Chapter - II

“Everyday I fight war against the mirror. I can’t take the person staring back at me”. Performed by Pink “Don’t Let me Get Me”.

- Leslie Feinberg

Review of Literature
A conceptual frame work for the study based on the ideas and concepts gathered from review work of existing literature of both theoretical and empirical nature will facilitate planning the study in a comprehensive manner. It also helps to know the previous research work done in that area and acts as a torch for the new researchers. Better ways are needed to generalize the research findings from laboratory studies to operational settings, from one experimental study to another and from one operational setting to another. The proposed study is new in its subject treatment. However, an attempt is made here to put together some of the closely related research findings on the area. The literature survey on different dimensions is presented in the following subheads.

II.1. Concepts and definition of Socio-Economic Status
II.2. Importance of Self Help Groups for Weaker section in the Society
II.3. Activities and employment achievement of Self Help Groups
II.4. Transgenders’ feelings and emotions and their Social Activities
II.5. Government and general public support to Transgenders.

II.1. Concepts and Definition of Socio-Economic Status

Cattell (1942) in his article mentioned about five most important definers of social status namely prestige rating, intelligence quotient, income (annual), years of education and inter-correlating them with 25 occupations. Cantril (1943) classified the American people based on social status, into upper, upper middle, middle, lower middle and lower social classes. He concluded that there is by no means a close one to one correspondence between each social class identification and income group identification. Warner, et. al., (1960) used two methods to provide accurate measurement of social class. These methods are (i) Evaluated Participation Method and (ii) Index of Status Characteristics Method. Evaluated participation comprised several rating techniques based on the proposition that
those who interact in the social system of a community evaluate the participation of those around them and that the members of a community are explicitly or implicitly aware of their rankings and translate their evaluation of such social participation into social class ratings. The Index of Status Characteristics used are occupation, source of income, house type and dwelling area, which are then rated on a seven-point scale. Hollingshead, et. al., (1958) placed individuals and families in different classes based on Index of Social Position. This index used three indicators namely i) residential address of the household, ii) the occupational position of its head, and iii) the years of school the head of the family had completed.

Pareekh (1981) classified the socio-economic status in the rural areas based on nine characteristics namely caste, occupation of family head, education of family head, level of social participation of family head, landholding, housing, farm power, material possessions and type of family. However, the instrument developed by Agrawal, O.P., et. al., (2005) is applicable for both urban as well as rural families. Moreover, the instrument has been developed for all sections of the society. Various scales developed by different researchers mentioned above to measure socio-economic status of any section of the society individually focuses on different variables. Total number of variables is more than twenty. However, NSSO uses very peculiar profile termed as MPCE (Monthly Per Capita Expenditure) of a household to assess the socio economic status of a section of the society. This profile is best suitable for the purpose because directly or indirectly it incorporates all variables used in various scales mentioned above. That is why beside other variables, MPCE has been used in this work to analyze the socio economic status of Scheduled Caste people in the rural areas of Assam with special reference to the district of Nagaon, the central region of Assam.

II.2 Importance of Self Help Groups for Weaker Sections in the Society

Self Help Groups enhance the equality of status of weaker sections as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. In all stages of economic and social activities, involvement of weaker section in the society becomes essential. They encourage
weaker section to take active part in the socio economic progress of the nation. The Self Help Groups bring out the possibility of weaker section in moulding the community in right perspective and explore the initiatives of weaker section in taking up entrepreneurial ventures. Self Help Groups empower weaker sections and train them to take active part in the socio economic progress of the nation and make them sensitized, self made and self disciplined. Self Help Groups may remove the social limitations of weaker sections such as suppression and may contribute for their dominant role in decision making. The Self Help Groups inculcate a great confidence in the minds of weaker sections to succeed in their day to day life. In recent years, SHGs have become significant institutions for rural development. It is now being increasingly realized that instead of targeting the individuals in the process of development, it would be more useful to adopt the approach of group development. The group approach makes available the collective wisdom and combined resources for any task.

Pandian Cynthia (2006) had stressed upon empowering the weaker section through administrative intermediates and lifting them above the poverty cellar through income generating activities and employment potential of Farm Sector, Non Farm Sector, Informal Sector, Rural Infrastructure and Self-Help Group (SHG). He had suggested small businesses and economic activities to be adopted by the weaker sections. They should be told how to improve quality, productivity, cost effectiveness, and such other activities to improve their socio economic conditions. Rural housing, food processing and preservative, agro-processing, air-drying, bio-diesel, rain water harvesting, water-shed development, water management technologies, health services, sanitation etc. would be of various useful activities for their development. It was also suggested that the retrieval of rural information, digital video technologies, vermin culture, bio-pesticide, bio-diesel etc. would be useful for them.

