage within the village.

Table 2.8 Village wise percentage of deserted women, Daund taluka

Village	No. of households	No. of deserted Women	Percentage to the total number of households
Dalimb	353	26	7.37
Delavadi	470	30	6.38
Kauthadi	205	7	3.41
Khopodi	141	15	10.64
Nangaon	761	51	6.70
Pandhrewadi	349	11	3.15
Pargaon	1048	64	6.11
Pimpalgaon	745	33	4.43
Rawangaon	768	58	7.55
Wadgaon darekar	324	17	5.25
Wasunde	394	17	4.31
Total	5558	329	5.92

Extent of Desertion in Daund Taluka

We see from the data that Khopodi village has the highest extent (10.64%) of deserted women. This is in fact the smallest village from among the 11 villages.

Table 2.9 Caste wise percentage of deserted women, Daund taluka

Caste	No. of households	No. of deserted Women	Percentage to the number of households
Open	2795	134	4.79
OBC	499	31	6.21
SC	892	73	8.18
ST	108	6	5.56
DT	141	10	7.09
NT	973	61	6.27
Muslim	131	12	9.16
Christian	3	0	0.00
No Response	16	2	12.50
Total	5558	329	5.92

Table 2.9 shows us the caste-wise break up of deserted women. Among the mentioned castes, we find that the highest incidence is among the Muslim (9.16%) followed by SC (8.18%) and the DT (7.09%) households. We have a category where the castes were not stated by the respondents and therefore even 2 deserted women amongst this category reflect on the higher percentage of desertion. This unstated category could very well be a mix of different castes and therefore we would rather go by the figures where caste is stated explicitly.

The question is whether we can arrive at any conclusions with reference to caste and desertion. Does this mean that upper castes underreport their desertion figures, or does it mean that upper caste women have lesser freedom to desert their husbands and come to their natal homes? Or that they simply have no reason to desert? These are questions that can be further explored through oral narratives of these women.

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 2.10 Religion wise distribution of deserted women, Daund taluka

Religion	No. of households	No. of deserted Women	Percentage to the no. of households
Hindu	5282	306	5.79
Muslim	131	12	9.16
Neo Buddhist	134	11	8.21
Jain	6	0	0.00
Christian	3	0	0.00
No response	2	0	0.00
Total	5558	329	5.92

Most of them profess Hindu religion and a small percent from among them come from the Muslim and Neo Buddhist religions. Again if we are to look at the percentage to the total number of households in each of the religions, we find that Neo Buddhists (8.21%) and Muslims (9.16%) have a higher percentage of desertion. Like caste, here too we need to explore as to why the extent is higher among these religions. Among the Muslims the dominant reason could very well be oral talaq. Among the Navboudha, a comparative freedom for women and the compulsions to move out of the house and work could be reasons for their choosing to step out. But a stronger reason which both these communities share and so do the other castes that we saw earlier, is poverty. The most compelling reason for women to be thrown out of these houses is simply because the poor households are not able to fend for more than one wife. This does not justify the exploitative actions, but simply shows that while an upper caste and a higher socio-income group may afford to support two wives, poorer households would only have the option to leave one for the other.

Table 2.11 Age wise distribution of deserted women (Age as per NFHS¹⁰), Daund taluka

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15–19	10	3.04
20–24	26	7.90
25–29	47	14.29
30–34	38	11.55
35–39	61	18.54
40–44	81	24.62
45–49	2	0.61
50–54	22	6.69
55–59	10	3.04
60–64	15	4.56
65–69	8	2.43
70–74	7	2.13
75–79	1	0.30
80–84	1	0.30
Total	329	100

Table 2.10 gives us the age-wise profile of deserted women and we find that the highest percentage is in the age group of 40–44 years (24.62%). But if we combine the age groups between 25–44 years we find that the percentage is the highest and is about 68%. The younger age profile of deserted women is disturbing. It is also indicative of a recent change that is taking place where either reporting is possible or because women do feel assertive, walking out on their marriages is possible if the situation gets out of control. However detailed analysis would help us identify some of the reasons for this young population of deserted women.

¹⁰ National Family and Health Survey

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Chart 2.3 Age wise distribution of deserted women (Reproductive age), Daund taluka

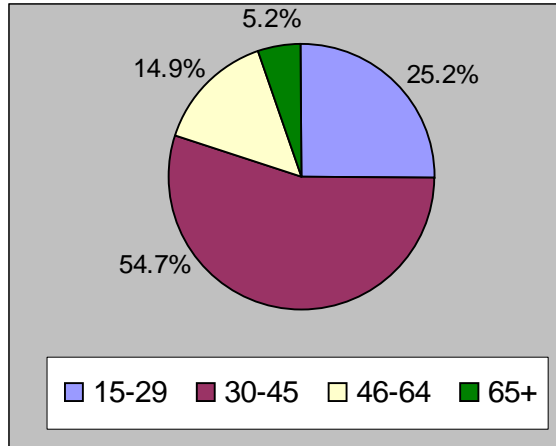


Table 2.12 Educational status wise distribution of deserted women, Daund taluka

Educational Status	No. of Deserted Women	Percentage to the total number
Non-literate	171	51.98
1 st to 4 th	42	12.76
5 th to 7 th	68	20.67
8 th to 10 th	32	9.73
Under graduate	1	0.30
No Response	15	4.56
Total	329	100

The educational status shows that more than 50% of the women are non-literate, the remaining being largely within the category of secondary schooling. This is a rather astonishing figure considering that these are young women and also close to an urban centre. It also shows that although young, none of these women have really gone to school beyond the 7th class. This is the situation in one of the prosperous talukas of a prosperous district. Its proximity to the city too does not seem to have any positive impact on women's education.

Extent of Desertion in Daund Taluka

Table 2.13 Occupation wise distribution of deserted women, Daund taluka

Occupation	No. of Deserted Women	Percentage to the total number
Agriculture labour	132	40.12
Labour other than agriculture	109	33.13
Household work	55	16.72
No work	11	3.34
Farming/Cultivation	10	3.04
Government service	3	0.91
Private service	2	0.61
Animal care	2	0.61
Self employed	2	0.61
No response	3	0.91
Total	329	100

Table 2.13 shows us the various occupations that these women engage in. More than 70% of the women are engaged in wage labour of some kind. Of these 40% are involved in agricultural labour and 33% are involved in other labour which includes working as unorganized workers in new small-scale industries that are coming up, construction labour etc. Only 3.04% of these women are into farming or cultivation on their family or owned lands.

Annexure 2

Supporting tables for Chapter 2

**Table 1 Village, Household wise caste distribution (percentage within village),
Daund taluka**

Village	Open	OBC	SC	ST	DT	NT	Muslim	Christian	No response	Total
Dalimb	77.62	2.83	10.48	0.00	2.55	5.38	0.57	0.00	0.57	100
Delavadi	54.26	3.62	27.02	0.85	0.64	9.36	4.26	0.00	0.00	100
Kauthadi	0.00	0.00	17.56	0.00	0.00	73.17	9.27	0.00	0.00	100
Khopodi	48.23	0.00	7.80	0.71	4.96	38.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
Nangaon	54.27	18.53	15.64	1.45	3.55	2.89	3.29	0.00	0.38	100
Pandhrewadi	55.30	34.38	3.44	1.43	0.29	0.57	3.73	0.57	0.29	100
Pargaon	59.26	6.77	15.27	4.48	1.15	10.59	2.00	0.00	0.48	100
Pimpalgaon	52.49	10.47	23.89	2.42	6.44	2.55	1.34	0.00	0.40	100
Rawangaon	4.17	5.08	18.49	1.82	1.43	66.28	2.47	0.00	0.26	100
Wadgaon Darekar	84.57	0.93	7.72	2.47	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	100
Wasunde	69.54	5.08	11.42	0.00	2.54	10.91	0.51	0.00	0.00	100

Extent of Desertion in Daund Taluka

Table 2 Village wise land ownership, Daund taluka

Village	Land ownership (In Acre)						
	Landless	0 to 3	3 to 6	6 to 15	15 to 50	More than 50	Total
Dalimb	25.8	41.1	20.1	11.9	1.1	0.0	100
Delvadi	40.4	41.9	12.3	3.2	1.7	0.4	100
Kauthadi	22.4	33.2	21.0	16.1	7.3	0.0	100
Khopodi	31.9	41.1	14.2	9.9	2.1	0.7	100
Nangaon	45.3	26.7	14.7	10.1	2.9	0.3	100
Pandharewadi	24.9	36.1	22.3	12.9	3.2	0.6	100
Pargaon	42.9	33.3	14.7	7.3	1.8	0.0	100
Pimpalgaon	44.2	33.2	13.6	7.0	2.0	0.1	100
Rawangaon	38.7	27.6	14.1	16.3	3.3	0.1	100
Wadgaon Darekar	39.2	29.6	13.9	10.5	6.8	0.0	100
Wasunde	23.9	27.2	26.1	16.5	6.1	0.3	100

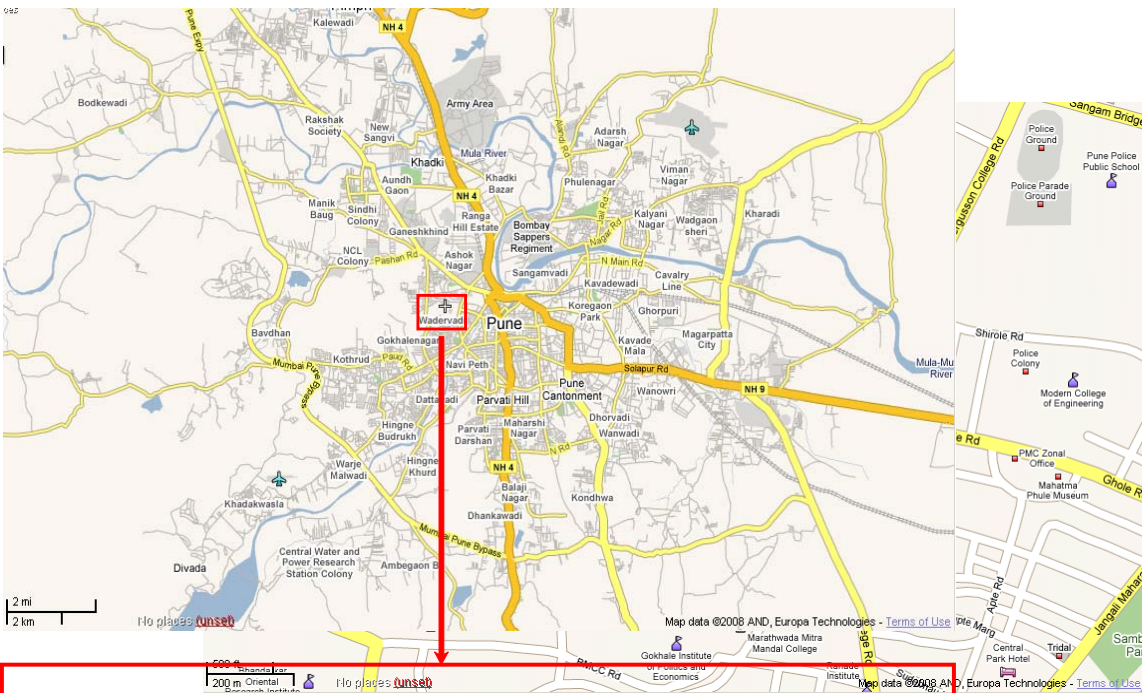
Table 3 Caste wise land ownership, Daund taluka

Caste	Land ownership (In Acre)						
	Landless	0 to 3	3 to 6	6 to 15	15 to 50	More than 50	Total
Open	24.7	37.0	21.3	12.7	4.1	0.2	100
OBC	45.5	33.5	13.3	5.5	1.8	0.4	100
SC	74.2	20.4	3.0	1.9	0.4	0.0	100
ST	87.0	10.2	1.9	0.0	0.9	0.0	100
DT	78.7	12.1	5.7	3.5	0.0	0.0	100
NT	23.3	37.3	18.5	17.3	3.4	0.2	100
Muslim	56.5	24.4	9.2	4.6	5.3	0.0	100
Christian	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
No response	81.3	12.5	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	100

Table 4 Reporting of problem in the village (Percentage of households reporting the problem), Daund taluka

Village	Drinking water Related	Lack of public sanitation facilities	About educational facilities	Lack of proper Roads	Lack of public transport facilities	Problem of electricity supply	Addictions	About health service
Dalimb	53.82	28.33	39.09	9.63	56.66	10.20	18.98	40.79
Delvadi	49.57	41.49	26.81	8.09	14.26	10.21	7.66	5.53
Kauthadi	49.76	2.93	8.29	74.15	23.41	14.15	0.00	7.32
Khopodi	60.28	37.59	46.81	12.77	0.00	11.35	35.46	18.44
Nangaon	23.26	39.55	5.12	59.66	55.45	15.37	27.07	1.31
Pandharewadi	39.26	11.75	7.16	23.50	5.73	12.03	0.86	0.57
Pargaon	28.72	30.06	23.85	9.92	3.15	12.12	2.86	6.58
Pimpalgaon	15.17	46.31	20.67	9.40	20.27	15.97	13.42	15.17
Rawangaon	25.52	36.72	18.49	20.96	0.13	33.46	49.35	1.04
Wadgaon								
Darekar	8.95	33.95	49.07	62.04	51.85	10.49	20.06	29.94
Wasunde	34.77	0.25	5.58	23.35	0.00	11.42	0.00	6.35

Study area, Ghole road ward, Pune city



Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Introduction

Pune city is one of the fastest growing urban centres. Earlier known as the cultural and educational capital of Maharashtra, it is now fast being recognised as the IT capital of the State.

Pune is a plateau city (180 31' N, 730 51' E) situated near the western margin of the Deccan plateau. It lies on the leeward side of the Sahyadri i.e. the Western Ghats and is hardly 50 km from the crest of the Ghat country. It is situated at a height of 560m above the mean sea level, near the confluence of Mula and Mutha rivers. Two more rivers, Pavana and Indrayani, transverse the north-western outskirts of the urban area. Mula-Mutha later empty into the Bhima river. In a sense, the city is located in the upper Bhima basin. The city is surrounded by hills on the east and the south.

Historically we see a shift in the power centres of the city changing hands from the Moghuls to the Marathas and then to the British in the 19th century. In fact the city came to fame during the Maratha and subsequently the Peshwa rule in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Today Pune is recognised as one of the fastest growing urban centres. Like any other urban centre, it is now also known for its vast disparities in incomes and the increasing number of poor who migrate here to make ends meet. A large number of the poor work in the unorganized sector as *hamals*, domestic workers or waste pickers and most of them come from the dalit, OBC, NT etc. castes. Increasingly, the housing problem is becoming a crisis in the city. A large number of the poor are homeless.

The total Pune urban area is about 700 sq. km. The total area of the Pune metropolitan region is 1605 sq. km. The land use pattern of the city has changed rapidly and agriculture and grassland scrub has decreased and the area under

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

settlement has increased rapidly. Pune city is also famous for its hills and at present we see encroachments on these hills which are the lifeline of the city.

The total population of the city is about 4 million as per the 2001 census.

Looking at the overall scale of the city there was no way that we could do an extent study of the city. We therefore restricted ourselves to one ward office in the city, the population of which is roughly equivalent of that of Daund taluka. The ward that we studied is the Ghole Road Ward office.

Ghole road ward

Population

The Ghole Road ward office is located right in the centre of Pune city and is one of the more prosperous slum areas of Pune, although within the area there are slums with extreme levels of poverty. It is these slum dwellings that became a part of our study. The total population of the Ghole Road Ward office area as per the 2001 census is 197,703 covering 44166 households. Ten wards come under this ward office. The details of the area are described in the table below

Demographic profile of Ghole road ward

Total population	197703
Total Number of households	44166
Sex ratio	911
Sex ratio 0 to 6	920
Proportion of SC population	17.63
Proportion of ST population	1.35

If we look at the work distribution of the population in the ward office area, we find that the total working population is 35% of the total population of the area. Of these, 91% are main workers i.e. those who have worked for more than six months in a year. However there is no distinction in this data in terms of work in the organised or unorganized sector. Also the data is for a fairly central and well-off location in Pune and therefore does not reflect the extreme poverty levels in some of the slum dwellings which are in the heart of the city.

