CHAPTER – II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study is designed with a view to examine the impact of Self Help Groups on empowerment of women in educational, economic, social, political and psychological aspects. A comprehensive review of literature is essential for any good research endeavor as it provides background information to aid researcher in designing and analyzing research work. Since the early 1980s, a large number of studies have examined the various dimensions of micro finance programmes and women empowerment. Several international organizations like Action-Aid, UK, CGAP (Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest) and Overseas Development Authority (ODA) have conducted case studies and Organized workshops in various countries. The workshops had looked mainly into the experience of different countries and the impact of micro finance programmes in a cross-cultural perspective. Other sources of information include published and unpublished materials. An attempt is made in this chapter to give a brief account of literature related to empowerment of women and Self Help Groups under the following headings.

- Studies on State of Rural Women
- Studies on Meaning and Concept of Women Empowerment
- Studies on Women Empowerment and Need of Self Help Groups
- Studies on Meaning and Characteristics of Self Help Group
- Studies on Empowerment of women through Self Help Groups
- Studies on the Role of Self Help Groups on Women Empowerment
Studies on the Impact of Self Help Groups on various Indicators of Women Empowerment (Educational, Economic, Social, Political and Psychological aspects)

2.1.1 STATE OF RURAL WOMEN

Sontheimer (1991) observed from his study entitled “women and the Environment: A Reader, crisis and Development in the Third World” that over the last twenty years relationship between women and the living system that supported their lives had changed drastically in response to heavy ecological stress in many areas of poor developing countries. It was seen that the rural women had inherited a situation where their rights and access to cultivable land had decreased and the open forest, woodlands and bush from which they gather such vital necessities as folder, fuel, wood and water had become scarcer and disappeared.

Bhatt (1992) in his study entitled “Structural Reform and poor Women: The case for redesigning development” and through the analysis of economic policy he concluded that women were involved in designing and implementing development in the areas of education, banking, environment, health and childcare and acquired self-reliance, leadership and other skills.

Kherde and Pal (1992) conducted a study entitled. “Role of farm women in dairy development” established that about 80 percent of the female population in India lived in rural areas and carried out a large number of dairy and farm operations in the villages. They suggested that for the success of farm women and increase in productivity, cooperation of farm women and their education in the use of modern dairy technologies were needed.


Mexi and Sunjiarti (1992) in their study entitled “The promotion of self help groups for poverty allocation in Indonesia. The experience of Bina Swadaya” stated that the SHGs formed by the target group were interested in the Indonesian rural development through fixed work and channels established for development process. The result was that through this strategy the standard of living of the poor target groups was improved both directly and intermediaries by meeting their demands through loans and saving schemes.

Braimoh (1995) in his study entitled “Integrating women into rural development in Africa by participatory research development southern Africa”, held that the traditional belief excluded women from contributing meaningfully to development. The participation of women in development depended on the full utilization of their abilities, equal employment rights, equality in inheritance rights, equal sharing of responsibilities in home and their participation in institutional and administrative life.

Rammohan et al. (1995) in their study entitled “Women; The key to human resource development” stated that literacy rates and work participation rates for Indian women were far below than those for men, although they have risen social, economic, health and cultural rights in order to bring human resource development. Further, they held that women in India continued to be on the receiving end of social, economic, political and cultural inequalities. Only when women developed, the society could develop and progress. It is concluded by the authors that when women’s status was improved or enhanced, there could be a reduction in fertility, maternal and

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5 Braimoh D., “Integrating women into rural development in Africa by participatory research development southern Africa”, vol. 12, no.1, 1995, pp.127-133

infant mortality and female infanticide. Simply, the key to the control of population pressure was a woman.

Sumita and Shubhject (1996) observed from their study on “Gender linked Information seeking pattern of women farmers of Punjab”, that the husband usually worked as laborer in the city and the women in the farming operations. Men were observed as possessing hierarchical dominance in relation to crop production and practices where as the women relied upon practices at home due to their local accessibility.

Ismail (1996) conducted a study entitled “Gender needs analysis of women entrepreneurs”, and established that 66.7 percent of the women were involved in retail services, 36.4 percent in professional services, 21.2 percent in manufacturing 9.1 percent in wholesale and concluded that women required more exposure to entrepreneurship, business management training with respect to mentoring and career counseling, networking and better access to credit facilities and involvement in male dominated business.

Masuda (1996) in his study on “Human development and women in development” held that women in rural areas were engaged not only in household chores and childcare but also in farm work and paid work in plantations. They are traditionally undervalued and undercounted and not yet in the mainstream of agricultural development. Neglect of gender issues in research, extension and technology development restricts their output, income and welfare to levels well below their potential.

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Chikwendu and Arokoyo (1997)\textsuperscript{10} in their study entitled “Women and sustainable Agricultural development in Nigeria” assessed that over 90 percent of the Nigerian women were involved in farming, about 64 percent of this number were involved in crop production, 48 percent in both crop and livestock production and 4 percent in livestock production. Most of the women were involved in processing and marketing, little control over their labor, the rural women worked on both family and personal farms.

Narasimhappa (2007)\textsuperscript{11} in his study entitled “Status of Women-After independence” observed that legislation alone cannot improve the status of women, unless the women themselves grow conscious of their own dignity and genuine needs. Even in independent India, discrimination on the basis of gender has not been completely eradicated. The constitution has proclaimed equality and stands as a guardian for all citizen to ensure the principle. But equal rights still elude women in many ways. The oppression of Indian women has continued because of the existence of the patriarchal social structure based on caste and community.

2.1.2 STUDIES ON MEANING AND CONCEPTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Bharadwaj (1980)\textsuperscript{12} pointed out in his study on “Manual for socio-economic status scale” that empowerment is influenced by a host of socio-economic, political and cultural factors and basically empowerment determined by their socio-economic status. Socio-economic status would therefore be a ranking of an individual by the society she lives in, in terms of her material belongings and cultural possessions along with the degree of respect, power and influence she wields.


Chandra (1997)\textsuperscript{13} in her study entitled “Women and Empowerment”, defined, Empowerment of women as the redistribution of power that enable thus to challenge patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. In the process, not only increase their capacity; but also enable them face new challenges in the overall development of the household and also to contribute to the local community development.

Lakshmidevi (1998)\textsuperscript{14} in her study entitled “Prospects and problems of empowering rural women.” defined empowerment of women as an active multidimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and power’s in all spheres of life. It would consist of greater access to knowledge and resources greater autonomy in decision making and greater ability to plan their lives.

Anand (2001)\textsuperscript{15} in his study entitled “Micro Credit avenue for sustainable empowerment of rural women” highlights that the micro credit as an alternative system which is generally recognized as a powerful tool for empowerment of women. The micro credit has particular relevance to women and their empowerment, considering the historical perspective of the involvement of women in the thrift and credit activities.

Suguna (2001)\textsuperscript{16} in her study entitled “Women’s Empowerment: Concept and Framework”, pointed out that empowerment of women is essential to emancipate women from the social evils called traditional and


cultural customs. Women are marginalized over years together at various stages, and also they are branded as weaker and are kept aside from reaching the front stages. In this context, empowerment is required to increase awareness and capacity building for their greater participation in the decision making and transformation action.