D.M.Madari and Shivkumar Deene (2000) stated in their article that women have suffered the most in our country. Women involvement in economic activities is marked by low work participation rates, excessive concentration in the unorganized sector of the economy and that too in low skill jobs. There is greater dynamism in the rate of growth of female employment. Women becoming
entrepreneurs in India is still very difficult, as our patriarchal society stipulates unfavourable values for women. The experience gained from the study suggests focusing on the following recommendations to do away with the odds the women entrepreneurs face: In addition to different financial organisations arranging special loan fund for women entrepreneurs, separate financial institutions have to be formed for women. Loan should be on easy terms and interest rate must be lower for women than for usual commercial loans. Assistance has to be provided to women entrepreneurs to procure raw materials. Women should be advised on various issues of women entrepreneurship development and be given access to information. Separate outlets may be created in all the district headquarters and other important public places where products of women entrepreneurs will be sold. Government must build godowns to preserve the goods produced by women entrepreneurs. Prioritized loans must be provided to women entrepreneurs to increase the production of unusual goods. Women must be given institutional help to make and evaluate projects. Women entrepreneurs must be motivated so that professionalism can grow among them to develop a sense of ownership. They need to be cordially helped by all friends and relatives

Sen and Grown (1987) Bsnath and Elson (1999) and Nussbaum (2000) stated in their write-ups that, it is clear from the literature on gender and empowerment that the role of gender in development cannot be understood without understanding the socio-cultural (as well as political and economic) contexts in which development takes place. The concept of empowerment only has meaning within these specific contexts. At the same time, operational definitions (e.g. definitions embodied in indicators to be applied in the context of development assistance policies, programs, and projects) should be consistent with the spirit of international conventions to which countries providing international development assistance have been signatories. The approach based in universal human rights offers the best operational framework for this task. S.K Mishra (2005) in his study of poverty and inequalities in rural Assam concluded that the extent of poverty is very high among the backward communities in the rural areas of Assam. Income inequality is alarming in the villages of Assam and such inequality is more prevalent than in India. The prime reasons of poverty are excessive dependence on
primary sector, disguised unemployment, poor development of marketing facilities, connectivity and power supply, poor agricultural productivity, absence of any significant manufacturing activities, and so on.

V. Puhazhendhi and B. Jayaraman (1999) concluded in their article that the informal groups of rural poor with active intervention of NGOs, adequately supported by training and financial assistance, ensured and also significantly improved women’s participation both from economic and social aspects. The group approach is becoming more and more important as evidenced by the recognition accorded by the Government of India in the on-going income generating programmes. The SHGs have become the focal point of the development schemes under the unified poverty alleviation programme, in the “Swarnajaynti Gram Swarojgar Yojana” (SGSY) launched from April 1999 by the Government of India. Further, reduction in transaction cost of lending to the rural poor through SHGs when compared to the normal lending and increased recovery performance reinforce the group concept in the rural credit delivery through formal institutions. Hence, there is a greater potential for the group approach in further while conceptualising and implementing any programme for the rural poor, especially weaker section in the society like women and Transgenders.

Samirendra Nath Dhar and Soumitra Sarkar (2000) stated in their article that the main purpose for which SHGs are formed is that they can graduate as group micro entrepreneurs and generate income from group economic activities. To ensure that SHGs take up economic activities and can sell their products, “Care should be taken that the market is either readily available or there is a potential for market creation for the products. This may require engaging the services of professionals in the field for market research and survey. The group leaders and members of the SHGs should be counselled to ensure that the term of a loan should not be longer than is actually necessary and interest and repayment holidays should not be generalised. Repayment periods should be weekly and sometimes even daily wherever possible. Monitoring or repayment periods should increase the group’s earning flow. Here comes the role of clusters and federations where counselling
can be done for ensuring prompt repayments and reduction of transaction and operating costs\textsuperscript{13}.

E.Raja Justus and M. Mahiba (2000) stated in their article that Participatory Micro Enterprises can play an important role in accelerating the development process of underdeveloped countries or developing nations like India. In the last two decades, they have made their presence felt by involving in various spheres of activities like: welfare programmes; development-oriented schemes concentrating on people, empowering women, and other weaker sections, protecting the rights of the exploited classes; educating on environmental matters; spreading literacy; implementing health schemes; and making the best use of the available help, concessions, grants and the like from the Government and other development agencies for the benefit of the poor.