Hindola (The Swing)

Distribution of working population, Ghole Road Ward

	Total	Percentage of male workers	Percentage of female workers
Main workers	63980	77.44	22.56
Marginal workers	5861	62.51	37.49
Working population	69841	76.19	23.81
Non workers	127862	39.29	60.71

If we look at the male-female distribution of main and marginal work then we see that a larger number of women are marginal workers as compared to the number of women who are main workers.

Distribution of Main and Marginal Workers in Ghole Road Ward

	Total	Percentage of male workers	Percentage of female workers
Cultivators	139	76.98	23.02
Agricultural labourers	128	56.25	43.75
Workers in household industry	2308	48.01	51.99
Other workers	67266	77.19	22.81

Of these main workers we find that 96% come in the category of other workers, which is work other than agriculture and agriculture labour and household industries.

Civic amenities

Our survey covered about 16 slum dwellings in the area and most of these did have some basic amenities like water and sanitation. However the services were not adequate and often people reported conflicts around these issues. The sanitation facility is a paid facility and women reported a monthly charge of anything between Rs 30–50. These are expected to go towards the maintenance cost.

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

This chapter looks at the extent of deserted women in 16 vastis of the Ghole Road Ward of Pune city. The selection of the sample in Pune was done largely keeping in mind the stronghold of the organisation that we were partnering with. Based on discussions with the key activists of the organisation, we selected a sample of 16 vastis from the Ghole Road ward. The population covered by us was 10% of the total population of the Ghole Road Ward.

Our sample - who did we speak to

We have spoken largely to women from within the households to get the basic data on the extent of desertion and other socio-economic information on the households. However in this phase we had not made it as a methodological precondition to talk to women because a) of the scale involved b) it did not hold relevance from the point of view of the purely quantitative and objective nature of the data that we were collecting at this stage.

Section 1: Building the profiles of the vastis we surveyed

Before we look at the extent of desertion in these vastis we need to be familiar with the households and people we surveyed. In all we surveyed 4402 households across 16 vastis in the Ghole Road Ward of Pune city. This roughly covers 10% of the total number of households in the Ghole Road ward office which has a total number of 44166 households. This survey entailed a complete coverage of all the households in these vastis. A few households from each of the vastis may have been left out because none of the members of the household were present on the day the survey was done. We present below a brief profile of the vasti-wise distribution of the sample.

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 3.1 Vasti wise distribution of the sample, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Vasti	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Chafekar Nagar	162	3.68
Gajamalwadi	22	0.50
Hanuman Nagar	26	0.59
Health Camp	351	7.97
Juni Wadar Wadi	1522	34.58
P.M.C.Colony	198	4.50
Pandav Nagar	292	6.63
Patil Bangala	83	1.89
Pulachiwadi	265	6.02
Ramnarayan Wasahat	47	1.07
Ramoshi Wadi	269	6.11
Shirole Plot	189	4.29
Tukaram Paduka Chouk	12	0.27
Vaidhya Bangala	61	1.39
Wadar Wadi (Maruti Mandir)	876	19.90
Wadekar Bangala	27	0.61
Total	4402	100

From the table above we can see that our 16 vastis ranged from very small to large. Some vastis had as few as 12 households and some others as many as 1522.

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Table 3.2 Caste wise distribution of the sample, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Caste	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Open	1087	24.69
OBC	343	7.95
SC	820	18.63
ST	99	2.25
DT	1414	32.12
NT	178	4.04
Muslim	189	4.30
Christian	12	0.27
No response	260	5.75
Total	4402	100

Table 3.2 gives us the caste profile of the households that were studied. It shows that in the 16 vastis about 44% were from the Denotified, Nomadic tribes and the Other Backward Castes. About 18% were from the scheduled castes and 24% from the upper castes. There was a small Muslim population (4.3%) that lived in this area. About 6% of the households did not give any response. (To see the spread of households surveyed across castes in the selected vastis, see table 1 of Annexure 3 at the end of this chapter)

Table 3.3 Religion wise distribution, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Religion	No. of households	Percentage
Hindu	3908	88.78
Muslim	189	4.30
Neo Buddhist	266	6.04
Jain	6	0.13
Christian	12	0.27
No response	21	0.48
Total	4402	100

Table 3.3 gives the religion-wise distribution of the households surveyed. Predictably here too the larger population is that of Hindus, which is about 88.78% of the total population, followed by Neo Buddhists at 6.04% and the Muslims at 4.30%.

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 3.4 Sex wise distribution, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Sex	No. of population	Percentage to total number
Female	10065	50.83
Male	9736	49.17
Total	19801	100

Table 3.4 shows the sex-wise distribution of the population. As against the rural context, here we see a slightly higher population of women in the urban slums surveyed.

Table 3.5 shows us the sex-wise marital status of the total population. If we look at the number of married men and women to the total population then we find that they are more or less the same, but as in Daund, here too we find that comparisons of the unmarried men and women do show that only 20% of the women are unmarried while the population of unmarried men is about 26% which once again reiterates the point of women getting married young in the urban contexts as well.

Table 3.5 Marital status of the population, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Marital status	Female	Male	Total
Married	4391	4352	8743
Unmarried	4081	5225	9306
Widowed	1335	121	1456
Separated/Divorced	11	12	23
Deserted	240	0	240
Male who has deserted his wife	0	19	19
No response	7	7	14
Total	10065	9736	19801

In the Pune urban data, we see that there are 240 women who are deserted and 1322 who are widowed. Of the 4402 households we see that deserted women come from 5.4% of the households and widowed women come from 30% of the households. This is higher than what we saw in the context of Daund where the percentage of such households was 26%. As we saw in the context of Daund, here too we can see that the percentage of deserted, divorced and widowed women to the total number of the ever married women is 26%

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Table 3.6 Main occupation of the surveyed households, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Occupation	No. of people	Percentage
Artisan	287	1.45
Construction labour	1246	6.29
Domestic Labour	1589	8.02
Driver	471	2.38
Household work	3428	17.31
Private Service - unorganised	1125	5.68
Ragpickers	25	0.13
Sweeper	25	0.13
Any other labour	544	2.74
Unorganised Sector	8740	44.13
Self Employed workers	867	4.38
Thekedar/Contractor	968	4.89
Self employed	1835	9.27
Government Service	324	1.64
Pensioner	148	0.75
Private Service - organised	987	4.98
Organised Sector	1459	7.37
Education	5484	27.70
No work	1060	5.35
No response	1223	6.18
Others	7767	39.23
Total	19801	100

The above table shows us the different economic and other activities that people from across these 16 vastis engage in. Like the rural sector, here too a large percentage of the population engages itself in the unorganized sector. Here 44.13% are in the unorganized sector and 9.27% are involved in small trade or employment of their own. About 27.70% of the population is young and is still in education. Often these young ones are also contributing to the household labour or supporting their own education through odd jobs. About 7% of the population is engaged in the organised sector either as government servants or in the private sector. Many of them are of course class IV employees with the government.

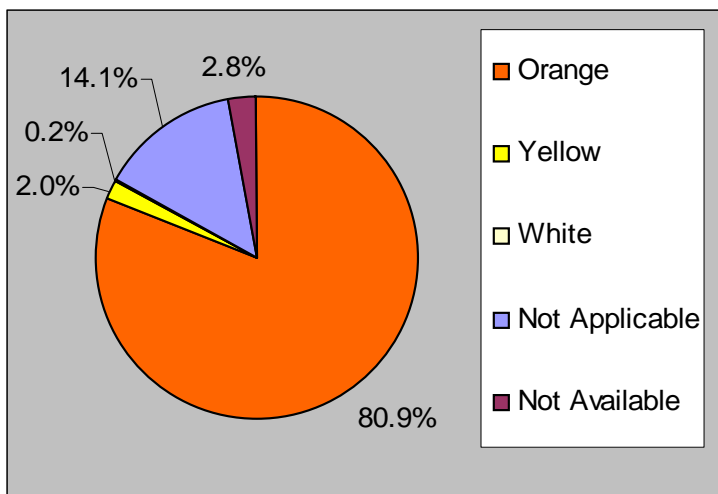
Hindola (The Swing)

Table 3.7 Spread of households with access to ration cards, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Holding of ration card	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Yes	3782	85.92
No	549	12.47
No response	71	1.61
Total	4402	100

The above table gives us a profile of households holding a ration card. This is also a proof of their residence and in an urban setting holds value in terms of regularizing their rights over the plot of land. We see that in these 16 vastis 12.47% of the households still do not have access to ration cards and are therefore deprived of the benefits thereof. The chart below shows us the spread of households holding the different colours of ration cards. Although 49% of the population is in the unorganized sector, we find that a large number fall above the poverty line going by the colour of the ration card. (To see the detailed vasti-wise ration card holding, see table 2 of Annexure 3)

Chart 3.1 Ration card colour, Ghole road ward, Pune city



Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

If we look at the assets owned by those who were surveyed, we find that about 76% of the households own the houses they are living in and 23.78% do not yet own any house. The table below gives us a picture of the land ownership of the households back in their villages.. About 11% of the households do own some land in their villages back home, but most of the others are landless.

Table 3.8 House ownership, Ghole road ward, Pune city

House ownership	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Yes	3355	76.22
No	1047	23.78
Total	4402	100

Table 3.9 Land ownership, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Land ownership	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Yes	492	11.18
No	3910	88.82
Total	4402	100

Both the tables below show us that there is very little financial and monetary exchange with their relations back home. Most of the households reported that they neither send nor receive any money from their relatives outside of Pune.

Table 3.10 Sending remittances, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Sending help	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Yes	167	3.79
No	4235	96.21
Total	4402	100

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 3.11 Receiving remittances, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Receiving help	No. of households	Percentage to the total number of households
Yes	52	1.18
No	4350	98.82
Total	4402	100

Section 2: Extent of desertion

In the urban context too, very similar figures are seen in the context of desertion. Here the data shows that 240 women are deserted from the 4402 households that were surveyed. The extent is almost similar to the rural context. Below is a caste wise distribution of deserted women. The last column of the table compares the caste-wise distribution to the total population within the caste.

Table 3.12 Caste wise percentage of deserted women, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Caste	No. of households	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the number of households
Open	1087	42	3.86
OBC	350	19	5.43
SC	820	59	7.20
ST	99	4	4.04
DT	1414	83	5.87
NT	178	6	3.37
Muslim	189	11	5.82
Christian	12	1	8.33
No response	253	15	5.93
Total	4402	240	5.45

If we look at the table 3.12, we find that a large percentage of desertion is among the Scheduled Castes i.e. 7.20% and the Denotified Tribes (5.87%) or particularly, the *vadar* community in this case. These are migrant communities from Andhra

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Pradesh with a very high incidence of alcoholism among the men. Most of the women engage in domestic work in the neighbouring areas. The proportion of deserted women among the open castes is found to be comparatively less and under-reporting could often be the reason for this. Women from open castes also exhibit lesser agency and flexibility in terms of moving out of violent relationships. This is evident in the rural context too. This was also validated in some of the individual interactions that we had with some of these women. Many of them have left their homes as a last resort and after trying hard to make things work.

Table 3.13 Religion wise percentage of deserted women, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Religion	No. of households	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the number of households
Hindu	3913	210	5.37
Muslim	184	11	5.98
Neo Buddhist	266	17	6.39
Christian	12	1	8.33
Jain	6	1	16.67
No response	21	0	0.00
Total	4402	240	5.45

Most of the deserted women profess Hindu religion and a small percent are Muslims and Neo Buddhists. Again if we are to look at the percentage to the total number of households in each of the religions, we find that Neo Buddhists (6.39%) and Muslims (5.98%) have a higher percentage of desertion as compared to Hindus (5.37%). The reasons of cultural contexts need to be explored as it is closely tied to both the personal laws in the case of Muslims and to material conditions in the case of Neo Buddhists, as was also true among the Scheduled Castes that we saw earlier.

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 3.14 Age wise distribution of deserted women (Reproductive age), Ghole road ward, Pune city

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15-29	78	32.50
30-45	130	54.16
46-64	30	12.50
65+	1	0.42
No response	1	0.42
Total	240	100

Table 3.14 gives us the age-wise profile of deserted women and we find that the highest percentage is in the age group of 30-45 years (54.16%). But if we combine it with the age groups 15-45 years, we find that the percentage is the highest and is about 86%. The younger age profile of deserted women is disturbing. It is also indicative of a recent change that is taking place where either reporting is possible or women are assertive and can walk out on their marriages if the situation gets out of control. However detailed analysis would help us identify some of the reasons for this young population of deserted women.

Table 3.15 Educational status wise distribution of deserted women, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Educational Status	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Non-literate	106	43.17
1 st to 4 th	36	15.00
5 th to 7 th	57	23.75
8 th to 10 th	32	13.33
11 th to 12 th	4	1.67
D.Ed/B.Ed	2	0.83
Under graduate	3	1.25
Total	240	100

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Like in the urban context, here too the educational status shows that a large number of women are non-literate. In this case it is 43.17%. There are about 52% who have done some schooling, but most of them have not crossed the std. VIII threshold.

Table 3.16 Occupation-wise distribution of deserted women, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Occupation	No. of deserted women	Percentage
Any other labour	8	3.33
Construction labour	13	5.41
Domestic Labour	134	56.25
Private Service - unorganised	7	2.92
Household work	48	20.00
Sweeper	2	0.83
Unorganised sector	212	88.74
Self Employed	7	2.92
Government Service	6	2.50
Pensioner	1	0.42
Private Service - organised	4	1.67
Organised Sector	12	4.59
No response	10	3.75
Total	240	100

The above table shows us the various occupations that these women engage in. More than 88% of the women are engaged in wage labour in the unorganized sector. Of these 56.25% are working as domestic workers and we shall briefly see the socio-economic status of the domestic workers in a separate section.

Annexure 3

Supporting tables for Chapter 3

Table 1 Vasti wise caste distribution of the sample, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Vasti	Open	OBC	SC	ST	DT	NT	Muslim	Christian	No response	Total
Chafekar Nagar	38.27	12.35	32.72	2.47	2.47	4.93	1.85	0.00	4.94	100
Gajamalwadi	4.55	68.18	4.55	22.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
Hanuman Nagar	73.08	0.00	23.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.85	0.00	0.00	100
Health Camp	22.51	9.69	46.44	0.86	3.70	4.84	6.84	0.85	4.27	100
Juni Wadar Wadi	10.78	3.02	19.32	2.56	44.15	6.18	6.18	0.20	7.61	100
P.M.C.Colony	10.10	3.03	82.30	0.00	0.51	0.51	0.51	1.52	1.52	100
Pandav Nagar	38.36	20.21	21.92	2.40	10.27	2.05	1.37	0.34	3.08	100
Patil Bangala	67.48	22.89	1.20	6.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.41	100
Pulachiwadi	72.83	9.81	4.15	0.38	0.00	2.64	4.91	0.37	4.91	100
Ramnarayan Wasahat	40.43	17.02	0.00	12.76	0.00	0.00	29.79	0.00	0.00	100
Ramoshi Wadi	13.75	5.58	11.15	2.23	47.21	5.20	6.69	0.00	8.19	100
Shirole Plot	57.14	23.81	2.64	5.29	0.00	8.47	0.53	0.00	2.12	100
Tukaram Paduka Chouk	41.67	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
Vaidhya Bangala	80.33	14.75	1.64	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.28	100
Wadar Wadi (Maruti Mandir)	17.35	4.00	3.08	1.48	64.73	0.91	1.83	0.11	6.51	100
Wadekar Bangala	40.75	33.33	3.70	0.00	0.00	14.81	0.00	0.00	7.41	100

Extent of Desertion in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City

Table 2 Vasti wise ration card holding, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Name of Vasti	Total no. of households	Households having ration card	Percentage to the total number of households
Chafekar Nagar	162	149	91.98
Gajamalwadi	22	22	100.00
Hanuman Nagar	26	24	92.31
Health Camp	351	325	92.59
Juni Wadar Wadi	1522	1263	82.98
P.M.C.Colony	198	185	93.43
Pandav Nagar	292	278	95.21
Patil Bangala	83	82	98.80
Pulachiwadi	265	236	89.06
Ramnarayan Wasahat	47	45	95.74
Ramoshi Wadi	269	237	88.10
Shirole Plot	189	176	93.12
Tukaram Paduka Chouk	12	11	91.67
Vaidhya Bangala	61	55	90.16
Wadar Wadi (Maruti Mandir)	876	669	76.37
Wadekar Bangala	27	25	92.59

The Women We Interviewed

In this section we try to understand more specifically about the deserted women we interviewed from both Pune city and Daund taluka. In total we interviewed 472 women from both these areas. This chapter discusses the profile of the sample in terms of their age, education, caste and religion.