_Sonia Gandhi (2003)_\(^{17}\) sheds light in her speech on "Women's Emancipation: still a distant reality" that the women's empowerment called for a massive national effort to equip them with skills and expertise, apart from power and resources, to fulfill their constitutional obligations. Political debate was the first significant step to make our policies a more effective instrument for the poor and the disadvantaged.

_Sinha (2005)_\(^{18}\) made a study on "Empowering women: A catalyst in social development". The author stated that Empowerment is a process which helps people to gain control over their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. In other words, empowerment facilitates changes and enables a person to do what one wants to do. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one’s goals.

_Manimekalai (2005)_\(^{19}\) pointed out in her study entitled “Women and Management” that Empowerment is an essential starting point and a continuing process for realizing the ideals of liberation and freedom. Women’s empowerment includes with a personal strengthening and enhancement of life chances, and collective participation in efforts to achieve equality of opportunity and equity between different genders, ethnic groups.


\(^{19}\) Manimekalai K, “Women and Management” Third concept, March 2005, pp.50&51
and social classes. It enhances human potential at individual and social levels of expressions.

Sumathy and Nagendran (2007)\textsuperscript{20} made a conceptual study on “Women Empowerment- Ethics and Logics”, stated that women manages the busy world today by sharing time, appreciation, knowledge and ideas, friendship, kindness and experience. Their success is mainly because of their ability to relax optimistically, listen deeply, feel empathetically, respond carefully, synchronize co-operatively, act authentically and acknowledge generously.

Karunakar and Saravanan (2008)\textsuperscript{21} conducted a study entitled “Impact of micro finance on SHGs in Tamil nadu” found that micro finance is recognized as a key strategy for addressing issues of poverty alleviation and women empowerment. Access to financial service and the subsequent transfer of financial resources to poor women enables them to become economic agencies of change. The women become economically self-reliant, contribute directly to the well being of their families, play a more active role in decision making and are able to control systematic gender inequalities.

2.1.3 STUDIES ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND NEED FOR SELF HELP GROUPS

From the development experience of many western Countries, it was found that there is correlation between women empowerment through education, poverty entitlement and dismantling of gender discrimination in employment and in the holding of public and political offices and those in the professions and particularly in judiciary and economic growth in its totality encompassing capital formation, human resources development, technology advancement and professional managerial competencies. Thus, women have

\textsuperscript{20} Sumathy M. and Nagendran K “Women Empowerment- Ethics and Logics”, southern economist, July 15, 2007, pp 5 & 6

been recognized as being critical to the success of the development process, pointing out that the government's major thrust has been on providing women with access to the factors of production (Beijing conference, UN Report, 1995)\textsuperscript{22}

Batliwala\textsuperscript{(1995)}\textsuperscript{23} identified in his study on "Empowerment of women in south Asia" that there are three approaches to women's empowerment: (i) the integrated development approach which focused on women's survival and livelihood needs; (ii) the economic development approach which aimed to strengthen women's economic position and (iii) the consciousness approach which organized women into collectives that address the sources of oppression.

Marilee \textsuperscript{(1995)}\textsuperscript{24} studied the role of empowerment of women on decision making and concluded empowerment as a multifaceted process, involving the pooling of resources to achieve collective strength and countervailing power and entailing the improvement of manual capacities and analytical reflective abilities of local women.

Pillai \textsuperscript{(1995)}\textsuperscript{25} depicted in his study entitled "Women and Empowerment" that empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process, which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted nor can it be given away as aims. Power has to be acquired and once acquired, it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved.


\textsuperscript{23} Srilatha Batliwala, "Empowerment of women in south Asia" (1995)

\textsuperscript{24} Karl Marilee, "Women and Empowerment participation and decision making", Zed Books Ltd. London and New Jersey. (1995)

\textsuperscript{25} Pillai J.K., "Women and Empowerment", Gyan publishing house, New Delhi. (1995)
Carr Marilyn, et al. (1997)\textsuperscript{26} reviewed women economic empowerment in South Asia. They defined empowerment as the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of the power. Further, the goal of women’s empowerment is to challenge patriarchal ideology to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality. Empowerment enables poor women to gain access to, and control of both material and informational resources.

Abdur Rab (1998)\textsuperscript{27} examined management of development in growth with equity and stated that the concept of empowerment places emphasis of women’s freedom of choice and power to control their own lives at both the personal and social levels. Empowerment is simply gaining power to make their choice heard to contribute to plans and decisions that affect them to use their expertise at the work to improve their performance and with it the performance of their whole organization.

Choudhary (1998)\textsuperscript{28} in her study entitled “Model of Empowerment” stressed the need for sharpening women’s empowering strategies to make them effective and results oriented. She pointed out that money earned by poor women is more likely to be spent on the basic needs of life than that by men and that this realization would bring women as the focus of development efforts. She also examined the advantages of organizing women groups thereby creating a new sense of solidarity and to work together for the cause of economic independence.

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\textsuperscript{28} Choudhary “Model of Empowerment”, Trends on Social Science Research, vol.5(1), June. (1998)
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Ghosh, et al. (1998) conducted a research on women entrepreneurs in India and suggested models for their development. He reported that emphasis on economic development without attention to quality of life has resulted in uneven economic growth but also a process, which will improve the lives of people. This implies improvement in the quality of lives of all segments of the population, particularly those groups that have been traditionally marginalized, such as women.

Tripathy (1999) made a study on "Making Insurance everybody's Business: The SHG way" and suggested that the success of the Indian Self Help Group (SHG) movement has not only helped in realizing the fact that the rural poor are able to save or capable enough to repay, but also open potential markets for formal financial institutions. It is in this context that the emerging needs of the rural people towards new innovative products of micro-finance should be dealt with serious attention. The winds of change should and must reach the remotest parts of the country, where lies the potential clients of micro-finance.

Manimekalai and Jajeswari (2000) in their study entitled "Empowerment of women through self help groups", reported that the SHG is considered as a viable organization of the rural poor particularly women for delivering micro-credit in order to undertake entrepreneurial activities. Some of the studies of SHGs of the rural poor particularly those managed by women, successfully demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift activities. The poor as a group are quite creditworthy and repayment of loan is quite satisfactory.

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31 Manimekalai and Jajeswari, “Empowerment of women through self help groups”, MARGIN, vol.32, no.4, July-September, pp.74-87. (2000),
Kulshrestha (2001)\textsuperscript{32} in her study on “Self Help Groups Innovations in financing the poor” lime lights that experience has shows that many of the poverty alleviation programmes through organized credit channels have not achieved that required success. It has been observed that in respect of financing poverty alleviation programmes and creation of employment in rural areas. There are a number of factors which prevent small borrowers and poor people from securing adequate credit from formal credit agency, such as lack of awareness among beneficiaries in respect of development through credit and thereby making proper use of credit.