Even though Participatory Micro Enterprises had been functioning from the later years of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, their aims and objectives had differed, but most of them had extended some service to the weaker sections of the population. But since the 70’s there had been a change in the trend of the voluntary agencies. A new type of voluntary enquiries with accent on mass movement and community development emerged. The development efforts in Latin American countries through a new philosophy of non-formal education introduced by Poulo Frierie of Brazil motivated the birth of many NGO’s with participation of people in the development process.

People’s Associations for Social Action (PASA) was registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act in December 1978, to work among the poor people in some selected villages in Kanyakumari District. The growth of People’s Associations for Social Action has two distinct stages-the earlier stage where community organization and awareness education had been emphasized and in the new stage starting from 1987 where integration has been attempted between the community organization and the income generation programmes, including microenterprises\textsuperscript{14}.
Athaparia and Pandey (2001) in their study on scheduled castes of Assam as the victims of poverty observed that most of the scheduled castes in Assam either do not have their residential plot or have very small land holdings which are not sufficient to maintain their family. Most of the Scheduled Caste communities in Assam pursue agriculture as their main occupation. They engage themselves in cultivation during the rainy season keeping other months in other occupations. Very small land holdings of the Scheduled Caste people of Assam indicate the unemployment and poverty of the Scheduled caste people of Assam. Fish Catching in Assam is practiced mostly by the Scheduled Caste communities like Kaivartas, Jalia, Namasudrs, Jhalo-Malo etc. But the fishing sources like rivers, beels etc. remain inaccessible to the poor fisherman as the same are auctioned to the big traders or Mahajans. Consequently, the local fishermen are suffering from the economic hardship.

Dichter (1999) had revealed that the Self Help Group served as a set of co-guarantors, tool of solidarity and so on. The study in Bangladesh had explained that group defaults could be used for group success. There was great demand for credit from SHG. The other members must see that credit was properly managed by the members of SHGs. Poverty and vulnerability was reduced by the credit given to the groups. Micro enterprises were not likely to remain viable in any context that begins to be economically viable. Self Help Group improved the productivity of members’ income generating activities, enhancing self confidence among independent workers.

II.3. Activities and Employment Achievement of Self Help Groups

Hommes (1997) examined Self Help Groups in Vietnam and found duck breeding, cattle and goat breeding or fruit crops rising as the common enterprises undertaken. The profit generated was recycled into the group funds for building better sanitation stations. Weaving bedmats using Pandanus leaves, manufacturing agarbathis under the trade name ‘Poicka agarbathi’, manufacture of school bags using second hand machines, land development under watershed programme, making umbrellas, compost making, mushroom production and milk testing were some of the activities taken up by SHG members as commercial ventures.
The Vetri SHG promoted by Swami Vivekananda Gurukulam (SVG), Coimbatore is a successful Self Help Group formed and run by Women members and it is financed by State Bank of India, SRKV Branch at Coimbatore. The total number of members in this group is 17 and 15 of them are involved in recovery agent activity. The loan availed was to the order of ₹5.75 lakh, which was utilized for doing small business such as in groceries, chocolate agency, garlic business, saree sales, etc. The group has so far saved ₹2 lakh\textsuperscript{18}.

Snehalatha and Reddy (1998) revealed that the income generating activities taken up by the women were dairy, forest nursery, sericulture, vegetable cultivation and petty business, which were carried out as a group activity\textsuperscript{19}.

Swati (2001) from a study in a tribal district of Madhya Pradesh, India revealed that, besides reducing the pressure on the forests (which was the main objective of initiating SHG by the Forest Department), SHG was able to start and run a nursery on their own. It provided them opportunities not only for experimental learning of many nursery management skills but also of leadership and group functioning. About 75.60 per cent availed loan for dairy activities, while 4.00 and 3.60 per cent of the respondents availed loan from the group for daughters marriage and poultry farming, respectively\textsuperscript{20}.

The Ganapathy SHG promoted by Swami Vivekananda Gurukulam (SVG), Coimbatore is a successful Self Help Group formed and run by Women members and it is financed by State Bank of India, SRKV Coimbatore Branch. The total number of members of the group at present is 17 and their total savings as of May 2007 was around ₹60,000. The food items were initially prepared by them in the house of one of the members. Now they have engaged a cook for preparing the food by paying ₹.250 per day as wage. The members purchased a second hand matador van for ₹60,000 from the group loan as well as loan availed from the bank and it has been registered in the name of one of the members. They have also engaged a driver for driving the vehicle and the driver has been paid ₹.150 per day as wage. They spend ₹.200 per day towards running expenses. In addition, they pay quarterly M V tax of ₹.1,050 and vehicle insurance of ₹.6,000 per year. The members are able to earn ₹6,000 per day and after meeting all expenses, the net
income is estimated to be ₹2000 per day. The members have taken advantage of the location and fully exploited the potential of this activity\textsuperscript{21}.