Caste, religion and vasti/village wise profiles

Our initial survey had covered 11 villages in Daund taluka. From these 11 villages we interviewed 254 women. Of these 11 villages, the largest number of deserted women came from the villages of Rawangaon and Nangaon. Both these were also large villages and alcoholism had also been reported to be high in these two villages. In the earlier chapters we looked at the percentage of deserted women as compared to the total number of households within those castes. It showed us that a large percentage of desertion was among NT and SC households followed by Muslims. Among the 254 women, we find that open castes, SC and NT show the highest numbers. They are followed by OBCs. The table below gives us a village-wise distribution of the deserted women. The two charts that follow show a caste and religion-wise spread of the deserted women.

Table 4.1 Village wise distribution, Daund taluka

Village	No. of women	Percentage to the total number
Dalimb	19	7.48
Delavadi	25	9.84
Kauthadi	4	1.57
Khopadi	11	4.33
Nangaon	41	16.14
Pandharewadi	8	3.15
Pargaon	41	16.14
Pimpalgaon	26	10.24
Rawangaon	54	21.26
Wadgaon Darekar	15	5.91
Wasunde	10	3.94
Total	254	100

Chart 4.1 Caste wise distribution, Daund Taluka

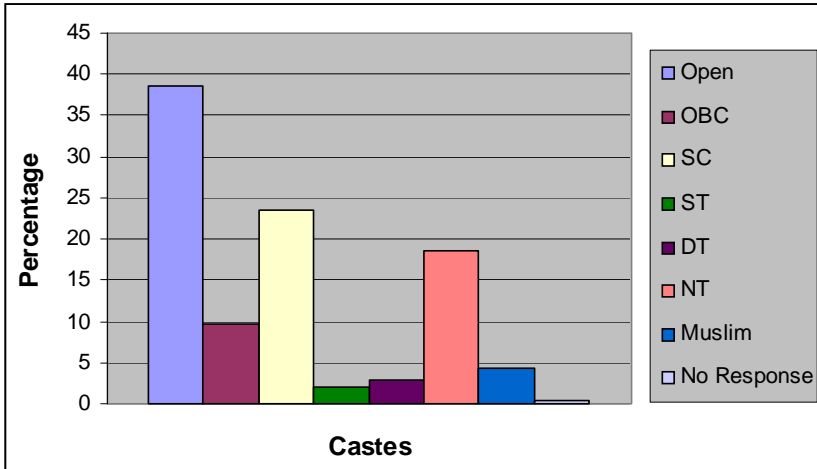
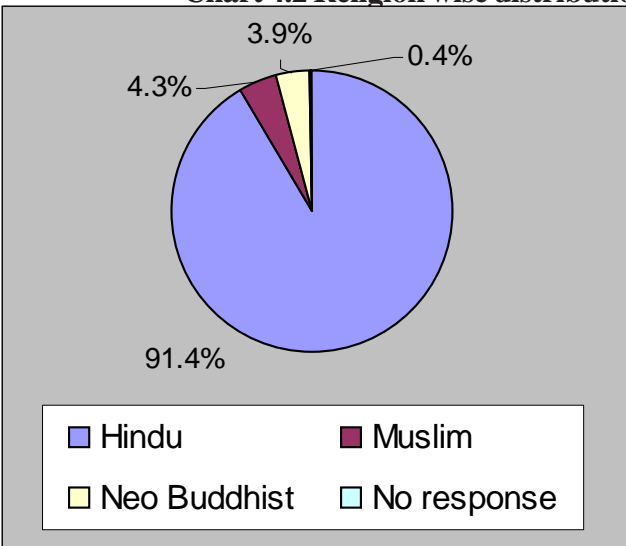


Chart 4.2 Religion wise distribution, Daund Taluka



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In the Ghole Road ward of Pune city we spoke to 218 deserted women from across 14 vastis. Our largest sample (53%) was from Wadarwadi and the Juni Wadarwadi, a settlement dominated by the vadar community, a nomadic tribe largely from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The table below gives a vasti-wise spread of the deserted women.

Table 4.2 Vasti wise distribution, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Vasti Name	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Chafekarnagar	2	0.92
Gajamalwadi	2	0.92
Hanumannagar	1	0.46
Health Camp	22	10.09
Juni Wadarwadi	37	16.97
P.M.C.Colony	19	8.71
Pandavnagar	10	4.58
Patil Bangala	1	0.46
Pulachiwadi	1	0.46
Ramoshiwadi	8	3.67
Shirole Plot	9	4.13
Vaidhya Bangala	2	0.92
Wadarwadi (Maruti Mandir)	101	46.33
Wadekar Bangala	3	1.38
Total	218	100

As table below suggests, 47% of the women were from the Denotified tribes i.e. in this case the vadar community and 25% were from the Scheduled castes. Fifteen per cent of the deserted women belonged to what is categorised as the open caste.

Chart 4.3 Caste wise distribution, Ghole road ward, Pune city

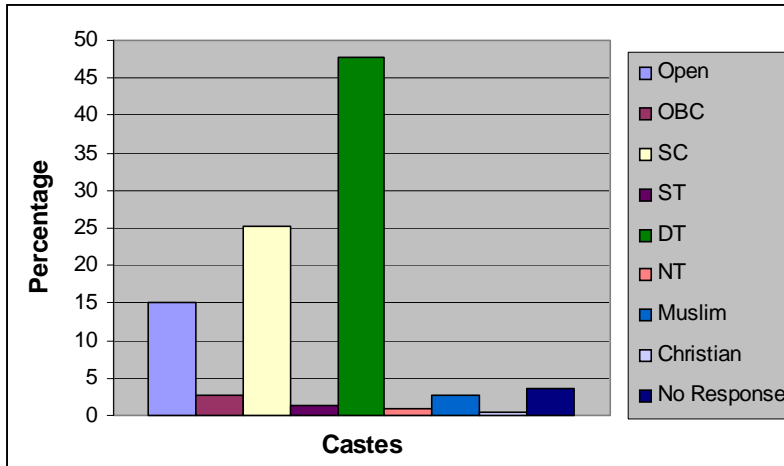
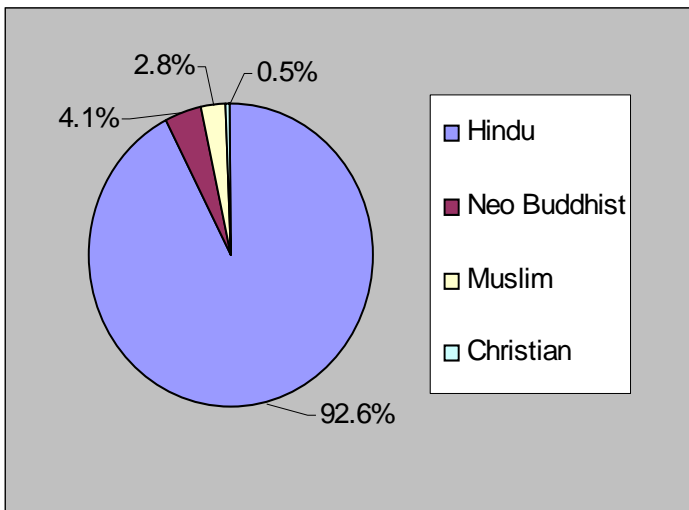


Chart 4.4 Religion wise distribution, Ghole road ward, Pune city



Most of the women belong to Hindu religion as is evident from the data, followed by Neo Buddhists (4.1%) and Muslims (2.8%)

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Age profiles

In the earlier section we have seen educational and age profiles of the deserted women from both the areas. This data too corresponds with that observation. The two tables below show us the age profile of the deserted women from Daund. The age-wise distribution is seen both as per the NFHS categories as well as the reproductive age group. The table below shows a fairly even spread across the different age groups of the NFHS.

Table 4.3 Age wise distribution (Age as per NFHS), Daund taluka

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15-19	6	2.36
20-24	21	8.27
25-29	25	9.84
30-34	28	11.02
35-39	46	18.11
40-44	46	18.11
45-49	26	10.24
50-54	11	4.34
55-59	15	5.91
60-64	17	6.69
65-69	8	3.15
70-74	4	1.57
75-79	1	0.39
Total	254	100

Table 4.4 Age wise distribution (Reproductive age), Daund taluka

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15-29	52	20.47
30-45	141	55.51
46-64	48	18.90
65+	13	5.12
Total	254	100

The age group of 30-45 years shows a high percentage of deserted women. If we combine the two groups of 15-45 then we have about 75% of the women falling in those age groups. The numbers dwindle as the age group increases and this needs to be explored further to understand whether women remarry or go back to their husbands or that there is a high incidence of mortality among the deserted and single women.

Table 4.5 Age wise distribution (Age as per NFHS), Ghole road ward, Pune city

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15-19	5	2.29
20-24	26	11.93
25-29	41	18.81
30-34	37	16.97
35-39	36	16.51
40-44	31	14.22
45-49	13	5.96
50-54	17	7.80
55-59	3	1.38
60-64	4	1.83
65-69	2	0.92
70-74	2	0.92
No response	1	0.46
Total	218	100

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Table 4.6 Age wise distribution (Reproductive age), Ghole road ward, Pune city

Age group	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
15 to 29	72	33.03
30 to 45	114	52.29
46 to 64	27	12.39
65+	4	1.83
No response	1	0.46
Total	218	100

In Pune, we see that in the younger age group there are a larger number of deserted women. As against the Daund data, we see that here in the 15-29 age group, 33.03% are deserted women. So if the two age groups were to be combined for Pune, we find that the 15-45 age group has 85% of deserted women.

Education profiles

Table 4.7 Educational status wise distribution, Daund taluka

Education	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Non-literate	148	58.27
1 st to 4 th	32	12.60
5 th to 7 th	42	16.53
8 th to 10 th	26	10.24
Graduate	1	0.39
No response	5	1.97
Total	254	100

For both the locations we see that there is a fairly large percentage of women who are non-literate. The Daund data shows us 58.27% women are non-literate. There is one graduate woman in this group, but overall we see very low levels of education.

Table 4.8 Educational status-wise distribution - Ghole road ward, Pune city

Education	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Non-literate	105	48.17
1 st to 4 th	29	13.30
5 th to 7 th	52	23.85
8 th to 10 th	31	14.22
11 th to 12 th	1	0.46
Total	218	100

Surprisingly women living in a central location of Pune too do not seem to show any difference in terms of their literacy levels. We have seen in the earlier table that most of the women are in the younger age group, but yet we find that 48.17% are non-literate and only 1 of them has reached the 11th-12th class. There are no graduates despite the facilities in the city, pointing to the fact that poverty, caste and patriarchy determine access to education. We shall see in a later section how low educational level does have negative impacts on women's livelihood opportunities. This is clearly indicative of the poverty of the households these women belong to.

Lower education leaves these women with little options to sustain themselves. Perhaps women would have had better options to bargain for their rights had they been a little more educated. As we shall see a little later, a large number of women are forced to work as agricultural labourers with an annual availability of work not being more than 150 days per year.

Chapter 5

Desertion and After

In this chapter we look at the reasons for desertion as articulated by the women themselves and see the comparisons between the rural and the urban contexts. We then go on to see the changes in women's life after desertion.

Our findings on the number of years of desertion show that about 23% of the women from Daund have been deserted for 4 or less than 4 years. The remaining 77% have been deserted for longer. Most of them have said that they did not or could not continue in the exploitative relationship for long. In Pune city too, the picture is more or less the same as is evident from the table below.

Table 5.1 Years of desertion, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Time since living alone (In years)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Less than one year	4	1.83
1-4	46	21.10
4-10	57	26.15
11-15	32	14.68
16-20	30	13.76
21-25	15	6.88
26-30	12	5.50
31-35	6	2.75
36+	9	4.13
No response	7	3.22
Total	218	100

One of the counter arguments for not providing any benefits to these women is that they are a floating population and that they are deserted today but may not be so tomorrow and hence there is no need to really argue for their rights or carve out

a special programme for them. But data across different studies has shown that most often women do not remarry and they do not go back to their husbands either. We asked all the 254 women whom we interviewed as to what were the reasons for desertion.

Reasons for desertion

Table 5.2 Reasons for desertion, Daund taluka

Reason for desertion	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Second marriage or extramarital relationships of husband	52	20.47
Alcoholism and harassment	51	20.08
Husband not willing to live with her	25	9.84
Mental and physical torture by husband and his family	22	8.66
No male child or infertility	22	8.66
Demands for dowry	15	5.91
Illness of the husband	12	4.72
It being husband's second marriage	11	4.33
Suspicion	10	3.94
Illness of the wife	7	2.76
Attempt of sexual harassment by other family members	6	2.36
Child marriage	6	2.36
She herself did not want to live with her husband	2	0.79
Unemployment of husband	2	0.79
Some other reason	11	4.33
Total	254	100

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While talking with many of these women we realized that though men were exploitative and demanding in their relationships, women did not want to tolerate ill-treatment in the house. Many of the marriages have in fact broken up within as early as 4 or 5 days or in a month's time. The physical violence and abuse was very much there and women too refused to tolerate. We see that there is a transition in the family and expectations that women have from their marriages have undergone a change. This perhaps led to women taking early decisions to leave. The reasons however indicate that men and the marital families have not really changed in terms of their expectations from the new bride. Demands for dowry, capability of managing the household work and farm work etc. are very much the norm. Incapability to fulfil these household responsibilities either in terms of producing a male child or satisfying the sexual needs of the husband lead to tumultuous marriages and perhaps the younger girls are not willing to accept this anymore. The context of course is violence; the agency is only with regard to a matter of the timing to leave a broken relationship. Men continue to remarry, have more than one spouse, have several extra marital affairs and yet expect women to accept this norm. Our data shows that younger women are not willing to accept this and are choosing to leave their marital homes at an early stage of the marriage. These changing aspirations and expectations from marriage are an important area of investigation that we need to explore. For e.g. in Daund we spoke to a woman whose husband was openly having an extra marital affair with a woman who lived nearby. In the woman's words, *'he used to spend all his time at her house. He just came to this house to take meals. So one day I told him that since he lives with that woman, I will not do any work for him and hereafter he should take his meals at that woman's place only. He beat me up severely. I could not tolerate this and so I left him.'*

For Pune city too, the situation was not very different.

Table 5.3 Reasons for desertion, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Reason for desertion	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Alcoholism and harassment	66	30.28
Second marriage or extramarital relationships of husband	28	12.84
Mental and physical torture by husband and his family	21	9.64
No male child or infertility	12	5.50
Unemployment of husband	12	5.50
Suspicion	8	3.67
Illness of the wife	6	2.75
Illness of the husband	6	2.75
Demands for dowry	4	1.84
Unspecified reasons	55	25.23
Total	218	100

Like in the rural context, here too we see very similar reasons for throwing a woman out of the house. The table above is indicative of the reasons or what we may call as the manifestations of the patriarchal system. While acknowledging that these reasons are not isolated and that often a combination of these leads to finally the woman being thrown out or choosing to opt out, we still thought there was a value in seeing some of the key triggers as perceived by women for the break-up in the family.

These findings show that alcoholism and harassment resulting from that has been cited as the reason for desertion by 30.28% of the women, but we also see that 25.23% of the women have had to leave their houses without any apparent reason. In many cases women have said that they went to their natal homes for a festival, but when they got back to their marital homes, they were asked to leave. A few other women have said that their husbands just left without saying anything and then they were harassed by their in-laws.

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Apart from this, women have also cited the husband's second marriage and extra-marital relationships as the main reasons why the marriage broke up. *'I came to my natal home during Diwali and when I returned, I saw my husband married to some other woman. She was employed and was financially contributing to the house so I was thrown out'*. This instrumentality of women shows how patriarchies are so very accommodative¹¹. Here the fact that the woman goes out and works is permissible since there is an economic value to it whereas in other cases we have seen suspicion as the major reason for men disallowing their wives from going into the public arena and eventually being the cause for desertion as well. Some of them also said that they went to their natal home to deliver a baby and when they came back they saw that he had already remarried. One woman was quoted as saying, *'My husband did not like me. So he married another girl. He had in fact gone to decide his brother's marriage but liked the girl himself and got married to her.'*

Not producing a child or even worse not producing a male child or rather producing only girl children has also been a source of discontent leading to desertion. In Pune city we have 5.5% women being forced to leave as they could not produce a male child or because they produced only girl children.