Suguna (2001)\textsuperscript{33} depicted in her study on “Women’s Empowerment – Concept and Frame work” that the process of empowerment has provided a broad based activity scheduled to the regional, national and global agencies in which participation has been highlighted. By this method, participation of women in the decision making process could be enhanced many fold and progress attained in a much short time. The process of empowerment helps in identifying areas to be targeted planning strategies for action and outcomes. Empowerment is not a process which is horizontal or vertical but a process which goes round in a circle.

Bharat (2002)\textsuperscript{34} studied about women Self Help Groups as kindling spirit of entrepreneurship and examined with the results of many credit programmes. He found that the dissatisfaction with the experiences has demanded new modalities to provide effective financial services to rural poor. Research in various countries has brought to light the fact that SHGs play a significant role in mobilizing substantial amount of savings.


\textsuperscript{34} Dogra Bharat, “Women Self Help Groups: Kindling spirit of Entrepreneurship, Kurukshestra, May -05.
Punithavathy and Eswaran (2002)\textsuperscript{35} conducted research on "Empowerment of women through micro-credit" and stated that economic empowerment is the initial aspect of women development. The economic empowerment means greater access to financial resources inside and outside the household, reducing vulnerability of poor women to crisis situations like famine, flood, riots, death, and accidents in the family and significant increase in women's own income. Economic empowerment gives women the power to retain income and use it at her discretion. It provides equal access and control over various resources of the household level. Financial self-reliance of women both in household and in the external environment lead to empowerment of women in other spheres. Micro-credit has resulted in equal access and control over resources at the household level. Micro-credit has resulted in reduced vulnerability of poor women to crisis, famine, floods, and riots.

*Om Raj Singh (2003)*\textsuperscript{36} analyzed the role of NGOs in fostering Self Help Groups and stated that Self Help Groups are necessary to overcome exploration, create confidence for the economic self-reliance of rural poor, particularly among women who are mostly invisible in the social structure. These groups enable them to come together for a common objective and gain strength from each other to deal with exploitation. A group becomes the basis for action and change. It also helps building of relationship for mutual trust between the promoting organization and rural poor to constant contact.

*Prasant Sarangi (2003)*\textsuperscript{37} observed SHGs in Orissa state and reported that the Self Help Groups (SHGs) in our country have become sources of inspiration for women welfare. Now-a-day, formation of SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development programmes. SHG

\textsuperscript{35} Punithavathy Pandian and R. Eswaran, "Empowerment of women through micro-credit", Yojana, 2002.

\textsuperscript{36} Om Raj Singh (2003) "Role of NGOs in fostering Self-Help Groups, Rural Empowerment through SHGs, NGOs, PRIs", Deep and Deep publication, New Delhi. Pp. 71-77.

is also a viable organized set to disburse micro-credit to the rural women and encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities.

The above studies emphasize the need for empowerment of women in order to promote gender equality, to make women as agents of change in society and to increase their capability to enjoy life to the full. Looking at development as freedom and women's issues from the angle of increasing their capabilities are better than concentrating on women's well-being. These studies focus on how women folk can be uplifted through self help groups. It provides an opportunity to improve their financial, social and political status by their involvement as teams. SHGs promote the quality of life by motivating female human potential. In addition, the studies quoted above emphasize that if women are encouraged to actively involved in SHGs they would exhibit better role responsibilities as an entrepreneur, wife, mother etc., SHG is agreed to be one of the effective means of empowerment of women and thus rural development.

Therefore, the preceding review shows that the strategy of micro-financing through SHGs can help in a big way in eradicating poverty and empowering women. However, what is needed is a real change in the community's attitude to depart from the traditional approach of highly subsidized support to the promotion of self help. This is a time consuming process but regular follow up and guidance are sure to bring substantial improvement.

2.1.4 STUDIES ON MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF HELP GROUPS

Alam (1991)\(^{38}\) conducted a research on tribal community and examined the role of education on participation of women in SHGs. He reported that the members of SHGs were unanimous in their opinion that their tribal community wants to secure a place among other communities. To

make the necessary requirements they have to take decisions and act
diligently to meet the requirements.

*Rao (1994)*\(^3^9\) observed SHGs and credit and reported that group
members usually create a common fund by contributing their small savings
on a regular basis, group managing pooled resources in a democratic way,
consider loan requests and loans are disbursed by purposes. Funds are
managed meticulously and there is a far greater responsibility and
commitment among the members towards the utilization of the amount for
the approved purposes and in repayment. The groups develop their own
management system and accountability for handling the resources generated.
Moreover local-leadership is developed to handle the affairs. The interaction
among the members of the group does not restrict itself only to the affairs of
savings and loan transaction but often their issues within the group as well as
in the community find a forum herein.

*Gain and Satish (1996)*\(^4^0\) carried out research on “Self help groups in
Rural Development” and reported that factors affecting groups’ dynamics
and group functioning such as feeling of solidarity and pervasive benefits
from group formation, increased awareness of group members, self-reliance
and transparency. They feel that dependence on outside source either in
material or human terms exist and so the group autonomy is not attained in
many cases.

*Jha (2000)*\(^4^1\) in his study entitled “Lending to the poor: Designs for
credit” and stated that SHG is a small economically homogeneous affinity
group of the rural poor voluntarily coming together to save small amounts

\(^3^9\) Rao Dinakar.K, “Women’s savings and credit schemes:three case studies”, Khadigramodyog,
October. 1994

\(^4^0\) Gain and Satish, “Self help groups in Rural Development”, Dominant publications and
Distributors, New Delhi, 1996.

\(^4^1\) Abhaskumar Jha, “Lending to the poor: Designs for credit”, Empowerment of Women,
regularly, which are deposited in a common fund to meet members emergency needs and to provide collateral free loans decided by the group.

*Jha (2001)*\(^{42}\) micro finance provides credit access to poor with no collateral obligations. It encourages savings and promotes income-generating activities. Loans are provided at all market driven rates of interest and peer pressure is used in repayment. Micro finance is carried out through self help groups, where poor come together in the range of 10-20 by weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings through their savings and loaning. It is hoped that through such interventions hitherto uncovered groups are covered with credit and in the process get empowerment.

Regarding working pattern of self help groups, *Archana Sinha (2002)*\(^{43}\) revealed that SHGs collect the deposits from their members and lend to the needy members for production purposes and also for subsistence and consumption needs. It takes loans from banks or voluntary agencies or self help promoting institutions to meet the needs of the members. SHG itself with the help of NGO makes assessment of individual credit needs of its members and submit to the bank for sanction of collective loans in its name. NGO helps the SHG in promoting raw materials and also marketing of the produce. SHG collectively ensure repayment of bank loans. Entire loan amount disbursed to SHGs is refinanced by NABARD to the financing bank.

Further, she stated that groups generate a common fund where each member contributes their savings on a regular basis. Groups meet periodically to discuss their transactions, loans are decided by consensus. Loans cover a variety of purpose including non-traditional ones also. Loan amounts are small and for short duration, loan procedure is very simple and fertile, defaults are negligible and groups are mobilizing savings from their members and are effectively rotating the same among their members.