The reasons for desertion do not vary across castes, but experiences of being alone would differ for those from the upper castes and those belonging to the other castes. We do see some variations in opportunities for work, extent of poverty, and the less understood area of identities and security. However this would need a separate area of enquiry which did not fall in the scope of the present study.

Violence and desertion

Across both the areas we found that violence forms the basis of the marital relationship. The relationship breaks down if violence reaches an extent beyond which women cannot really tolerate. Harassment both by the in-laws as well as the husband therefore is cited as an important reason for desertion. In fact it is

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion on accommodative patriarchy, see Choudhary, P. 1998. 'Sexuality, Unchastity and Fertility: Economy of Production and Reproduction in Colonial Haryana'. In Martha Alter Chen, ed. *Widows in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

implicit in almost all the cited reasons. However only those women for whom it takes extreme forms cite this as the central reason.

'My husband was an alcoholic and used to beat me every now and then. I had to do labour work to earn money. So why should I live with him? It is better that I live with my parents and earn my own money.'

Women's sexuality and desertion

In both Daund and in Pune city we see that desertion was around the woman's sexuality and reproduction. Wherever these were in question and outside the normative construct of the woman, desertion has taken place. For e.g. the husband complaining that she is infertile or that she could not produce a male child, or that she was ugly.

In Daund, about 24 women quoted infertility or lack of a male child as one of the major reasons for desertion. Invariably in most of the cases, the husband was married at least 2–3 times before this marriage or even after deserting the woman. He also had numerous affairs with women, often made them pregnant and left them to fend for themselves. Evidently the normative man does not exist and therefore there is no questioning by the society for any of his transgressions. Lord Ram, the closest to what is a normative man, had himself deserted his wife and was suspicious of her relationship with Ravana.

Often the responsibility of their children was with the women and sometimes an added responsibility of the aged and ailing parents whom the brother refused to take care of.

The story also had alcohol as an accomplice in desertion.

Women as victims of and women as forced accomplices in the patriarchal project

In almost all of these cases one finds that the second wives, the mothers-in law or the 'other woman' expressing solidarity with the man—a vivid example of how patriarchy re-establishes itself through its own victims. The parents of the male have accepted all extramarital affairs and second marriages very well. In none of the cases did we have women saying that her in-laws were in support of her or

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that her sister-in-law at least expressed sympathy for her. In fact, they were very much a party to the exploitation of these women. These stories brought out just how strongly entrenched patriarchy is and how difficult it is for women to find a common rallying point to fight against it; how it is difficult for women to identify with other women simply because the primacy of their relationships to their men and their families becomes ever so important in an insecure, patriarchal and gender discriminatory society. Many of the women we interviewed in fact said that ill treatment by their in-laws was the main reason why they chose to leave the household. Some also said that if there was a possibility of staying separately then they would have thought of staying on in their marriages.

Choice of remarriage and practices across castes

Upper castes have largely prohibited remarriage by custom. Scheduled castes and other backward castes do allow for remarriage, but the reality is that women prefer not to do so. A large percentage of the deserted women belonged to other castes and though remarriage was sanctioned, women chose not to remarry. Some of the important reasons cited by these women were-having children, social attitudes, fear of the loss of claim to earlier husband, low chance of conjugal happiness in second marriage and importantly, because she did not want to go through a similar experience one more time in her life. The chances also are that a man who may agree to marry a deserted woman is also a man with perhaps a lot of negative attributes (bigamy, widower, children, alcoholic, ill) and women did not want to go through a similar experience one more time. The question here is of the quality of the marriage and the real freedom they may have to marry under positive circumstances.

After desertion: life for men - business as usual

Life for women changes drastically after desertion and we shall see how that is so in a later section. But for men things hardly change. Usually in most of the cases the men married not just once but 2-3 times. They often had open sexual relationships either within the household with their sisters-in-law or outside the house.

The chart below shows that men marrying immediately after desertion becomes very easily acceptable. In Daund, 158 of the 254 women we interviewed said that their husbands had married again. Some of the women reported that they got married just after she left or was thrown out. For some women it was shocking to find their husbands married when they came back from their natal home after the birth of the first child. Many among the 37% who are reported to have not married after deserting their wives, were in fact married 2-3 times before deserting them. The chart below shows us the extent of remarriage among the husbands.

Chart 5.1 Husband's remarriage, Daund taluka

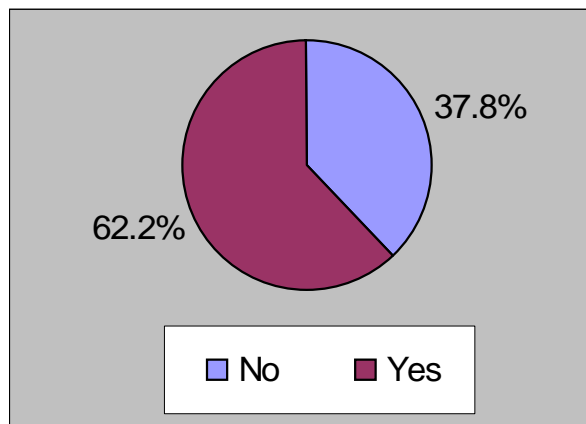
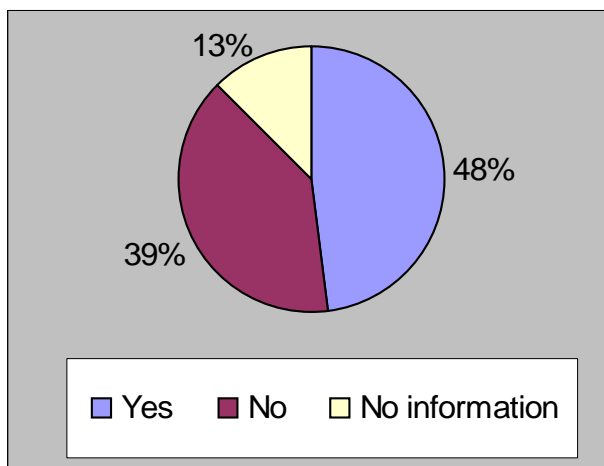


Chart 5.2 Husband's remarriage, Ghole road ward, Pune city



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Of the 218 women we have 48% saying that their husbands did remarry immediately after deserting them. But unlike in the rural context, here we see that there were 39% women who said that their husbands did not remarry. 13% women had no knowledge about the whereabouts of their husbands.

Table 5.4 Who the husband married after desertion, Daund taluka

Husband's second wife	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Unmarried	96	60.76
Deserted woman	13	8.23
Widow	2	1.26
No information	47	29.75
Total	158	100

Table 5.5 Who the husband married after desertion, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Husband's second wife	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Unmarried	39	37.50
Deserted woman	17	16.35
Widow	4	3.85
No information	44	42.30
Total	104	100

If we look at the data on who the husbands got married to, we find that 60% of them in Daund got married to a *kumarika* or a never-married woman. Second marriages have also taken place with some of the closest relatives of the women they have deserted. For e.g., a close cousin or sometimes even the sister of the deserted woman. Rules (unwritten but powerful) for remarrying differ for men and women in some castes. So a man's remarriage is socially sanctioned irrespective of caste or community they may belong to and there are often willing parents to marry off their daughters to men who may have deserted their earlier wives or

who may have open relationships with other women, all of which gains an immediate social sanction and legitimacy. For women, the rules are different. Although some of the scheduled and other backward castes do sanction remarriages for women, our data shows that women prefer to stay alone. The main reasons cited for this are the social stigma and pressures which are very high and which constrain women from remarrying. Also many of the women we spoke to chose not to remarry because their only memories of marriage and relationships with men were negative.

After desertion: life for women

For men life continues to remain business as usual, but for women everything changes. She belongs neither to the marital home nor to the natal one. This uncertain status leaves the deserted woman a lot more vulnerable than the widows. At one level there is a relief from the torture that she faced at the hands of her in laws and husband, but at another level she now has to face a different set of social and material challenges in her new state. For women, the first change is the physical relocation. Marriage itself relocates women and by the time the woman learns the new ways of life in a new home alien from her own setting, she is forced out of her house back to her natal home where she is rarely a wanted guest.

Sometimes her brothers are supportive but most often not. The relations with the sister-in-law are also problematic. Her energy is often drained in arguments and sometimes physical fights with brothers and their families. Very often she has to give her entire income to the brother and also work hard for the home.

Parents, despite the poverty at home, have been supportive of their daughters who in the parents' old age have proven to be more useful than sons.

Society looks down upon women whose husbands come and go. Delavadi is one such village where people have been looking down upon the deserted women whose husbands are frequent visitors. They think that these women are living in the best of both the worlds and hence argue that they should not get any benefits. However what we found was that these women were in fact worse off as they were facing the wrath of both society and their husbands. Another case is of a woman who was thrown out of the house for her incapacity to engage in agricultural work and has now gone into a deep shock. She is psychologically unwell and refuses to talk.

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In the section that follows, we discuss the struggle for survival of these women. All through we can see the hardships and the material deprivation on the one hand, but equally the grit and determination to survive and overcome the socio-cultural barriers and lead a full life.

On remaining deserted rather than divorced

Almost all the women we spoke to in different villages and vastis preferred not going in for a divorce. Women have often cited a couple of reasons for this- a) the procedure is too complicated as it involves hiring lawyers, paying money and bribing people, none of which these women have felt capable of doing; b) there is always a hope in the initial period that they could go back and stay with their husbands; c) the status of a *Deserted* woman is socially less stigmatizing than that of a divorcee.

Both the tables below show us that women have preferred to stay away from the law for the above mentioned reasons of wanting to evade the stigma associated with being divorced, and of course, the cost of getting justice. All of these reasons need to be pursued and understood carefully. Only 5.50% of the women from Daund are legally divorced, leaving the rest to be in a state of desertion.

Table 5.6 Legally divorced, Daund taluka

Legally divorced/separated	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	240	94.50
Yes	14	5.50
Total	254	100

Table 5.7 Legally divorced, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Legally divorced/separated	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	196	89.91
Yes	22	10.09
Total	218	100

On legal support

In both Daund and in Pune city we find very few women approach the courts to help get them justice. Though one of the most cited reasons for desertion by these women was second marriages or bigamy, we find women hardly go to court for this reason. In Daund we can see from the table below that only 12.20% of the women have filed any kind of case in the local court. The largest among these is for maintenance.

In Pune city we find the number further dwindling to 8.72% women who have filed any case after being deserted. Fear of the law and the money involved forces women to stay away from taking a legal recourse.

The few women who have filed a case in the court have done it for maintenance of children, divorce or for the possibility of cohabitation or against the continued violence on them. None of them have risen up to challenge bigamy of their husbands.

Table 5.8 Filing case in court, Daund taluka

Filing case in court	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	223	87.80
Yes	31	12.20
Total	254	100

Table 5.9 Reasons for filing cases in the court, Daund taluka

Reason for filing case in the court	No. of deserted Women
Maintenance	22
Share in property	4
Cohabitation	2
Against harassment	1
Against illegal second marriage	1
Divorce	1
Total	31

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Table 5.10 Filing case in court, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Filing case in court	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	199	91.28
Yes	19	8.72
Total	218	100

Table 5.11 Reasons for filing of the cases, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Reason for filing case in the court	No. of deserted Women
Maintenance	9
Cohabitation	5
Against harassment	2
Divorce	2
Money for children's education	1
Total	19

On maintenance and financial support

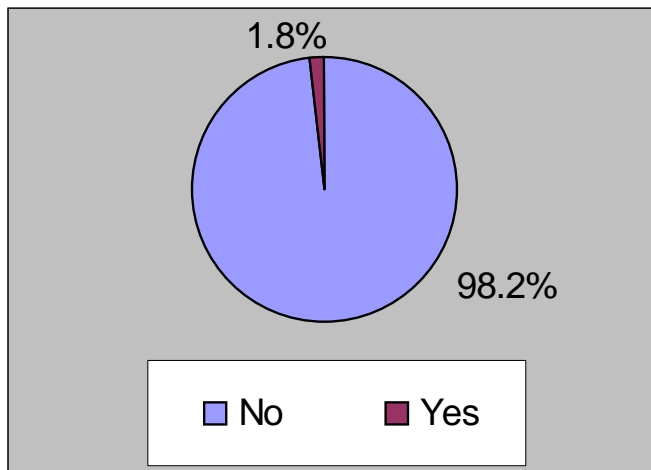
Despite free legal aid, women have not been able to file cases for maintenance either. Of all the women interviewed from Daund, only 12.20% have filed their cases in the court. These cases have largely been for maintenance or for marital property. Only one case each has been filed for divorce and for bigamy respectively. Take one case for instance-Rakhubai filed a case against her husband, but did not have enough money to proceed with the case. Even the lawyer's assistant tried to take advantage of her being single. Therefore, since then, she has abandoned the case. She has the responsibility of two children. She has now got into selling alcohol for her survival though she herself has been a victim of an alcoholic husband.

Desertion and After

Most of the women did not have support or have received only one time support from their husbands. This points to the glaring barriers, procedural as well as socio-cultural, that women have in accessing the law. The procedural barriers need to be addressed through a demand for changes in the implementation of various Acts. However the struggle for changes at the socio-cultural level need far more effort and sustained work on the part of the movements and the organizations.

The chart below for Pune city clearly shows how little women benefit from legal procedures. Only five women (i.e. 1.8%) receive any compensation. The monthly compensation that these women receive is not more than Rs. 400-500. When we asked women about the outcomes of their cases for divorce, maintenance, and support for children, they said that most of the cases were closed, with nothing going to the women or with very paltry settlements given to the women.

Chart 5.3 Currently getting monthly compensation, Ghole road ward, Pune city



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Table 5.12 Compensation received, Daund taluka

Compensation Received	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
One time money in cash	13	5.12
Monthly compensation	6	2.36
Farm	1	0.39
House	1	0.39
No compensation	233	91.74
Total	254	100

Tables and charts below clearly that how the women have to shoulder responsibility of children either singly or with their parents without any support from the husband

Table 5.13 Responsibility of children, Daund taluka

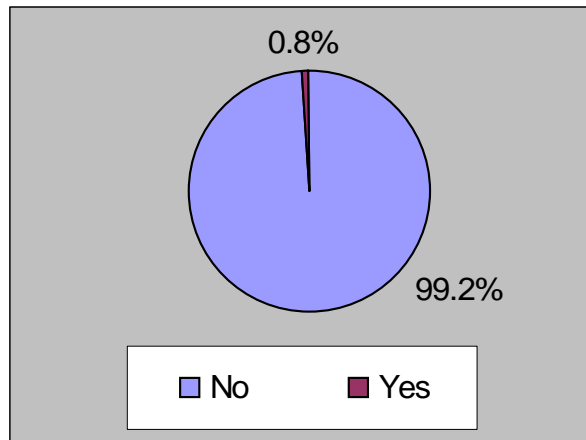
Responsibility of children	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No children	133	52.36
Self	111	43.70
Husband	7	2.76
Relatives	3	1.18
Total	254	100

We find in the data that in 52% of the cases the couple did not have children. This indicates two possibilities which need further exploration- a) that they were deserted very early in the marriage which in fact has been the case in this context where we have seen that women have chosen to leave or were forced to leave within a year of marriage b) that desertion was mainly due to lack of a child.

If we look at the above table, we see that the responsibility of managing children is with the women. Of the 121 women who did have children, 111 looked after the

children by themselves and only in 7 cases did the husbands look after the children. The following table shows us that in Daund only 2 (0.8%) women receive any financial help towards the children.

Chart 5.4 Financial support for children, Daund taluka



In the urban context as well we see a large number of women without children. Here it is 35.78%. This also suggests the breakdown of the marriage very early on in the marriage and also the lack of children as being the major reason for desertion.

Here only in the 4 cases women said that both husband and wife are sharing responsibility of the children. In all the other cases it is either the woman herself or her parents. Among these women no one reported receiving any help for children.

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Table 5.14 Responsibility of children, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Responsibility of children	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No children	78	35.78
Self	89	40.83
Own parents/Relatives	47	21.56
Both	4	1.83
Total	218	100

Table 5.15 Financial support for children, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Financial support for children	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	139	63.76
Not Applicable	78	35.78
No response	1	0.46
Total	218	100

Living arrangements

'She lives in a cattle shed with another widowed woman. She is seen as a burden by her brother's family' commented a neighbour while a deserted woman was being interviewed.

The system of patri-local residence has the effect of isolating women. After marriage, a woman is forced to leave her natal home and shift with the husband to his house. Often this means alienation for women from their familiar surroundings. For a woman, adjusting in this new situation is often an uphill task. Countering violence and ill-treatment from her husband and his family in a new location without any support often means that women go back to their natal homes for support. The natal home is often not willing to take her back for reasons ranging from their own poverty to what the society may say. It is the living arrangements, which however indicate the support systems the woman may have in these circumstances. For Daund, we found that a large number of women go back to their natal villages and stay initially with their parents or brothers, but gradually do move out into independent households in the natal village.

Desertion and After

One of the major changes in the life of a woman is her relocation after marriage. Rules of patrilocality force women to shift out of her residence into her husbands and in-laws' residence. This relocation itself is an unsettling experience for women as it means giving up on every memory and relationship that she held in her previous location. Desertion again forces the woman to relocate herself. Choices for residence are very limited if poverty intersects with desertion, which as we shall see in the next chapter, is often the case.

Residence is one of the main indicators of the extent of violence and its acceptance by the natal homes. It is significant to understand where these women go and stay and how they are received there. Decisions related to residence also show us on the one hand the extent of victimization and on the other, the agency of women. The three tables below explain how women decide to stay and where. Of the 254 women, 90.94% of the women came back to their natal villages to find the security that they may not have found elsewhere or simply put, that was the only place they could go to. A few of them i.e. 2.76% were in fact staying in their marital villages and 6.30% had chosen to stay in a completely different village.

Table 5.16 Village of residence, Daund taluka

Village of residence	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Natal	231	90.94
Marital	7	2.76
Neither	16	6.30
Total	254	100

Table 5.17 Residence in joint family, Daund taluka

Residing in a joint family	Not residing in a joint family	Total
128 (50.39%)	126 (49.61%)	254 (100%)

Once in their natal homes, many would prefer to set up their own houses, but are not really in a position to do so. The above table shows that almost 50% of the women are staying in joint families and the rest of the 50% are not.

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Table 5.18 Distribution of residence by type of household, Daund taluka

Residence location	Residing in a joint family	Not residing in a joint family	Total
Natal	126	105	231
Marital	0	7	7
Neither	2	14	16
Total	128	126	254

Here we see that women who have continued to stay in their marital villages obviously cannot stay in joint families. A large number of those who return to their natal villages are seen to be living with their families, but more out of a lack of choice than anything else. Often parents are helpless and provide her support, but they themselves are at the mercy of their sons. In many a case we see that the deserted woman sets up a separate home along with her parents, each providing mutual support for the other.

Table 5.19 Vasti residence, Ghole Road Ward, Pune city

Residence	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Natal	178	81.65
Marital	8	3.67
Neither	28	12.84
No response	4	1.84
Total	218	100

Predictably, 81.65% women have come back to their natal vastis in search of security and 12.84% have decided to stay in vastis which are neither their natal nor marital ones.

Table 5.20 Residence in joint family, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Residence in joint family	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Yes	142	65.14
No	72	33.03
No response	4	1.83
Total	218	100

In the urban case, we see that 65.14% of the women continue to stay with their natal family and 33.03% stay in separate homes. The constraint of space is already an important issue in urban areas. So although these women would have preferred to stay separately, financially it just becomes impossible for them. Most of these women live in houses which are not more than 80-100 sq. ft. Often there are more than 5-6 members living in these houses.

Table 5.21 Distribution of residence by type of household, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Residence location	Residing in a joint family	Not residing in a joint family	No response	Total
Natal	136	39	3	178
Marital	2	6	0	8
Neither	4	23	1	28
No response	0	4	0	4
Total	142	72	4	218

Although about 50% in Daund and 65% in Pune city are staying in joint families, many among them have set up their own hearths and are trying to be as independent as possible. Most would prefer to set up their own homes and have control over their own incomes, but often this does not become possible as we shall see in the later section on women's earnings.

Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

In the earlier section we have looked at some of the changes that women go through after desertion. Life for men usually remains the same, but women do undergo a lot of changes especially as they need to bear the burden of the children as well. We have seen in the earlier chapter that there is little by way of financial support from the husband or his family. Materially for women this means a life of poverty with the burden of the children as well as in many a case that of her ageing parents as well.

Work life

Table 6.1 Occupational status, Daund taluka

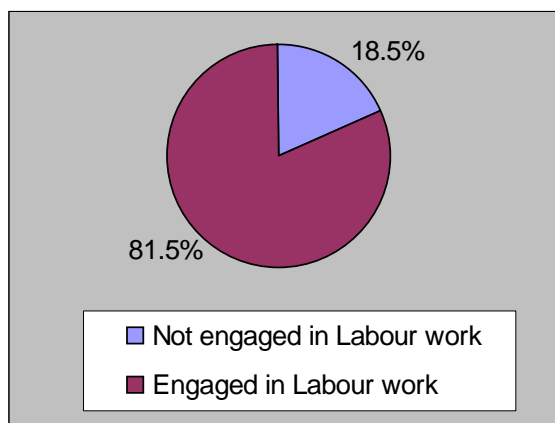
Occupation	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Agriculture labour	189	74.41
Other labour	15	5.91
Household work	22	8.66
No work	12	4.72
Private service	4	1.58
Farming/Cultivation	4	1.58
Government service	4	1.58
Self employed	1	0.39
Artisan	1	0.39
Education	1	0.39
Domestic Labour	1	0.39
Total	254	100

The deserted women's survival is through their labour and we see that in Daund about 81% of the women are engaged in some form of labour. Of the 49 (18.5%) not engaged in labour work, only 34 are not engaged in any kind of paid work and the remaining 15 are either working in government or private service or are self-

Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

employed as artisans or are working on their own land. Even the 22 that are not involved in any labour activity are contributing to household labour.

Chart 6.1 Engagement in labour activity, Daund taluka



If we look at the spread of the work of those women who are engaged in some kind of labour, we see that 75% of them are involved in agriculture, largely indicating that these women have very few choices and have only their labour to rely on.

If we look at the caste-wise profile of labour work, we do not see much variation in the engagement with labour. Almost all of them across castes are forced to work as wage labourers. However the percentage of SC, OBC, NT is marginally higher than the upper castes.

Table 6.2 Caste wise engagement in labour activity, Daund taluka

Caste	Women engaged in labour activity	Women not engaged in labour activity	Total
Open	77	21	98
OBC	22	3	25
SC	50	10	60
ST	4	1	5
DT	6	1	7
NT	38	9	47
Muslim	7	4	11
No Response	0	1	1
Total	204	50	254

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Their education also indicates that they are hardly equipped to diversify and add to their family incomes. This is a very similar trend to what has been studied in the context of Sangli district as well. (SOPPECOM, SMS, TISS, 2005)

The table below indicates that, on an average, women in this prosperous area do not have gainful employment for more than 181 days in a year. With this employment they are able to earn an annual income of around Rs. 6124. These are average figures.

Table 6.3 Days of employment and wages, Daund taluka

No. of women engaged in labour activity	Total days in a year	Available days in a year/woman	Total wages (in Rs.)	Annual income in Rs./woman /year
204	37058	181.7	1249392	6124.5

(For the detailed village-wise and caste-wise break-up of days of employment and wages see table 1 and 2 of Annexure 4 respectively at the end of this chapter)

The situation in Pune city is hardly different and one can see this from the unorganized nature of the deserted women's work. As far as occupation is concerned, 61.93% of the deserted women engage in domestic work which is unorganized in nature. 12.85% of the women are involved in housework, which in all likelihood is laborious as it is in return for the support that the parents or the brothers' family is extending to them. This perhaps could become a separate area of inquiry.

Table 6.4 Occupational Status, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Occupation	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Domestic labour	135	61.93
Construction labour	10	4.59
Self Employed	10	4.59
Any other labour	3	1.38
Sweeper	4	1.83
Private Service - organized	5	2.29
Private Service - unorganized	4	1.83
Government Service	4	1.83
Household work	28	12.85
No work	15	6.88
Total	218	100

Access to property

Just as opportunity for work is critical when it comes to livelihoods of single women, so too is access to property, especially land and housing. Ownership or access to property is critical when it comes to bargaining for support or as a fall back option in the worst instance.

In this section we have looked at women's access to different kinds of property, primary among them is land, housing and of course other resources such as different household gadgets and cattle in the rural context.

In the urban context, agricultural land refers to land owned back home in their home villages.

Land ownership

To understand the economic status of these women, it is important to understand the landholding of the families that they come from and also whether they have land in their own names. Almost 51% of the women were married into families who are landless. In case of the remaining women who were married into landowning families, land ownership varies from 1–3 acres to more than 50 acres. In fact the numbers are fairly evenly divided.

Table 6.5 Agriculture land owned by marital family, Daund taluka

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Landless	130	51.18
0 to 3	34	13.39
3 to 6	41	16.14
6 to 15	30	11.81
15 to 50	17	6.69
More than 50	2	0.79
Total	254	100

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Table 6.6 Agriculture land owned by natal family, Daund taluka

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Landless	105	41.34
0 to 3	71	27.95
3 to 6	43	16.93
6 to 15	27	10.63
15 to 50	8	3.15
Total	254	100

If we compare the two tables 6.5 and 6.7, we see that the percentage of landlessness is higher amongst the marital families than amongst the natal families. But we see a trend here that points to landlessness being a critical feature in the case of desertion. If we consider the small and marginal farmers, then the figure increases to about 65%. We then need to probe further on this aspect or association of landlessness or marginal land ownership with desertion. Does this in anyway indicate that women are easily deserted because poverty does not allow the man to co-exist with more than one wife? In households with larger landholdings perhaps men would be more willing to maintain more than one wife and children.

**Table 6.7 Self owned agricultural land acquired from natal family,
Daund taluka**

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
0.00	248	97.65
0.20	1	0.39
1.00	1	0.39
2.00	2	0.79
3.10	1	0.39
3.50	1	0.39
Total	254	100

Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

As far as women's own land ownership is concerned, we find that the figures are abysmal. 97% of the women have no land ownership whatsoever. Assuming that 41% anyway come from landless families, we can still see that the remaining 56% are still without any legal right over their natal land.

The picture is of course as expected when it comes to marital family owned land. Almost 99% of the women have gained no rights from their marital homes.

Table 6.8 Self owned agricultural land acquired from marital family, Daund taluka

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
0.00	252	99.22
1.00	1	0.39
2.00	1	.39
Total	254	100

The fact that they are neither divorcees nor widows makes their claims on the land even more difficult. What is important to understand here is the struggle that these women have to go through with nothing but their own labour in their control. They have no bargaining power in either of their families. With only 181 odd days as year round availability of employment, they hardly hold a good chance to come out of the poverty cycle.

In the urban scenario the question of ownership of agricultural land was asked mainly in the context of what they or their households own back in the villages. Very evident is the landlessness of both the natal and marital households which perhaps forced them to migrate to cities during major years of drought. Only 4% of the women said that their marital or natal families owned any land in the villages.

Hindola (The Swing)

Table 6.9 Agriculture land owned by marital family, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Landless	209	95.87
1 to 3	2	0.92
3 to 6	5	2.29
6 to 15	1	0.46
15+	1	0.46
Total	218	100

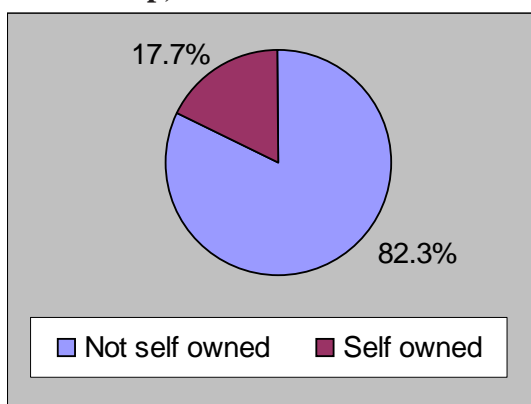
Table 6.10 Agriculture land owned by natal family, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Land ownership (in Acres)	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Landless	210	96.33
1 to 3	4	1.83
3 to 6	1	0.46
6 to 15	3	1.38
Total	218	100

None of the women said that they had land in their names.

Housing and basic amenities

Chart 6.2 House Ownership, Daund taluka



Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

The chart shows that over 82.3% of the women do not own a house while 17.7% do own houses. Of these 17.7% (45) women who do own houses, we see that they lack some of the basic facilities and their houses are *kuccha* houses. Half of these houses (22) have a bathroom facility which is outside the house and only 8 have it inside the house. Fifteen of the houses do not have any facility at all. Sanitation facilities are worse still with only 10 of the 45 women having some facility outside the house. The rest of them have no facility available.

Table 6.11 Availability of bathroom facility, Daund taluka

Availability of bathroom facility	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Outside the House	22	48.89
Not Available	15	33.33
Inside the House	8	17.78
Total	45	100

Table 6.12 Availability of sanitation facility, Daund taluka

Availability of sanitation facility	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Not Available	34	75.56
Outside the House	10	22.22
Using Public Facility	1	2.22
Total	45	100

In Pune city, the situation is not very different. Table 6.13 shows that 85% of the women do not own a house. The table below shows the constraints under which women have to stay. Of the 34 women who live on rent, 12% have to pay a rent between Rs.500-1000 per month. This is a considerable sum with a large part of the income going into housing.

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Table 6.13 House ownership, Ghole road ward, Pune city

House ownership	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Joint Family Owned	148	67.89
On Rent	34	15.60
Self Owned	33	15.13
Encroached	1	0.46
No response	2	0.92
Total	218	100

Of those who do own houses, 85.29% are using public toilets which are a paid facility. They pay a monthly amount between Rs. 10–30. A large number of women have even said that this is a free facility. Only 2 women have a toilet inside their house.

Table 6.14 Availability of sanitation facility, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Availability of sanitation facility	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Public	29	85.29
In the house	2	5.88
Outside the house	2	5.88
Not Available	1	2.95
Total	34	100

Other assets

Our data shows that women also have little or no access to smaller gadgets which are required in the household. The most common asset owned by women in the household is the simple stove but that too is in about 35.4% cases only. About 36.22% women do not own any assets whatsoever in Daund.

Table 6.15 Ownership of assets, Daund taluka

Assets	Percentage of the deserted women
None	36.22
Stove	35.43
Cycle	5.51
Radio	4.72
Fan	4.33
TV/VCD	4.33
Iron	2.36
Gas	1.97
Sewing Machine	1.97
Mixer	1.57
Phone	0.79
Motor Cycle	0.79

Table 6.16 Ownership of assets, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Assets	Percentage of the deserted women
Stove	54.13
TV	17.89
Fan	17.89
Gas	22.48
Mixer	8.72
Radio	11.01
Any other	23.85
Iron	5.96
Cycle	3.21
VCD	7.34
Mobile phone	0.46
Fridge	0.92
Sewing Machine	3.67
Phone	3.67
Motor cycle	9.17

Hindola (The Swing)

In Pune city the picture is slightly different with a little higher number owning stoves (54.13%) and a few more women owning entertainment gadgets like TV and radio sets, which is something more or less negligible in rural Daund. These differences indicate largely the rural–urban aspirations and the peer pressures rather than the incomes.

In Pune city since agricultural land has not been an issue, we tried to assess the overall share of the women from both the natal and marital households. If we were to look at the resources of these women then we see that almost 92.66% of them have no share in anything from their natal families. Of the 6.88% who have reported some share, it has been either in the form of cash or a house or just a room in the house.

Table 6.17 Share in the natal family’s property, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Share in natal family’s property	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	202	92.66
Yes	15	6.88
No response	1	0.46
Total	218	100

Table 6.18 Share in the marital family property, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Share in natal family’s property	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	213	97.71
Yes	4	1.83
No response	1	0.46
Total	218	100

The situation is much worse in the case of share from the marital family. Here only 4 women got a share in the house while 97.71% go without any benefits at all.

Intersection of desertion and poverty

Data on ownership of land and other forms of property actually showed us how women are deprived of property rights and are left with no assets to fend for themselves and their children. In fact the section on employment opportunities too pointed out that women are not able to find work for more than 150–180 days in a year. Most of the women are in wage work, largely working as cheap labour in the unorganized sector. In the rural context they work as agricultural labourers and in the urban context largely as domestic workers. In urban Pune we have looked at a particular class of women since the survey was done largely in the slums of Pune city. However the study in rural Daund was located across rural classes and here we can clearly say that irrespective of class, caste or religion, deserted women are forced to fend for themselves and have no resources to do so. For those coming from better off families, perhaps the support systems are slightly better. From this data we largely see that poverty does intersect with desertion.