\(^{42}\) Ibid,

Rao (2002)\textsuperscript{44} examined empowerment of farm women through dairy cooperation in Andhra Pradesh and stated that the SHGs collect the deposits from their members and kind to the needy members for production purposes and also for subsistence or self help promoting institutions to meet the needs of the members. SHG itself with the help of NGO make assessment of individual credit needs of its members and submits to the bank for sanction of collective loans in its name. NGO helps the SHG in procuring raw material and also marketing of the produce. SHG collectively ensure repayment of bank loans. Entire loan amount disbursed to SHGs is refinanced by NABARD to the financing bank.

Lalitha (2004)\textsuperscript{45} observed from her study entitled “Women thrift and credit groups-Breaking the barriers at the grass roots” that the basic principles of the SHGs are group approach, mutual trust, organization of small and manageable groups, group cohesiveness, spirit of thrift, demand based lending, collateral free, women friendly loan, peer group pressure in repayment, skill training, capacity building and empowerment.

Stepen and Seilan (2005)\textsuperscript{46} pointed out in their study “SHGs and Microfinance creating linkages with banks” that SHG is a voluntary association of poor people, preferably from the same socio-economic background. They come together for the purpose of solving their common problems through self-help and mutual help. The concept aims at empowering women and thus uplifting their families above the poverty line.

It could be noticed from the above studies that an ideal SHG should frame and abide by certain rules to be strictly followed for the success of it.


\textsuperscript{45} Lalitha N., “Women thrift and credit groups-Breaking the barriers at the grass roots”, Peninsular Economist, 2004, ol.XII, no.2, pp.188-195.

\textsuperscript{46} Agnes Stepen and A.Seilan “SHGs and Microfinance creating linkages with banks”, Social Welfare, July 2005, vol.52, no.4, pp.33-34.
By being a member of SHG there is possibility for better participation, decision making, planning for future etc, There is a need to equip them in developing management skills especially in financial issues.

2.1.5 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SELF HELP GROUP

*Shridharan and Damayanty (1997)*\(^{47}\) concluded from their study entitled “Encourage Self help groups” that the SHGs empower women and train them to take active part in the socio economic progress of the nation and make them sensitized, self-made and self-disciplined. The SHGs have inculcated great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day to day life.

*Murugan and Dharmalingam (2000)*\(^ {48}\) observed from their study entitled “Self Help Groups. New Women’s movement in Tamil Nadu” that Empowerment of Women through self help groups would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women groups but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action for development. Empowering is not just for meeting their economic needs but also through more holistic social development.

*Puhazhendi (2000)*\(^ {49}\) conducted a study on “Increasing women’s participation and employment generation among rural poor: An approach through Informal groups” and depicted that SHG is the beginning of a major process of empowering women and to provide increased access to resources and control over factors contributing to women empowerment particularly in the employment and income generating opportunities. SHGs have become


appropriate community based organization that hold key for participatory
development, with an element of alternative rural credit delivery system.

Stiftung (2001)\textsuperscript{50} in his study entitled “NGO, civil society and
Government in Nepal” asserted that the SHG is an exclusive organization of
women as direct stakeholders and also democratically organized and
managed. The women have valuable common stakes in the SHG, which
promoted or voluntarily organized in the communities. Such common stake
in the groups, significantly have effect on their effective participation and
also decision-making of their groups.

Muralidaran and Kamaraj (2004)\textsuperscript{51} made a conceptual study entitled
“Empowerment of Rural women through SHGs” and depicted that SHG can
be defined as supportive, educational, usually change oriented mutual aid
group that addresses a life problems or condition commonly shared by all
members. SHG is a viable organized set up to disburse micro credit to the
rural women for the purpose of making them enterprising women and
encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Credit needs the
Self help group. The women led self help-group has successfully
demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift, appraise credit needs,
maintain linkage with the banks and enforces financial self-discipline.

SunderRaj (2004)\textsuperscript{52} described in his study on “SHGs and Women’s
Empowerment” that Self help Groups are the self managed groups of Women
who have come together to promote savings among themselves as well as
pool savings for activities benefiting either individuals or communities
economically. It primarily deals with economic resources, which in turn

\textsuperscript{50} Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, “NGO, civil society and Government in Nepal”, accessed from

\textsuperscript{51} Dr. K.Muralidaran and J.M.Arun Kamaraj, “Empowerment of Rural women through SHGs”. Rural
India, Feb-March 2004.

\textsuperscript{52} D.SunderRaj: “SHGs and Women’s Empowerment” social welfare, January 2004.
empower people through the values of equality, participation, accountability and transparency.

Ramachandran and Seilan (2005)\textsuperscript{53} in their study on “Socio-economic Empowerment and Self-help Groups” examined that the SHGs provide credit and also empower women socially and economically. They encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sector and prepare women to take up leadership positions.

Venkata Ravi and Venkataramana (2005)\textsuperscript{54} conducted a micro level study entitled “Empowerment of Women through SHGs” and found that the SHG as a community-based organization can provide a permanent forum for articulating women’s needs and contributing their perspectives to the development of society.

Bhuvaneshwaran (2006)\textsuperscript{55} observed from his research on “Role of NGOs in Self Help Groups” and found that SHGs are self managed groups of poor men and women primarily came into existence to mobilize financial resources through own savings and revolve the same to meet the credit needs to these members. His study concluded that each SHGs has a unique system of organizing and managing its own finance and operate as an independent institution.

Gangaiah and Vasudevulu (2006)\textsuperscript{56} conducted a case study entitled “Impact of Self Help Groups on income and Employment” and found that SHG is an informal association of women, who have voluntarily come together for the business of saving and credit and to enhance the member’s

\textsuperscript{53} Dr. T.Ramachandran and A.Seilan, “Socio-economic Empowerment and Self-help Groups” social welfare. September 2005, vol 52, no.6, pp-3-4

\textsuperscript{54} Venkata Ravi and M.Venkataramana, “Empowerment of Women through SHGs: A micro level study” SEDME, March-05, pp-32.

\textsuperscript{55} V.Bhuvaneshwaran, “Role of NGOs in Self Help Groups”, HRD Times, December 2006

financial security as primary focus and other common interests of members such as area development, awareness, motivation, leadership, training and associating in other social intermediation programmes for the benefit of the entire community.

2.1.6 STUDIES ON ROLE OF SELF HELP GROUPS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

_Ghosh (1992)_\(^{57}\) cited from his study entitled “NGO intervention in Poverty Alleviation-scope and Reality” that women themselves change fundamentally when they are members of strong functional women’s groups. This results because difference between weakness and strength lies in well built cohesive organization. These changes at the feeling level are integrally linked with experiences of successful collective action and result in changes in status and self-concept of women.

_Mahajan (1993)_\(^{58}\) conducted a survey on sustainable development of women in Maharashtra and found that the women in group activities significantly contributed in improving their self-confidence. Communication skills are improved after association with SHGs. The members were relatively more assertive confronting social evils and problem situations. A fall in incidence of family violence was evident.