However, the added dimension of poverty also means that men are not able to provide for maintenance towards their wives and children. For women this means the burden of supporting themselves and their children and an additional expense either in the form of providing their own labour or contributing in cash to the household where they live.

Social security

A large number of schemes are on paper, all in the name of the aged, the single and widowed women. Very few actually manage to reach where they are supposed to. One of the first hurdles is identifying the deserted women. They are often considered to be a non-entity as they belong neither to the natal nor to the marital home. The process of desertion is a long drawn process where, in the initial stages, the women bears the violence and continues to make adjustments, but when it becomes unbearable, decides to leave or if she protests, she is thrown out. During this entire process she still hopes to get back to her married state and hence does not benefit from any of these schemes. The government prefers to target old women or widows since they are a clear target. Deserted women, it is always said, go back to their husbands or that the husbands come back to them after they accrue benefits from the government schemes. It is this state of limbo that puts the deserted women in a far more vulnerable position than many other single women.

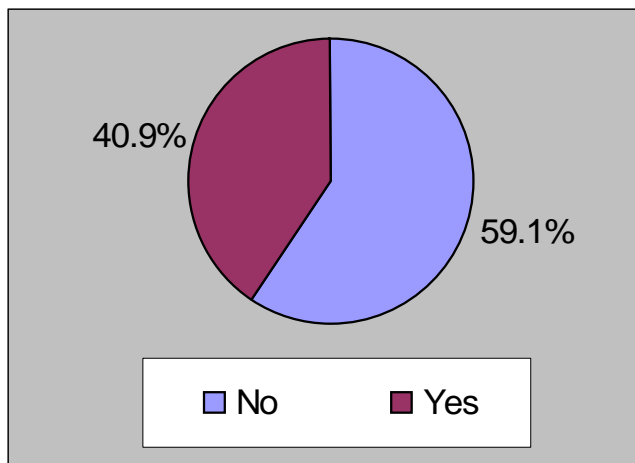
Hindola (The Swing)

In this section we look at how much the deserted women have been able to gain from the government schemes meant for the welfare of the single women.

Ration card

The table below looks at the very primary indicator of security and identity-the ration card. The single women's movement had always put the demand for ration card in the name of single women as its first demand. This demand was essentially to make a statement about the identity of the single woman as an independent household. In fact a resolution passed by the Government of Maharashtra to this effect has been considered as one of the major achievements of the movement among many others. The question really is how many single women are even aware of this Government resolution (GR) and how many have benefited from it.

Chart 6.3 Ration card in her own name, Daund taluka



This chart shows us that only 40.9% of the women have a ration card in their name. A large number i.e. 59.1% still do not have their own ration cards and in fact are dependent on either the natal or the marital households. As we have seen in our initial introductory chapter, a ration card does give the individual a sense of identity as well as some benefits that go with holding a ration card, for e.g., access to the PDS and improved availability of ration at lower rates.

Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

We do not see a very wide variation in material poverty across the different caste groups for these women. However, the material conditions of the natal household may vary and this has an impact both socially as well as economically.

(For the village-wise break-up of the ration card in self name, see table 3 of Annexure 4)

Table 6.19 Ration card in her own name (caste wise), Daund taluka

Caste	Total no. of deserted women	No. of women having self owned ration card	Percentage
Open	98	44	44.90
OBC	25	9	40.00
SC	60	24	40.00
ST	5	2	36.00
DT	7	1	14.29
NT	47	18	38.30
Muslim	11	5	45.45
No response	1	1	100.00
Total	254	104	40.94

In Pune city we see a very similar picture as far as ration card holding is concerned

Table 6.20 Ration card in her own name, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Ration card in her own name	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	137	62.84
Yes	79	36.24
No response	2	0.92
Total	218	100

Hindola (The Swing)

We see that 62.84% women do not have a ration card in their name. From those who don't have their own ration card, 64.23% said that their name is included in their natal homes, while 16.79% have reported their names being included in the marital homes.

Table 6.21 Inclusion of name in family's ration card, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Inclusion in ration card	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
Marital family	23	16.79
Natal family	88	64.23
Any other	2	1.46
No response	24	17.52
Total	137	100

The table below gives a caste-wise spread of those holding a ration card in their name

Table 6.22 Ration card in her name (caste wise), Ghole road ward, Pune city

Caste	Total no. of deserted women	No. of women having self owned ration card	Percentage
Open	33	17	51.52
OBC	6	4	66.67
SC	55	14	25.45
ST	3	0	0.00
DT	104	41	39.42
NT	2	1	50.00
Muslim	6	0	0.00
Christian	1	0	0.00
No Response	8	2	25.00
Total	218	79	36.24

Below Poverty Line

One of the most contentious issues is inclusion of the name in the BPL list. Across different villages we see this being the most discussed question. The critique is that these lists are flawed and the poor and the deserving are often missed out in these lists. Various calls are given for a revision of the lists, but to no avail. The deserted women are among the categories which have time and again missed the bus of the BPL. Data on their incomes, property shows us that most of them should be included in the BPL list. But as the table below shows us, about 78% of the women are not included in the BPL scheme.

Table 6.23 Name under BPL, Daund taluka

Name under BPL	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	198	77.95
Yes	56	22.00
Total	254	100

The caste and religion-wise table shows us that those whose names are included in the list are more or less evenly distributed but the NT are not included in the list at all and the OBC are only marginally included.

Table 6.24 Name under BPL (caste wise), Daund taluka

Caste	Total no. of deserted women	No. of women having name under BPL	Percentage to the total number
Open	98	24	24.49
OBC	25	3	12.00
SC	60	16	26.67
ST	5	1	20.00
DT	7	0	0.00
NT	47	8	17.02
Muslim	11	4	36.36
No response	1	0	0.00
Total	254	56	22.05

Hindola (The Swing)

The table below gives us the spread of those holding a ration card in their name and also having their names in the BPL list.

Table 6.25 Name in BPL list and self owned ration card, Daund taluka

Name under BPL	Self-owned ration card		
	No	Yes	Total
No	145	53	198
	57.10%	20.90%	78.00%
Yes	5	51	56
	2.00%	20.10%	22.00%
Total	150	104	254
	59.10%	40.90%	100%

The colour of the ration card is another indicator of the inclusion in the BPL list and also the benefits that would accrue to the card holder. But when we interviewed these women in detail, several discrepancies were found in terms of the colour of the card and inclusion in the list. Many who had yellow cards were not included in the BPL lists and were therefore not benefiting from the different schemes.

We see that when it comes to the poor, both the rural and the urban have a lot of similarities and in this case, single and deserted women are the worst off.

Table 6.26 Name under BPL, Ghole road ward, Pune City

Name under BPL	No. of women	Percentage
No	168	77.06
Yes	19	8.72
No response	31	14.22
Total	218	100

Here we see again that only 8.72% fall in the BPL category and 77.06% do not. For 14.22% there was no data available.

Table 6.27 Name under BPL (caste wise), Ghole road ward, Pune city

Caste	Total no. of deserted women	No. of women having name under BPL	Percentage to the total number
Open	33	3	9.09
OBC	6	0	0.00
SC	55	4	7.27
ST	3	0	0.00
DT	104	9	8.65
NT	2	1	50.00
Muslim	6	1	16.67
Christian	1	0	0.00
No Response	8	1	12.50
Total	218	19	8.72

The above table gives us a caste-wise break-up of names in the BPL category.

Benefits from the government schemes

The following tables show the benefits accruing to the deserted women in both Daund and Ghole Road Ward of Pune city. Here the schemes that we have included are the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana, the Indira Awas Yojana and similar pension schemes. It also includes the Antyodaya¹² scheme which basically benefits those under BPL, with low rates offered for food grains in the ration shops. In Daund we see that 88.2% of the women reported that they had not benefited from any scheme. The caste-wise spread does show that among the small beneficiary group, the benefits largely accrued to the Scheduled Caste groups. This was largely under those schemes where priority was given to the SC groups.

¹² Antyodaya scheme offers a special low price on food grains through the PDS for those who are in the further lower income category of the BPL.

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Chart 6.4 Benefits from any government scheme, Daund taluka

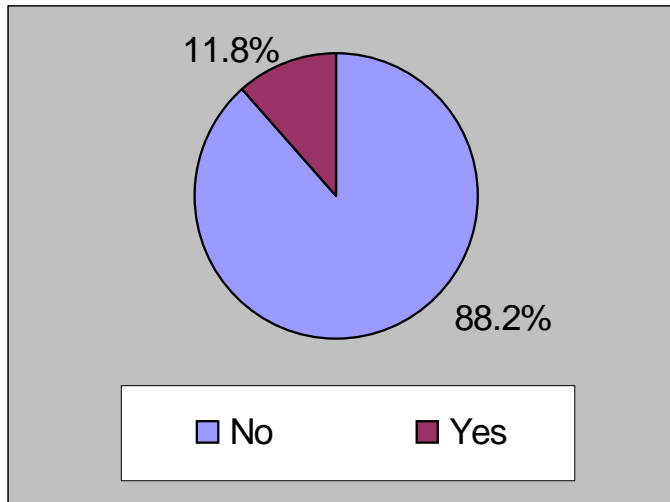


Table 6.28 Benefits from any government scheme (caste-wise), Daund taluka

Caste	Total no. of deserted women	No. of women having benefiting by any scheme	Percentage
Open	98	8	8.16
OBC	25	3	12.00
SC	60	14	23.33
ST	5	0	0.00
DT	7	0	0.00
NT	47	4	8.51
Muslim	11	1	9.09
No response	1	0	0.00
Total	254	30	11.81

In Pune city we find an even smaller number of women benefiting from the government schemes. The 2 covered by any government schemes are beneficiaries of the Antyodaya scheme.

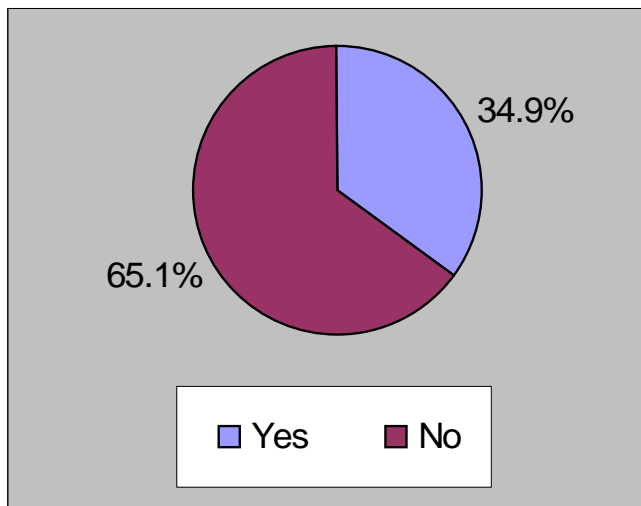
Table 6.29 Benefits from government scheme, Ghole road ward, Pune city

Benefit by any government scheme	No. of deserted women	Percentage to the total number
No	188	86.24
Yes	2	0.92
No response	28	12.84
Total	218	100

Savings

Often savings, either through the self-help groups or other informal channels such as the kitties or *bhishi*¹³, are a strong fall back mechanism for women who need small cash for illnesses or to tide over shortfalls due to lack of employment. We have already looked at the material deprivation of these women and find that they have very little to fall back on during a period of crisis.

Chart 6.5 Savings, Ghole road ward, Pune city



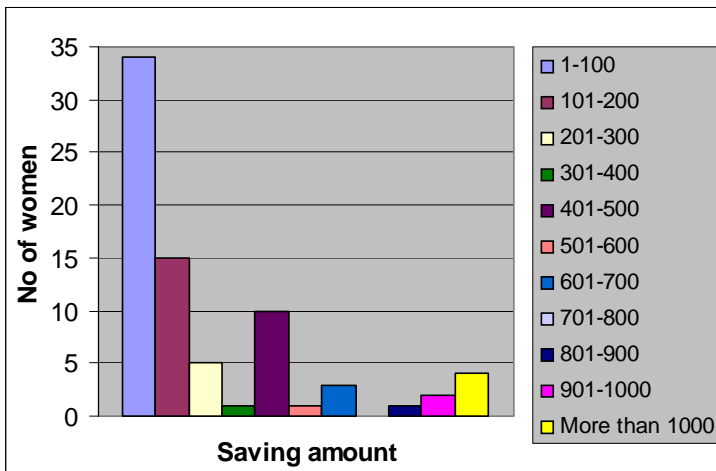
¹³ Informal channel of savings like the monthly kitty.

Chart 6.6 Types of saving, Ghole road ward, Pune city



We looked at the savings of these women and found that despite the mushrooming of SHGs¹⁴, there is very little that has reached the single and deserted women. We see that 65% of the women do not do any kind of savings in Ghole Road Ward, Pune City and the main reason cited by them was that they do not have that kind of cash flow to be able to save every month. The chart below gives a picture of how much money women are able to save per month.

Chart 6.7 Amount of saving, Ghole road ward, Pune city



¹⁴Self help groups

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In Daund taluka, 79% of women do not do any kind of savings. Of the 21% who are into savings, 13.4% are doing it through the SHGs. In Pune, though, the main savings are not done through SHGs but through the *bhishi*.

Chart 6.8 Savings, Daund taluka

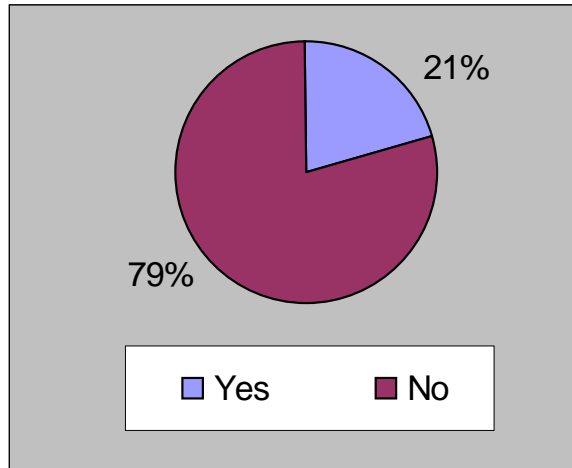
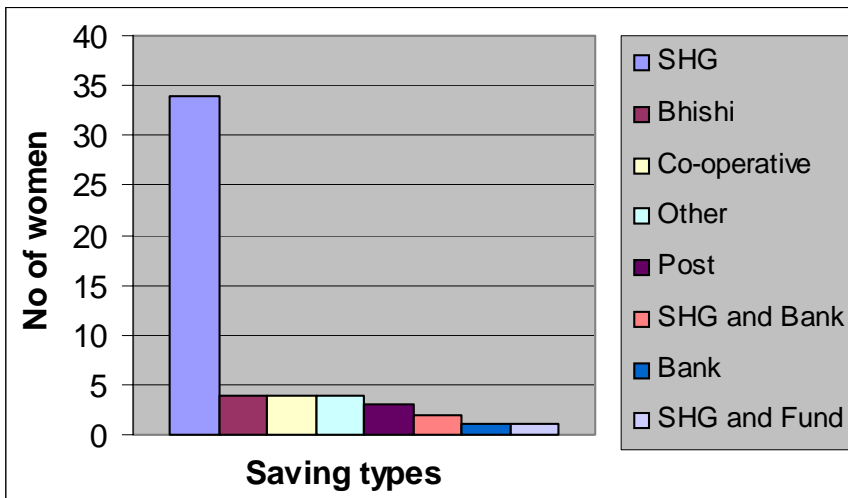


Chart 6.9 Types of saving, Daund taluka



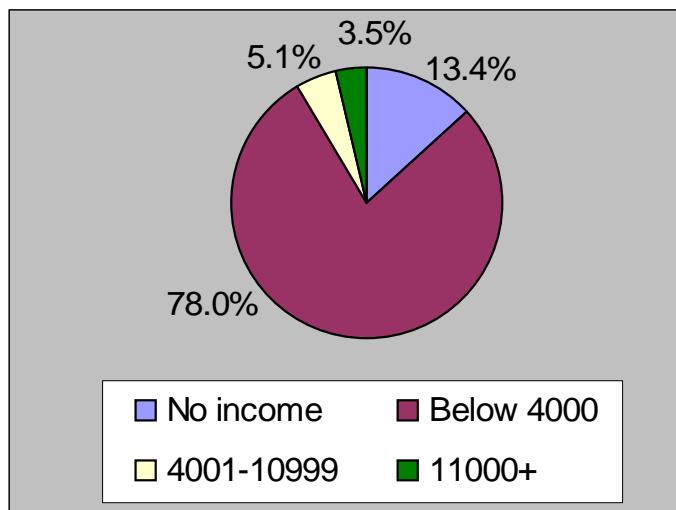
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Incomes and expenditure

We have looked at work availability, property ownership of both productive assets as well as smaller assets and how poverty is part of the lives of deserted women. The tables and charts that follow for both Daund and Pune city show that incomes of these women are very low. Most data on incomes and expenditure is very difficult to get. Incomes are often underreported and there are very few ways of assessing the true incomes unless the researcher stays with the households or opts for ethnographic studies over large-scale quantitative studies. Our data too does go through some of these dilemmas as is evident from the expenses overshooting incomes more than two times. The other problem in assessing the woman's income was also her residence in the joint family. Very often she would be paying her entire income to the family and not reporting it. Similarly, she would report the expense but it was not clear whether it was her personal one or came from a joint pool.

If we look at all these tables together, we can see a very clear picture emerging in terms of women's poverty. If we first look at the income classes of these women, we see that 78% fall in the below Rs. 4000 annual income category.

Chart 6.10 Annual income, Daund taluka

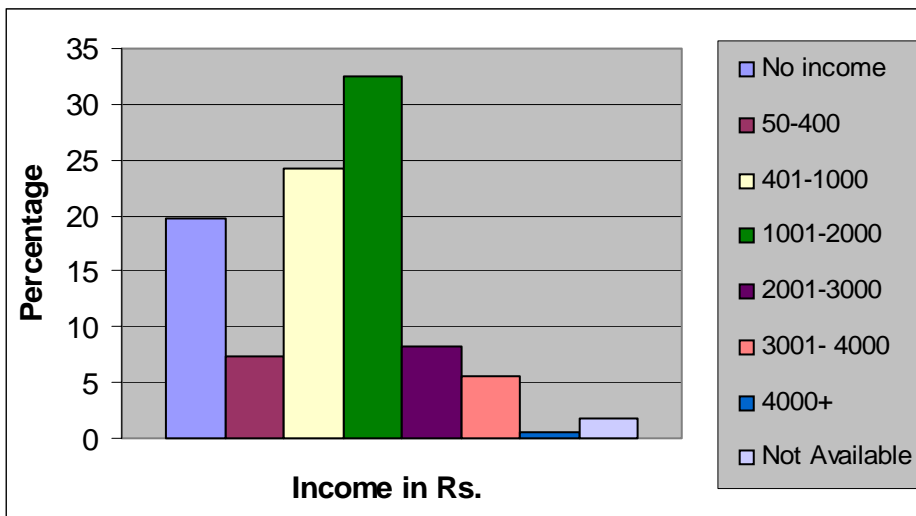


Intersection of Desertion and Poverty

If we juxtapose this income data with the data on ration cards and BPL lists then we see that 78% of the women are not under the BPL list and in fact 88% of the women have not benefited from any of the government schemes. This paints a rather abysmal picture for the women. (For a detailed break-up of village-wise and caste-wise annual income, see table 4 and table 5 of Annexure 4.)

The situation in the urban context is not very different and we find that it was difficult for us to calculate annual incomes for all the women due to the very seasonal nature of their work. Often these incomes were not available throughout the year, except perhaps for domestic labour. Nearly 82% of the women in Pune city area earn less than Rs. 2000 per month and even if this were to be calculated for the year, it would be only Rs. 24,000.

Chart 6.11 Monthly income, Ghole road ward, Pune city



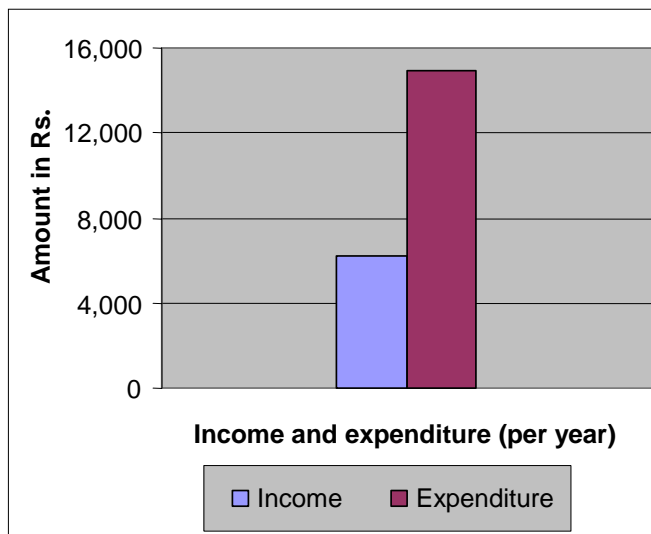
The woman's income perhaps goes into the kitty of the family where she is residing who in turn looks after her basic needs. In cases where she has set up her independent home, she finds it difficult to provide for herself and her children. Here too it goes without saying that in the absence of support in kind, it may be difficult for her to survive on such meagre income. A detailed understanding of incomes would be possible through an ethnographic study of these women.

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We now need to refer to the two charts below on income expenditure for both Daund and Ghole Road ward in Pune city.

In Daund this has been calculated for the agricultural labourers who are not living in a joint residence. This data is for 113 women out of the 254 women. For the rest of the women it was difficult to calculate the income expenditure as they were living in joint residence and often the expenses were made by the family and the labour was provided by the women. But the data for 113 women clearly shows that annual income from agricultural labour is on an average Rs. 6190 per woman while her expenses come to over Rs. 14000 per year. These expenses are mainly those incurred towards day-to-day survival and includes food, clothing, education, health and travel and other expenditure on festivals and yatras. The expenses are more than double the income and although this seems like a contradiction, it is usually the picture in most poor rural households where the expenses are then met through credits or through support systems in the village (See Table 6 in Annexure 4).

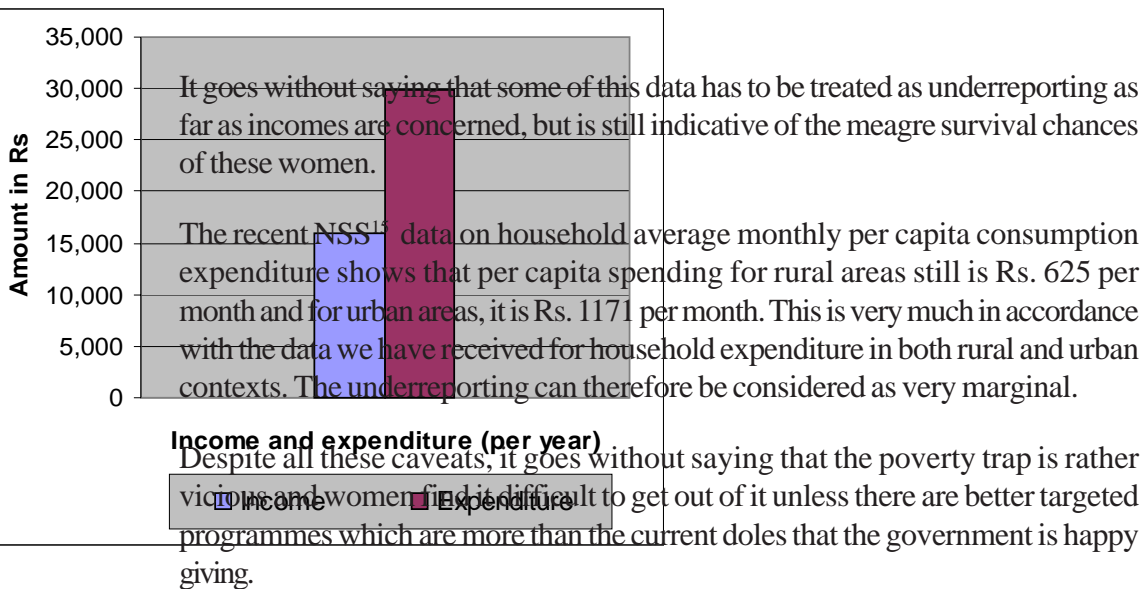
Chart 6.12 Income and expenditure, Daund taluka



In the urban context too we have a similar pattern in the income and expenditure. Here the average annual income per woman is Rs. 16035 and the corresponding expenditure is Rs. 29858. Data for the urban context is calculated for 53 women who did not live in joint families which means that they had to fend for themselves

as well as for other dependents such as their parents or their own children. All these women work in the unorganised sector and live on their own (See Table 7 in Annexure 4).

Chart 6.13 Income and expenditure, Ghole road ward, Pune city



¹⁵The 62nd round of NSS on household level consumption expenditure for the year 2005–2006.

Supporting tables for Chapter 6

Table 1 Village wise days of employment and wages, Daund taluka

Village	No. of women engaged in labour activity	Total available days in a year	Available days in a year/ woman	Total wages (In Rs.)	Annual income in Rs./ woman/ year
Dalimb	16	2945	184.1	104975	6560.9
Delavadi	22	4427	201.2	122280	5558.2
Kauthadi	3	566	188.7	18710	6236.7
Khopodi	9	1827	203.0	55060	6117.8
Nangaon	36	7008	194.7	235995	6555.4
Pandharewadi	6	1417	236.2	71090	11848.3
Pargaon	31	5299	170.9	171625	5536.3
Pimpalgaon	17	3351	197.1	115190	6775.9
Rawangaon	44	7071	160.7	244507	5557.0
Wadgaon Darekar	12	1870	155.8	66940	5578.3
Wasunde	8	1277	159.6	43020	5377.5

Table 2 Caste wise days of employment and wages, Daund taluka

Caste	No. of women engaged in labour activity	Total available days in a year	Available days in a year /woman	Total wages (In Rs.)	Annual income in Rs./woman/ year
Open	77	14991	194.7	489715	6359.9
OBC	22	4098	186.3	141295	6422.5
SC	50	8804	176.1	298765	5975.3
ST	4	678	169.5	22140	5535.0
DT	6	1040	173.3	37625	6270.8
NT	38	6621	174.2	235747	6203.9
Muslim	7	826	118.0	24105	3443.6

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Table 3 Ration card in her own name (village-wise), Daund taluka

Village	Total no. of deserted women	Women having self owned ration card	Percentage
Dalimb	19	10	52.63
Delavadi	25	12	48.00
Kauthadi	4	2	0.00
Khopadi	11	8	72.73
Nangaon	41	15	36.59
Pandharewadi	8	3	37.50
Pargaon	41	16	39.02
Pimpalgaon	26	7	26.92
Rawangaon	54	22	40.74
Wadgaon Darek	15	6	40.00
Wasunde	10	3	30.00

Table 4 Village wise annual income, Daund taluka

Village	Annual Income (in Rs.)				Total
	No. income	Below 4000	4001–10999	11000+	
Dalimb	0	19	0	0	19
Delavadi	1	22	1	1	25
Kauthadi	1	3	0	0	4
Khopadi	0	7	1	3	11
Nangaon	4	33	2	2	41
Pandharewadi	0	4	4	0	8
Pargaon	10	29	0	2	41
Pimpalgaon	6	16	4	0	26
Rawangaon	8	44	1	1	54
Wadgaon Darekar	3	12	0	0	15
Wasunde	1	9	0	0	10
Total	34	198	13	9	254

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Table 5 Caste wise annual income, Daund taluka

Caste	Annual Income (in Rs)				
	No. income	Below 4000	4001-10999	11000+	Total
Open	14	72	6	6	98
OBC	2	22	1	0	25
SC	5	51	2	2	60
ST	1	4	0	0	5
DT	1	6	0	0	7
NT	7	35	4	1	47
Muslim	3	8	0	0	11
No Response	1	0	0	0	1
Total	34	198	13	9	254

Table 6 Income and expenditure, Daund taluka

No. of women	Total income	Income/ woman/ year	Total expenditure	Expenditure/ woman/ year
113	699532	6,190.55	1681667	14,882.01

Table 7 Income and expenditure, Ghole road ward, Pune city

No. of women	Total income	Income/ woman/ year	Total expenditure	Expenditure/ woman/ year
53	849876	16,035.40	1582475	29,858.02

In Conclusion

We have, through this study, looked at the extent of desertion in rural and urban parts of Pune, the nature of this desertion in terms of the reasons for desertion, the socio-economic status of deserted women which discusses their material conditions, their living arrangements, their children and importantly, how they have survived despite the adversities.

In this concluding chapter, we shall revisit some of the key findings and discuss some possible actions as a way forward both for future research in this area as well as for the movement on single and deserted women in Maharashtra.

Key finding

The alarming numbers

In both areas of the Pune district, the rural and the urban, we find that the number of deserted women is alarming. In Daund, the number of deserted women to the total population of ever married women is about 4% and in the Ghole Road ward area, which is an urban slum in Pune, it is roughly the same at 4.2%.

If we take into account the number of widows then we find that the numbers increase to 17% for Daund and 26% for Pune city out of the total population of ever married women.

At a third level we have also looked at the percentage of households in which single and widowed women are living and here the figure for Daund is 26% and for Pune urban is 35%.

One of the things worth following is: why are the numbers of deserted women lower as the age group advances? The numbers dwindle as the age group increases and this needs to be explored further to understand whether women remarry or go back to their husbands or that there is a high incidence of mortality among the deserted and single women.

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Bigamy and violence: key reasons for desertion

The history of the single and deserted women's movement is now more than twenty years old. Looking back, one sees that the reasons for desertion have not really changed over time indicating that things really have not changed for women. Bigamy, alcoholism, violence in relationships continue to be the main reasons for desertion. In most of the cases in Daund and Pune urban we see that alcoholism, violence and harassment and second marriages continue despite various legal instruments brought in over the years. Perhaps what may have changed is the tolerance of women who may choose to leave the house before the violence reaches an extreme level. In all our interviews with more than 400 women we find that women have been offered little or no choice in the relationship.

Across castes, the reasons seem to be similar although the experience of desertion would be different.

To compare over time on forms of violence we may need to do detailed oral narratives with older women as well as those newly single. We need to see whether reasons for desertion change across contexts such as those where per capita incomes are high as against those where marginalization of labour as a result of globalization has been growing. We need to look at tribal areas where migration is on the rise and people are forced to give up their resources for their own survival. In these changing contexts we need to see how the family relations are affected and whether this does have an impact on desertion.

Strengthening of patriarchy through its own victims

One of the important findings has been that in almost all of these cases we find that the second wives, the mothers-in law or the 'other woman' are seen to express solidarity with the man. The woman may herself have played the same role on another occasion when she as the second wife used to co-exist with the husband's first wife. This really shows how patriarchy re-establishes itself through its own victims. Many of the women we spoke to were in fact the second wives of these husbands. Their marriages itself were illegal which in a way made them insecure, but desertion then marginalizes them further.

Why women chose not to remarry

Our earlier experience of our association with the women's movement shows that the way women respond too has not really changed when it comes to the matter of remarriage. Remarriage for most women is still a tough choice, not so much because of religious sanctions but more because of the responsibility of children and the prior experience of marriage. Chances also are that a man who may agree to marry a *Deserted* woman is also a man with perhaps a lot of negative features (bigamy, widower, children, alcoholic, ill) and women do not want to go through a similar experience one more time. The question here is of the quality of the marriage and the real freedom they may have to marry under positive circumstances. Often the relationships that women get into too are not any less exploitative

Why women chose not to divorce

In our sample we saw a number of women saying that they were not keen on divorcing their husbands. There were several reasons for this. The most important among them is the sense of security that comes from being in marriage. A divorce forecloses any possibilities of reconciliation or support for the children. Women have chosen to retain the names of the husband and the children still use the father's name.

The other reason for not going through the legal separation is also because many of these women are themselves the second wives and therefore the marriage itself is not legal. Subsequently none of their claims for property stand.

The third but less cited reason by the women was that the divorce procedure is too long and protracted and too expensive. So they would prefer to remain outside of that framework.

Resources and agency: understanding vulnerabilities and capabilities

An understanding of resources and agency becomes critical if we are to put some of our findings in context. Resources as we understand here include both tangible as well as intangible resources like land, housing, small gadgets, opportunities to work, living arrangements of women, their social networks, their age and education, support from the government schemes etc. Access to these resources is a pointer towards the bargaining positions of these women vis-à-vis the society. Access

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naturally improves social and financial security and subsequently, the authority of the actors.

Agency refers to the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. However, agency is also the ability to resist, to survive against odds, the ability to think and analyse. It can be exercised as individuals or as collectives.

Both resources and agency together would allow us an analysis of the capabilities and vulnerabilities of these women.