_Agnihotri (1995)_\(^{59}\) examined self-employment and entrepreneurship development programmes among rural and tribal women and observed the impact of SHGs on social economic status of rural and tribal women in Khanora. Nearly 150 families (women) were interviewed for the study and he found that the women of Kahnora were strongly determined to change their

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socio-economic status. They were able to procure enough food, clothing and better shelter.

*Rani (1996)*\(^6\) conducted a study on women Entrepreneurs found that the poor rural women are relatively powerless and they have no control over resources and weak in decision making power. Often decision made by others affects their lives. The prevail patriarchal ideology which promotes the values of submission, sacrifice, obedience and silent suffering often undermines even these attempts by women to assert themselves or demand some share of resources. From the study she proved that pre-requisite to promote empowerment of women in rural areas is promotion of organizing among women. Women can be organized through a variety of means namely through formation of cooperatives, Mahila Mandals and self help groups.

*Kumaran (1997)*\(^6\) conducted a case study on self help groups as an alternative to credit system to the poor in Andhra Pradesh and revealed that credit for consumption is the major purpose in Andhra Pradesh while its social functions and purchase of inputs for agriculture are in Karnataka. Petty trade is another reason for which loans are borrowed among all the respondents. These groups are also linked with banks to undertake income generating activities through which women could achieve economic independence and self-confidence to some extent.

*Gopalakrishnan (1998)*\(^6\) revealed from his study entitled “SHGs and Social Defense” that the self help group is a mini voluntary agency for self help at the micro level has been a focus on the weaker sections particularly women for their social defense. SHG has got great potential in creating awareness on day affairs, promoting savings habit, developing self and

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community assets, increasing income level, improving social power etc, SHG and bank linkage has improved their credit worthiness and repaying capacity. This can contribute economic development, child education, health and sanitation etc., through women. No doubt SHGs will replace commercial/cooperative lending institutions and the villages or at least supplement rural financing. SHG concept generates self-confidence, self-security and self reliance.

*Laxmi (1998)*\(^{63}\) examined the role of banking in rural development and stated that the SHG linkage programme has mostly highlighted the economic criteria. The awareness on the SHGs have created and the attitudinal changes they have brought in the minds and outlook of the members have definitely helped in realizing their own intrinsic strength. Formation of groups with homogeneous background and interest which is key to the success of the credit linkage programme gradually leads to a situation where self help groups transcend economic issues and are induced to take up other related issues.

*Devadas (1999)*\(^{64}\) examined economic development of Indian women and stated that women's participation in self help groups is believed to increase their status and decision making power. Employed women do not remain as objects of social change but became agents of it. Similar results were found by Aggarwal J.C and Aggarwal S.P (1999) according to them SHGs create awareness among the parents to send their children to the school and also provide training for the women to become Balwadi teachers.


Shylendra (1999)\textsuperscript{65} attempted to evaluate the performance of eight women SHGs promoted in the Vidaj village by the Institute of Rural Management (IRM), Anand. Here the SHGs failed to enable members to realize their potential benefits. The reasons identified for the failure were the wrong approach followed in the SHG formation by the team, misconceptions about SHG goals both among the team and the members and lack of clarity about the concept. The main lessons drawn from the project are the need for creating SHGs based on a clear assessment of the needs of different sections of the society, ensuring clear understanding of the concept of SHG among team members involved in promoting SHGs and enhancing the relevance of SHGs to their members by enabling them to meet effectively their requirements be it savings or credit or income generating activities.

Kishanjit and Krishnan (2000)\textsuperscript{66} stated from their study on “Micro Finance-Emerging Challenges” that the Indian micro finance scene is dominated by self help groups and their linkage to banks. The Indian development is unique for its use of formal institutions in providing finance to SHGs instead of creating parallel non-formal channels of routing finance to poor. The plan of link 2, 00,000 groups has brought to therefore the issues at group formation and nurturing before linkage with banks. Innovative forms of financing are therefore to be developed which are based on sound commercial principles and yet help to alleviate poverty. Credit delivery thrift and credit groups (SHGs) emerge as an alternative to the existing system of credit disbursement by the banks.

\textsuperscript{65} Shylendra “Micro-Finance and Self Help Groups (SHGs): A study of the experience of two leading NGOs, SEWA and AKRSP in Gujarat (India)”, Research paper 16, Institute of Rural Management, Anand 1999.

A study by Chowdary (2000)\textsuperscript{67} on reasons for joining SHGs gave rise to nine reasons. They are able to avail credit, develop saving habit, to meet unexpected demand for cash, peer pressure, motivated by NGO/Officials, solidarity, exchange of ideas/experiences, attend adult education classes and empowerment. Among all reasons mentioned to avail credit, "to meet unexpected demand for cash" and developing saving habit are prime factors in joining SHGs.

Gurumoorthy (2000)\textsuperscript{68} depicted from his study entitled "Self Help Groups-Empower Rural Women" that the SHG aims at providing awareness among the poor about the non-going development programmes. The poor should know how best to use existing government programmes and also the legal provisions meant for the disadvantage sections of the rural communities.

Gupta (2001)\textsuperscript{69} explored SHGs as an innovation in financing the poor and found that small savings by rural women can generate the require resources which can aid the people away from the exploitation of money lenders. She reported that SHGs performs a number of functions such as enabling members to become self dependent and self reliant, providing forum for members for discussing their socio-economic problems, developing decision making capacity and leadership qualities among members and equipping women with the basic skill required for understanding monetary transaction. She concluded that the SHGs aim at providing awareness among the poor about the ongoing development programmes. The poor should know how best to use existing government programmes and also the legal provisions meant for the disadvantaged sections of the rural communities.


Laxmi (2001) made a study on “Micro Finance: The New Development paradigm for Poor Women” and reported that SHGs are to supplement credit strategies for meeting the needs of the poor by combining the flexibility, sensitivity and responsiveness of the informal credit system with the technical/administrative capabilities and financial resources of formal financial institutions to build mutual trust and confidence between bankers and the tribal poor and to encourage banking in a segment of population that formal financial institution usually find it difficult to reach this innovative form of financing is imperative.

Kokila (2002) examined DWCRA bazaar as a successful experiment in Andhra Pradesh. She reported that the DWCRA bazaar is yet another advance step in the process of empowerment of women and helps members to get an exposure to marketing concepts, better technology, increase productivity and provides an opportunity to interface with consumers resulting in increased self-esteem of these women.

Chiranjeevi (2003) conducted a study on empowering women through SHG and found that mobilization of thrift improving saving habit among members had developed self discipline. In the opinion of ninety percent of the respondents it had empowered women and the saving of the groups had helped for their economic prosperity. He concluded that women have developed abundant self-confidence and self-esteem through SHGs movement. Not only economic poverty but also social and gender issues can be tackled effectively through this process.

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Prasant Sarangi (2003)\textsuperscript{73} stated from his research on "Self Help Groups" that women led SHGs in many parts of the country have achieved success in bringing the women to the mainstream of decision making. SHGs have also an available organized setup to disburse micro credit to the rural women and encourage them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. The women lead self help groups in village of Purushottampur block of Ganjam district of Orissa state have successfully demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift appraise credit needs, maintain linkage with the banks and enforce financial self discipline.

Karunakar and Saravanan (2008)\textsuperscript{74} studied about "Impact of micro finance on SHGs in Tamil nadu" and observed that the phenomenal growth of SHGs indicates that weaker sections of the society are also capable to sharpen their micro entrepreneurial skills with the help of their own savings and additional bank credit as and when they needed. In the most parts of the country SHGs have achieved success in bringing the women in mainstream of decision making. SHGs are also viable organized setup to disburse micro credit to the needy entrepreneur women and encouraging their promotion of poverty alleviation activities and programmes.

2.1.7 STUDIES ON IMPACT OF SELF HELP GROUPS ON VARIOUS INDICATORS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT (Educational, Economic, Social, Political and Psychological Aspects)

2.1.7.1 Impact of SHG on Educational Empowerment

Paranjape (1989)\textsuperscript{75} revealed in his study entitled "Women's Education status in Women and Development" that there is a link between the empowerment of women and their educational and economic status. At


present women are not empowered in the economic, social, political areas and in the field of education. Hence, there is a need to empower them socially, economically and politically through education, capacity-building, skill development and improving awareness regarding various issues.

As mentioned in the Human Development Report of South Asia (2000)\textsuperscript{76} “One of the discriminations that girls and women are facing in India is the fact that they are not able to enjoy the right to education. More than half of the adult illiterate (63 percent) are women and nearly 2/5\textsuperscript{th} girls enrolled in primary school are drop-outs before grade 5”

Mira Seth (2001)\textsuperscript{77} depicted from her study entitled “Women and Development, the Indian Experience” and concluded that future of the girl child gets further endangered if her mother is illiterate, for an educated mother will always educate her daughter but an illiterate mother may not.

Lakshmi Narayana and Rajesh (2002)\textsuperscript{78} pointed out from their study entitled “Curbing social Evils through Empowerment of women” that one of the strategies for the empowerment of women in education that build a positive self-image and boosts self-confidence among them and develops their ability to think critically.

Padmanabhan (2002)\textsuperscript{79} conducted a study on Literacy: gateway to women empowerment” and found that the women movements are the outcomes of their awareness to seek secure and protect their rights. Literacy is the only source of their empowerment and even to learn to put signature is

\textsuperscript{76} Human Development in South Asia (2000). The Mahbub Ul Haq Human Development centre, the Gender Question, Oxford University press.

\textsuperscript{77} Mira Seth “Women and Development, the Indian Experience” sage publications, New Delhi, 2001.


considered to be a source of empowerment because it enhance their self image and their self confidence. He concluded that women self help groups are women organizations aimed at creating awareness among women. The members of SHG are bold enough to open account in the banks, approach officials in the government departments.

Komal Srivastava (2006)80 explored a study on Community mobilization, Gender equality and resource mobilization in adult education that despite an overall improvement in the educational situation of girls and women in India, there are considerable gender inequalities in education. In the last decade, the Government of India introduced the campaign approach to tackle the problem of widespread illiteracy among women and other socio-economically disadvantaged groups in collaboration with the wider support of civil society. This paper attempts to understand the efforts of Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), a voluntary organization supported by the People's Science Movement, for women's empowerment through its innovative approach to large-scale community mobilization and organization at the grassroots. It shows both the potential and limitations of the BGVS in sustaining the process of empowerment among poor and vulnerable women in the state-sponsored literacy campaigns, and challenges in linking literacy with livelihoods issues, development and democracy in the context of limited state support and resources.

Ramanujam and Thenmozhi (2006)81 stated that as Education is a major source of power, women should be given proper education, It develops the personality of women exposing them to the word of books, peers, teachers and public at large. It is being increasingly felt that empowerment of women will enable a greater degree of self-confidence, a sense of


independence and capability to resist discrimination imposed by the male dominated society.

A study conducted by Surekha Rao (2007)\textsuperscript{82} it revealed that the socio-economic and demographic background of women is needed to be developed, in order to improve their family standards. To improve the family standards, more enrollments of girls in schools must be ensured. This will improve their educational background. Efforts should be made by the municipalities and the NGOs to control the school drop-outs among the girls.

Matheswaran (2008)\textsuperscript{83} explored in his study “Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development through Self - Help Group Movement in Tamilnadu” that the emergence of self-help group to seek economic independence for every woman is a welcome change and given the assistance and guidance self-help group is bound to make not only a sea change in empowering women but also tap the hitherto unutilized powers of women for development of the society as a whole. Education for women is necessary for an understanding and control over social, economic and political force and also to improve their quality of life. Education helps women to know of themselves and their children and understand the society as a whole. Based on his discussion, he concluded that education particularly distance education is an enabling factor for women’s empowerment and sustainable development.

\textsuperscript{82} Surekha Rao K “Education as a strategy for women’s empowerment” Women’s Link, vol.13, no.1, Jan-Mar 2007, pp.16-19

2.1.7.2 Impact of SHG on Economic Empowerment

Lalitha (1998)\textsuperscript{84} made a study on “Micro Finance: Rural NGOs and Banks Networking” and examined that one of the major constraints faced by women which opting for any economic activity is lack of information and skills of how to select the activity. It underlines a need for training of women in identification of opportunity for viable economic activities and making available resources for the same.

A study on “Development of women and children in Rural Areas-An impact study (DWCRA) groups by Damayanthi(1999)\textsuperscript{85} and revealed that group strategy has generated low socio-economic impact on the women’s household as the process of economic empowerment is influenced by socio-economic backgrounds, unsuitable income generating activities undertaken by them, lack of infrastructure and lack of awareness.

Jaya Anand (2000)\textsuperscript{86} studied that positive changes in the attitude among the women in the SHGs made them to realize that subsidies cannot be a “factors” that changes their lives. Micro finance through SHGs enables the poor women to take up micro enterprise without an outsider dictating the terms. It enables them to initiate social action against dowry system, alcoholism, illiteracy and other social issues. The collective strength of women under the SHGs has increased their ability to take up and work for social empowerment.

Lalitha and Nagarajan (2002)\textsuperscript{87} made a study entitled “Self Help Groups in rural development” and concluded that once economic


\textsuperscript{86} Anand Jaya, “Micro finance in Kerala”, Kurukshetra, August 2000, 40.11:10.21

\textsuperscript{87} Lalitha N. and Nagarajan B.S, “Self Help Groups in rural development” Dominant Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002.
empowerment is achieved in terms of easy access to credit facilities, better bargaining power has an influence on overall social empowerment. Collective economic strength in the group leads to enhanced access to new information, skills, knowledge about resources and collective action.

Debotosh Sinha (2005)\textsuperscript{88} observed in his study on “Empowering Women: A catalyst in Social development” that Education is one of the important indicators of women empowerment. The fact is that women though largely absent from the formal workplace and hence from official labour statistics are nevertheless heavily engaged in subsistence agricultural and informal sector of economy. There is a constant effort to put women’s income in bracket in order to consolidate the position that women are only reproducers and not producers. This idea needs to be changed. Women’s economic right is definitely an important indicator for enhancement of their status. So, women’s labour needs to be recognized. Education, more employment avenues, political awareness would all lead to women’s economic emancipation.