Resources

Age

If we look at the age profile of these women in both Daund and the Ghole Road ward, Pune city, we see that most of them are below 45 years of age. About 30% fall in the age group of 15-29 years and a larger number which is 54% for both Daund and Pune, in the age group of 30-45 years. As the age advances, we see a smaller number of women who call themselves deserted. As mentioned earlier, this could be because of higher mortality among them or that after their husbands die, they refer to themselves as widowed.

Understanding the age profile is critical when we want to look at the capabilities that women have, as younger age is an advantage when it comes to work-related options.

Education and skills

If we look at the profile of these women we see that a large percentage of our sample in both the rural and urban areas is non-literate. Neither do they seem to have any vocational skills, which would sustain them when employment opportunities narrow down. Most of them work in the unorganized sector where the work availability on an average is not more than 150-180 days in a year. Often the wages in rural areas are not more than Rs. 40 per day.

Lower education leaves these women with little options to sustain themselves. Perhaps women would have had better options to bargain for their rights had they been a little more educated and had more vocational skills.

Table 7.1 Marital Status wise education of the total female population (Percentage), Daund taluka

Education	Unmarried	Married	Widowed	Separated /Divorced	Deserted	No Response	Total
Non-literate	1.49	37.28	76.46	41.67	51.98	66.67	28.41
Nursery (K.G.)	10.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.55
1 st to 4 th	21.79	10.31	9.33	8.33	12.77	0.00	14.33
5 th to 7 th	18.55	21.61	8.22	33.33	20.67	0.00	19.36
8 th to 10 th	20.02	22.58	3.34	8.33	9.73	0.00	19.69
11 th to 12 th	5.61	4.00	0.26	8.33	0.00	0.00	4.15
D.ed/B.ed	0.40	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40
Diploma/ Certificate course	0.10	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07
Under graduate	2.38	0.71	0.17	0.00	0.30	0.00	1.25
Graduate	0.29	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.64
Post graduate	0.42	0.27	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30
Not Applicable	18.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.59
No Response	0.17	1.68	2.14	0.00	4.56	33.33	1.26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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So although age is an advantage, their low education and vocational skills leave them with very few options but to work as labourers in the unorganised sector.

The table 7.1 gives us an overall picture that compares education levels of deserted women with others. We clearly see an educational disadvantage with regard to deserted and widowed women.

Non-literate women are highest among the widowed, deserted and divorced categories as compared to married women. Whereas the overall non-literate population stands at 28.41% we see that 51.98% of deserted women are non-literate and 76.46% are widowed and about 41.67% are separated. This comparison is useful as it shows us how acute the differences are between a general female population and the vulnerable. It also points to the lack of literacy and education as an important constraining factor for women not only at the time of desertion but also to lead a meaningful economic and social life later.

Employment

In both Daund and in Pune city, we see that women are working in the unorganized sector, which means both insecurity of employment and low wages with no long term benefits. In Pune city, 61.9% of the deserted women engage in domestic work which is unorganized in nature. 12% of the women are involved in housework, which in all likelihood is laborious as it is in return for the support that the parents or the brother's family is extending to them. In Daund 75% of them are involved as agricultural labourers.

The work availability for urban women is a little more secure as most of them work as domestic workers, but for the rural women we find that the number of work days is not more than 180 in a year. The wages too are often in the range of Rs 30-40 per day. This financial insecurity makes the women very vulnerable.

To highlight the vulnerability of deserted and widowed women we see this comparative table below. While the majority of women in Daund taluka are largely engaged in household work (33.51%), a small number are engaged in agriculture labour (8.05%) as well. But if we look at the distribution of this over the marital status we find that deserted women who are engaged in agriculture labour are

Table 7.2 Marital status wise occupation of total female population (Percentage), Daund taluka

Occupation	Unmarried	Married	Widowed	Separated /Divorced	Deserted	No Response	Total
Farming/cultivation	0.90	25.39	11.22	8.33	3.04	0	14.98
Agriculture labour	0.84	10.63	12.50	8.33	40.12	0	8.05
Labour other than agriculture	1.11	9.24	9.33	33.33	33.13	0	6.98
Animal care	0.04	0.26	0.34	0.00	0.61	0	0.20
Artisan	0.00	0.03	0.09	0.00	0.00	0	0.02
Government service	0.02	0.67	0.60	0.00	0.91	0	0.44
Private service	0.15	0.52	0.26	0.00	0.61	0	0.37
Household work	8.35	50.14	37.84	25.00	16.72	0	33.51
Self employed	0.19	0.65	0.51	0.00	0.61	0	0.47
Education	67.25	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	23.78
Pensioner	0.00	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.00	0	0.02
No work	20.73	1.97	26.11	16.67	3.34	0	10.70
No Response	0.44	0.34	0.94	8.33	0.91	100	0.47
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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40.12% and only 10.63% married women are involved in agriculture labour. Only 16.72% deserted women do only household work.

Similarly the category of labour other than agriculture again shows an overall picture being very low i.e. 6.98%. However, 33.13% of deserted women are engaged into it. But in the farming and cultivation category which is largely on lands owned by the households we find that among the married women 25.39% are into it and among the deserted women the number is only 3.04%.

Both these tables 7.1 and 7.2 on education and occupation compare the status of deserted women with other women and this comparison clearly points to a difference. In the case of education we see that deserted women are non-literate in greater numbers and in occupation, we clearly see a larger group of deserted women working as labourers compared to those who are still married. At one level this talks about assurance of some level of income security for married women, but at another level it suggests less freedom for women to go out and work if they are married. However the deprivation is clear as deserted women have no choice but to work as wage earners and this wage too is available for not more than 180 days in a year on an average.

Property ownership

Both in Daund and Pune city we do not see much difference in terms of property ownership. In Daund, more than 95% women are landless and about 80% do not have a house in their name. In Pune city too the picture is the same.

We have also looked at other smaller gadgets like kerosene stoves, cycles, radios etc. and find that very few women in fact own even a simple stove. All these are pointers to their resource poverty.

Incomes

In Daund we see that on an average the annual income of the single woman going by the number of days of work availability is not more than Rs. 7000. In Pune city the monthly income category for 24% women is between Rs. 400–1000/ and 32% women have incomes in the range of Rs. 1000–2000. But despite these low levels of income their names are not included in the BPL lists as we see below.

Other social supports

There are several other vulnerabilities which we can analyse in terms of other social networks, support from the government schemes, living arrangements etc.

If we look at government support, we find that in both Daund and Pune 89% and 82% women respectively have gone without benefiting from any government scheme.

In Daund, 40% women have ration cards in their name but of these, only 22% have their name in the below poverty line list. In Pune, only 36% have ration cards in their names and of these, only 8.7% have their names listed in the BPL list. These figures are indicative of their access to state level supports.

Living arrangements are often a good way to understand the nature of support from the natal home. With the increasing nuclearisation of the family, we find that single women too prefer to set up homes different from those of their brothers. This is more so in the urban context since space is an issue. But as is evident from the data, the choices are very limited for women especially in urban areas since land prices are so steep.

In Daund, almost 50% women have set up their own homes but in Pune city 65% of the women are still living in joint homes with their brothers and/or parents. In some ways this also exhibits support from the natal family which is willing to take the girl back, but of course not without a price. So women have to labour hard both at home and outside. Often in the rural areas they have to work on the family farm where they are not paid any wages and therefore they have no cash to handle. This is a burden as women are not able to take any financial decisions for themselves.

Women's agency

Deserted women's agency has to be understood in the context of the limited choices that are available to them. The framework is already laid out and women's actions need to be seen within that limited sphere. The question often asked is whether we can call this as agency. Understanding agency of women who we have seen from the above discussion to be vulnerable from the resources point of view, is a complex process. In this study, we have not been able to do a serious study of their actions. However, from our interviews it is clear that although they have not been able to

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exercise any choices regarding their husbands, children, the process of desertion etc., they have withstood these challenges and survived. Absence of a man has not stopped their daily survival routine and in fact in some cases, it holds potential to act in collectives, which perhaps women in marriage are not able to do. Firstly, irrespective of the choice, the woman's decision to step out of the house too is a sign of her agency where despite the stigma and the cultural barriers, she decides to step out on her own individual accord. This is where the whole understanding of individual agency that counters or challenges the exploitative structures becomes important. One has to ask what is it that makes it possible for women to overcome some of these structures of patriarchy and exploitations and act. The example of Sakhubai from Rawangaon, a non-literate dhargar woman is a case in point-She had gone to work, leaving her child at home. The husband was careless and did not attend to the child who almost died playing near the well. The son survived the fall but since then she left with him to her natal home. Neither did the husband come for her nor did she return. This was the only reason that she cited for leaving the husband's home.

Some of the women we interviewed also seemed to be caring for their parents in situations where their brothers are not doing so.

But all through these interviews we see that choice has really a limited role. In fact none of the women had any serious alternatives before them from among which they could choose. In that sense then do we interpret this as agency? We leave this discussion here as it needs further exploration through oral narratives and more indepth participatory research.

The way forward

In this final section we look at some of the key areas that need to be addressed through research and action if we need to address some of the key questions in this regard. While action is important, this study also brought out the need to look at some of the older questions in the new context of globalization, in the context of variations in experience across caste, tribe and religion. Here we point out some of the areas that need to be further explored from the research point of view and some action points that the movement needs to think about.

Research areas

This analysis poses many interesting and new questions before us. While on the one hand we see that women's issues have not really changed and patriarchy presents itself in very much the same way as it did earlier, we need to see whether the form has changed and whether the gravity has deepened. Often it is said that patriarchies restructure themselves for their sustenance. In the context of desertion, what exactly does this mean needs to be understood carefully.

1. Apart from the extent then the questions to explore would be:
2. What being deserted means in the new context of globalization and marginalization of women's labour.
3. What it means in the context of changing marital and family relations. Increasingly families are moving towards nuclearisation so does that mean less space for the deserted women back in her natal home.
4. Understanding the lives of deserted women belonging to different caste groups and religious minorities.
5. Understanding the links between women's capabilities as understood as a combination of resources and agency, with desertion and violence.

This clearly point to new areas of research, which need to be done across different parts of the country, different social groups and over time. The spatial and temporal aspects therefore become very critical.

Agenda for the movement

The main focus of our study has been to bring visibility to the question and inform the women's movement in the state. From that point of view it is only appropriate to briefly discuss the prospects of such a study in terms of guiding action.

The single and deserted women's movement has been active since the mid-eighties just after the anti rape and the sex selective abortion campaigns were active in Maharashtra. The movement which was the most vibrant in Sangli, Satara and Sagamner districts of Maharashtra, later spread into some other districts as well. The movement was run on the single most important principle of self-respect and dignity for single and widowed women. Among the prominent organizations that took up this issue were Stree Mukti Sangharsh Chalwal in Sangli and Satara

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districts under the leadership of Indutai Patankar, Samata Andolan in Ahmednagar district under the leadership of Nisha Shivurkar and Samajwadi Mahila Sabha under the leadership of Vijaya Chowk in Dhule district. Nari Samata Manch had also been working on this issue for a brief period in the mid-eighties. These were among the pioneering organizations and later on several other groups have been working on the question of singlehood such as Kashtakari Sanghatana in Thane district amongst the tribals, Vanchit Vikas, WRAG (Women's Research and Action Group) among the Muslim women's groups etc.

It may be worth noting that many of the groups are coming together in Maharashtra now under the banner of Ektya Vanchit Mahila Andolan. This nascent collective includes several women's groups that belong to the tradition of the left as well as those that are autonomous. Recently a 2-day shibir was held on 13th and 14th February 2008, in Pune where some of the demands and strategies for the movement were chalked out. Very soon the Andolan would come out with a position paper on this issue.

Various other demands went along with the one for self respect and dignity, the primary ones being the right to hold a ration card in their own names and the right to housing. The important gains that were seen as achievements of this movement were the Government Resolution (GR) on ration card for women, housing plots in some areas, priority for schemes and loans etc. Around this time there were large mobilizations and mass rallies of women. In today's context, although the severity of the problem is very the much the same or perhaps enhanced, we do not see mass mobilizations. In fact in Maharashtra mass mobilization and the culture of struggle amongst the women's groups seems to have dwindled. This needs an independent analysis, but what is important from our point of view here is that in the absence of mass mobilization what kind of support could be provided to the women. Struggles cannot be substituted but nonetheless support would have to be there for the women even in the absence of such mass mobilisation. This needs to come in the form of building support groups in different areas that can empower women and create potentials for improving capabilities. Education and vocational skills are some of the areas that need to be built on.

While the older demands for property rights and welfare for deserted women are important, the movement should also see this in the context of the larger women's

movement where property rights for all women should be seen as a critical deterrent for desertion.

The question of economic security is crucial but importantly, the dignity and self respect of the deserted women becomes the central concern. Suspicion, being labelled as 'available women', vulnerability to sexual abuse, children looking down upon their mothers etc. -all of these forms of exploitation need a culture of resistance to develop. The need for single women to come together and redefine their image as women with dignity and rights, as women surviving despite the odds, is what can build this culture of resistance.

The struggle is at the ideological as well as at the material level. The demand is that society changes its perceptions and understandings about single women and not how single women can be integrated into the existing society. Clearly then the struggle for the identity of single-women cannot be divorced from the larger struggle of women in general.

Women would need additional skills, access to resources such as land and water, credit and importantly, schemes or programmes like the MREGA (Maharashtra Rural Employment Guarantee Act) which can help build these assets for a long term sustainable livelihood outcome.

The combined restrictions on ownership of property, employment, residence, remarriage strongly point towards a need for social security and support as matter of right. In the absence of state-based social security, what have come in handy have been the familial support and the social networks of women. This we have assessed in the form of living arrangements, intra-household support and inter-household support. Women's participation in struggles and collectives has given them strength and they look forward to this support.

Thus the movement critically needs to look at demands at two levels. Welfare of the Deserted and a long term strategy for security of women's rights over resources and facilitating a process where they are able to define their own goals and act upon them too.

The long-term goals

The longer term initiatives which are of a more ideological nature will have to be geared to such questions as women's rights and empowerment. Often these are overlapping needs and evolve out of interactions with one another.

1. Registering land and property in the names of wives as well as husbands would not only allow women greater security and stability in the event of a conjugal breakdown, but could also enhance their possibilities for determining household arrangements. Women might find it easier to ask men to leave home if they know that separation will not entail leaving home themselves and forfeiting their assets. Similarly men would think twice before throwing the woman out of the house or getting a second wife for himself.
2. In general, equal access to property, parity in incomes etc would go a long way in providing security for women. It also provides the space to challenge patriarchy and the dominant socio-cultural norms that govern the relationships between men and women. In the event of a conjugal breakdown it provides a fall back option.
3. Greater access to political power (which has only begun at the panchayat and district level) will be a further aid in accessing the resources for their struggles.
4. Although the study does show that deserted women do develop several imaginative strategies for earning conserving and stretching their income, their financial position would be much better if female earnings were closer to men's. A struggle for parity in incomes for women in general therefore is a critical in the long term
5. A revision in the gender discriminatory aspects of personal laws
6. In addition, of course the toughest nut to still crack is the socio-cultural context and the value systems that allow patriarchy to thrive. This is a long drawn struggle and often needs conscious efforts at different levels. Education at school and home geared towards an understanding of patriarchy as embedded in caste and class therefore becomes important to create a fertile ground for this change.

Immediate concerns

As mentioned earlier, the welfare demands of single women have been:

1. Ration cards in their names
2. Schemes of poverty alleviation specially targeted to them
3. Plot of housing land; access to free legal aid
4. Corpus to be created by the state for maintenance of the women till they receive financial support from their families
5. Shelter homes in urban areas
6. Education for children and hostel accommodation
7. Vocational training for the women and employment opportunities that help create assets
8. Financial commitment raised through charging a cess on salaried and self employed professionals
9. Opportunities for loans for self employment options and creating a network of markets.

To conclude, a wider discussion of this study and some of the critical areas of new research emerging from here become important to guide action. A need for combining both action and research emerges very clearly from this study. Importantly from the point of view of the movements what emerges is that rebuilding collectives is important, but this is a complex process as women are a diverse group with different class and caste identities. A careful analysis of what can build synergies while addressing these diversities therefore becomes important. However, the study also points to the need for intensive support work that is needed in terms of legal aid, counselling, building awareness in terms of what is due to them in the existing framework of the State etc. Local groups and NGOs need to take the initiative in some of this work which would help build collectives and lead to mass struggles.

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