Raghav Gaiha (2006)\textsuperscript{89} assessed the benefit of micro finance through SHG and examined that savings mobilization through SHGs was highly effective too- especially in a context of vulnerability of rural households to a range of idiosyncratic and covariant risks, and ineffectiveness of informal social networks in protecting them against such risks. More significantly, using different methods and data sources, various dimensions of empowerment were confirmed. Some of the mechanisms involved in it were identified and assessed. In conclusion, to confine impact assessment of microfinance to conventional economic criteria of rates of return, and financial sustainability of MFIs would not be just narrow but misleading as

\textsuperscript{88} Op.cit Debotosh Sinha New Delhi, pp.6-7, 2005.

well. The benefits through women’s empowerment are substantial and reinforce the case for microfinance through SHGs on both equity and efficiency considerations.

Reddy (2008)\(^9^0\) conducted an empirical study on Poverty reduction and Women Empowerment: Role of SHG federations in Urban areas in Hyderabad and concluded that efforts under the promotion of the SHG urban movement have worked to improve the lives of poor women by enhancing their ability to bargain, manage their own institutions independently and gain access to better livelihood opportunities. This in turn, has increased their financial security and in so doing, has enabled many women to come out of poverty creating stability not only in their own lives but also for those within their communities. However overall, the SHG movement, in its attempt to reduce poverty levels in urban areas, relies on three major principles for poverty reduction; self-help, mutual benefit and self-reliance.

Garikipati (2008)\(^9^1\) conducted a study on “Impact of Lending to Women on Household Vulnerability and Women’s Empowerment: Evidence from India” and found that impact evaluation studies routinely find that lending to women benefits their households. However, this may not empower the women concerned. This seemingly paradoxical conclusion is confirmed by her study with respect to a lending program in rural India. She investigates this result by examining a combination of loan-use data and borrower-testimonies. She find that loans procured by women are often diverted into enhancing household’s assets and incomes. This combined with woman’s lack of co-ownership of family’s productive assets and conclude,

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results in her disempowerment. If empowering women is a crucial objective, then the patriarchal hold on productive assets must be challenged.

Swain and Varghese (2009) evaluated the effect of Self Help Group participation on a long-term impact parameter, namely, asset creation. Indian Self Help Groups (SHGs) are unique in that they are mainly NGO-formed microfinance groups but later funded by commercial banks. The results reveal that longer membership in SHGs positively impacts asset creation, robust to various asset specifications. With longer participation in SHGs, members move away from pure agriculture as an income source toward other sources such as livestock income. Training by NGOs positively impacts asset creation but the type of SHG linkage per se has no effect.

2.1.7.3 Impact of SHG on Social Empowerment

A study by Gopalakrishnan (1998) has shown in his study entitled “SHGs and social defense” a positive change towards child care, environment, sanitation, drinking water, public speaking and child education. Most of the women showed interest in sending their girl children to school and were also involved in prohibiting arrack sales in their area.

Narasimhan (1999) observed from the study on “Empowering women: An Alternative strategy for Rural India” that women in the SHGs are empowered with information on hygiene, sanitation and health, they no longer turn to “maintain” and other “rites” for problems like sickness.

Dockey (1999) stated in his study on “SHGs and Micro credit, sustaining Rural Women” that the SHG strategy provides women with a

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93 Opcit, Gopalakrishnan B.K (1998), 44.10:30-34.


chance for educative programme, awareness creation on issues such as drinking water and sanitation, family planning and literacy.

*Ahmed (1999)*\(^9^6\)* The SHGs are involved in many activities as a community based organization at the village level like vigilance committees working at village level for supervising the execution and monitoring of the rural development activities in Assam, emerging as social activists in the implementation of different development schemes. These women groups have also involved in the prohibition of illicit liquor, social forestry, creating awareness on development schemes.

*Jaya Anand (2000)*\(^9^7\)* observed from her study on “Micro finance in Kerala”, and concluded that as Women are empowered with information and resources, it enables them to initiate social action against dowry system, alcoholism, illiteracy and other social issues. The collective strength of women under the SHGs has increased their ability to take up and work for social empowerment.

*Gangaiah (2000)*\(^9^8\)* found that in Andhra Pradesh, SHGs are also involved in the awareness generation on pre-natal and post-natal health care, safe drinking water, family planning, pulse polio and maternity benefits scheme. Further, they are enabled to access more information on development and welfare programmes implemented for women development.

*Mangathai (2001)*\(^9^9\)* found that the training provided to the women in the SHGs brought about a positive and gradual change in their group

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\(^9^7\) Op cit, *J-lyya Anand (2000)*, 40.11:10.21


management and operations as they became better aware of the productive loan and various options available to them. With the incremental flow of income, the women have ensured that all their children are provided health care and also regularly sent to the school.

*Madhur Bala and Monga (2004)*\(^{100}\) conducted a study in that they observed that education facilitates a woman to have employment and she proves her ability to have a better way in household decision making. These are the two prerequisites to improve the quality of life of women in family and society.

*Venkata Ravi and Venkataramana (2005)*\(^{101}\) conducted a study on Empowerment of women through SHG: They concluded that women had greater accessibility to the financial resources that were mainly invested in agricultural operations and for health care of the family members. Now they have their own source for credit and are able to borrow at the moment they are among the weaker sections, the SHG has become the main source of credit. This has injected positive change in their socio-economic behavior and status in the village.

*Biswa (2008)*\(^{102}\) in their study entitled “Self-Help Group-Promise for Women Empowerment” revealed that majority of the women SHGs have been able to achieve consciousness about the function of local self-government, politics, health awareness and child health care. These women are also gradually taking decision independently in their household affairs, economic matters, child education and health and family welfare. They concluded that SHG women are not only participating in capacity building

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but also utilizing their acquired capabilities to improve their quality of life in a holistic manner.

Kay (2009)\textsuperscript{103} conducted a case study from Narathiwat, a predominantly Muslim province in southern Thailand, which provides some useful insights into the potential of community-based self-help groups run by women. This paper demonstrates the multiple aspects of self-help groups developing in a phased process, starting with economic enhancement, leading to empowerment at the individual level, and then moving on to collective action at the community level. However, these initiatives will not be able to bring about social transformation in the aggregate unless issues of control and ownership of the production process, linkages with a broader market and greater decision-making at the political level are tackled. Initiatives at the community level can be a useful tool to empower women, forging gender equality from the grass-roots to the national level. However, these initiatives have to incorporate strategies and measures that empower the poor, especially poor women, and enable them to participate in the development and transformation of society if poverty is to be truly alleviated.

2.1.7.4 Impact of SHGs on Political Empowerment

\textit{Indian Express, New Delhi, June 5, (1991)}\textsuperscript{104} The equal right given to women in the constitution of India has in practice little weightage as seen by their poor representation in the Lok Sabha. In the 1952 elections, out of 499 members, only 22 were women. In 1957, out of 500, 27 were women. In 1962, there were 503 members of whom 34 were women. In 1967, out of 523 members, 31 were women. In 1971, out of 521, 22 were women. In 1977, there were only 19 women out of 544 members. In 1980 Lok sabha polls, 28 women were elected and in 1984 elections 44 women were returned. In 1989, there were 529 members of whom 27 were women.


\textsuperscript{104} Indian Express, New Delhi, June 5, 1991.
Bhargava and Vidya (1992)\textsuperscript{105} stated that in the 1991 general election also, the number of women MPs was more or less the same as that of 1989. Twenty eight women were elected to the Lok sabha and out of the 58 ministers in the Union Cabinet, only six were women including one with Cabinet rank.

Mishra and Prof Mishra (1995)\textsuperscript{106} observed that when women are encouraged by the performance in political process at the grass roots level, the educated, courageous and dedicated women will come forward to join and compete with their male counterparts in State and National politics. When they can go into the space and take the mountaineering, why not they take to national and state politics effectively?

Mira Seth (1995)\textsuperscript{107} stated in her article, that the political empowerment of women has made considerable strides with only 2.8 percent women being represented in the first parliament of 1952-57 to 7.2 percent in the present Lok shaba. Women's representation in the Rajya sabha has, however, shown greater improvement, having increased from 7.7 percent in 1952 to 15.5 in 1991. It is, however, felt that the Panchayat Raj Act of 1992 will empower women politically at the grass roots level in a revolutionary fashion.

Thanikodi and Sugirth (2004)\textsuperscript{108} studied that Empowerment of women means to ignite mental, moral and physical power of women on social and spiritual level. The fullest potential of women can be utilized, unless we equip women with confidence and power the future of our nation remains

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\textsuperscript{107} Opicit, Mira Seth (1995), pp.33-35

weak. The author suggested that women are brought into the mainstream of politics with enough representation in the decision-making bodies of our country, in all spheres of society-private, political, economic and culture.

*Thorp et al (2005)*\(^{109}\) explored that Group formation has great potential to empower and raise the incomes of poor people. However, the chronically poor are disadvantaged in group formation, and this may form a significant part of the vicious circle and dynamics of chronic poverty. These disadvantages include a lack of assets, isolation, and low levels of access to political institutions. Successful groups formed among the poor often exclude the even poorer, particularly those associated with market functions. It is the political function of groups that is of primary importance in helping to overcome marginalization and social exclusion experienced by the poorest.

*Smriti Rao (2008)*\(^{110}\) conducted a case study of a liberalization program with an emphasis on women's empowerment. Based on the state budget data and fieldwork data from two villages, this paper investigates the content of this policy regime to argue that women's empowerment policies were ultimately constrained by the policy context of liberalization. The state lowered shares of expenditure upon social reproduction and the substantive content of women's empowerment policy was reduced to a thrift and micro-credit program. Fieldwork data indicate, the latter lacks administrative support and relies upon the expenditure of time and resources by participants themselves, re-emphasizing class and caste inequalities among women and undermining the broader project of empowerment.

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\(^{109}\) Rosemary Thorp, Frances Stewart and Amrik Heyer, “When and how far is group formation a route out of chronic poverty?”, World Development, Volume 33, Issue 6, June 2005, Pages 907-920

2.1.7.5 Impact of Self Help Group on Psychological Empowerment

Jyothi Mitra (1997)\textsuperscript{111} after investigating on women equality and empowerment she found that majority of the 53 percent of the respondents participated in their enterprise for 6-8 hours in a day and main motive to start enterprise was to get employment to support family income by using their skills. Their ambition was to get good income and prove good entrepreneurs. They stated that commitment, hard work, efficiency and dedication were the main causes for their success.

Mohan Rao and Appa Rao (1999)\textsuperscript{112} studied women self help groups in Andhra Pradesh and found that the highest rate of tangible benefits is derived by SHGs than DWCRA members. The members of SHGs are enjoying the fruits of saving by improving their skills in different areas like Tailoring, painting, embroidering, soft toys making and they are occupying themselves in different self-employment like vegetable selling, pickle making, basket weaving and traditional craft works.

Snehlata Tendon (2001)\textsuperscript{113} says that self help group focus on change and change-oriented skill, to help women to achieve insight, empowerment, and finding a new way of life. This strategy has made the rural women to discover their strength, self-confidence, social and economic ability and capacity.

Kokila (2001)\textsuperscript{114} observed that the SHG consists of women from homogeneous occupational background even from neighborhood, which helps them mutually trust each other. This has facilitated the women to learn to work collectively towards set agenda and work in a democratic manner.


\textsuperscript{112} Mohan Rao R.M and Appa Rao C.H, “A study on women self help groups in Andhra Pradesh”, NABARD Chair Unit, Dept. of Coop and Applied Economics, Andhra University.


The SHG functions with the principle of "contribute according to your ability and take according to your needs".

_Archna Gupta (2001)_\(^{115}\) reported that a typical tribal women's SHGs performs a number of functions such as enabling members to become self dependent and self reliant, providing a forum for members for discussing their socio-economic problems, developing decision making capacity and leadership qualities among members and equipping women with the basic skill required for understanding monetary transactions.

_Awashthi et al (2002)_\(^{116}\) explored the working and impact of self help groups on economic status of women in watershed areas of Madhya Pradesh and pointed out that the SHG members suffered from lack of motivation, backward and forward linkages, inadequate provision for marketing and availability of inputs, lack of systematic monitoring and follow-up of the activities.

_Amelu (2005)_\(^{117}\) conducted a study on "Group formation-Modalities and objectives" SHG lays the foundation for self-reliance through building an institution, which has the capacity to continue development activities and empower people. It creates confidence, awareness and information sharing attitude in a collective manner.

_Gupta and Namita Gupta (2006)_\(^{118}\) stated that SHGs are considered as one of the most significant tools to adopt participatory approach for the economic empowerment of women. It is an important institution for improving the life of women on various social components. It acts as the

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117 Almelu S., "Group formation-Modalities and objectives, social welfare, July, 2005vol.52, no.4, pp.10

forum for members to provide space and support to each other. It enables its members to learn to cooperate and work in a group environment.

Studies quoted above emphasizes that if women are encouraged to actively involve in SHGs they would exhibit better role responsibilities as entrepreneurs, wife, mother etc. Women groups have proved that they would indeed bring about a sea change in the mindset of the very conservative and traditional bound illiterate to achieve the objectives of rural development. Many studies are conducted in the areas of economic and social empowerments but there are very limited research works in the area of educational, political and psychological empowerment aspects. The empowerment of women paves way for the development of the nation as well as it confirms the development of family conditions also. This study has been an in-depth study confined to one of the rural district in Tamil Nadu and it is concentrated to the empowerment of women through SHGs. Thus the present study focused on members' involvement in SHGs, empowerment programmes of SHGs and its impact on educational, economic, social, political and psychological aspects in detail.