Puhanzhendi (2000) reported the positive impact of employment generation on 45 per cent of the group members who had undertaken income generating activities. The additional employment generated through SHG lending worked out to 172 man days per member. Undertaking supplementary activities such as animal husbandry, poultry etc. and nonfarm activities like petty shop, kirani shop, flower vending business etc. provided employment to a greater extent. The annual employment available for the group members has increased by 85 per cent during the post group formation when compared to the pre group formation period\textsuperscript{22}.

The Senthamilz Pavai Mahalir SHG promoted by Women Organisation for Rural Development (WORLD), Cuddalore is a successful Self Help Group formed and run by Women members and it is financed by State Bank of India, Manapattu. The interview revealed: Women Organisation for Rural Development (WORLD) was sanctioned by NABARD’s financial support of ₹90,000 in March 2005 for promotion and credit linkage of 50 new SHGs in the area of Cuddalore Block, in Cuddalore district\textsuperscript{23}.

Papalo and Sharma (1999) suggested that restricting the economy and the structured adjustment policies may increase employment opportunities, but actually reduces employment. Hence, it was necessary that women, in general and rural women, in particular should equip themselves through formal and professional education in order to participate in the non-agricultural activities by giving up their dependency on agriculture\textsuperscript{24}.

Brahanyak, a 48 year old woman of Vadapuram Keelpadhi was living in a very poor economic condition and her husband owns a petty shop and had hand to mouth existence. She heard about the SHG and with the help of the NGO, she mustered 19 members, who also belonged to below poverty line group. All of them were landless and some of the members were working as agricultural labourers, that too in seasons. All of them have purchased one animal each through Self Help Group and are supplying milk to the milk producers coop society in the
village. Their net income has gone up to ₹1,500 per month per member. They have cleared approximately 50 per cent of the loan. On seeing the prompt repayment the branch manager recommended TEAP-RF loan of ₹45,000 (which included ₹30,000 subsidy and ₹15,000 loan component). The group’s savings as on date is ₹1.20 lakh and their internal lending is to the order of ₹3.00 lakh25.

Purushotham (2004) reported that rural micro enterprises in sub-sector had grown in importance during the last two decades, policy makers and administrators cannot ignore its capacity to provide viable and sustainable avenues of self-employment to the members of SHGs. Yet across a broad range of settings, the field evidence suggests that with appropriate market support strategies, the members of SHGs could be effectively assisted to identify and build micro enterprises as a source of their employment and income26.

The Subam SHG promoted by Hand in Hand, Villupuram is a successful Self Help Group formed and run by Women members and it is financed by Pallavan Grama Bank, Villupuram. The members reveal the positive and negative experiences of the members in the group. Subam SHG at Tindivanam was formed by Hand in Hand, Tindivanam, Villupuram district on 5 January 2005 with fifteen members. These members attended a One day Awareness Programme conducted by the NGO, Hand in Hand with NABARD’s grant assistance. After identifying the Computer skills of five members of the SHG, Hand in Hand motivated them to start a computer centre. Pallavan Grama Bank provided ₹2 lakh loan to five members viz., Kanchana, Prema, Valli, Divya and John to start the enterprise. They acquired five computers and a printer. These SHG members conduct training programmes particularly for poor and downtrodden ladies and underprivileged children. The courses offered by the Centre include Diploma in Office Automation, Diploma in Computer Applications, Diploma in Desktop Publishing, etc. The group members earn a monthly income of ₹12,000 to ₹15,00027.

II.4 Transgenders’ Feelings and Emotions and their Social Activities

Many of the Transgenders revealed their feelings and emotions when the researcher met them at Chennai and few of them were showed to her by a 45 years
old Transgender in Pulianthope. She said “we have been born like this; People don’t understand why we are like this! We force ourselves to live with no other go”. Another 23 years Transgender in Vyasarpaadi felt “when I went to a Government hospital for my illness, the workers there including doctor looked at me as an animal.” 29 years Transgender from Kannikapuram expressed her worries in the words “I have studied up to 12th standard, and I am willing to do any work that suits me. Even NGOs except very few like ‘Thai’ hesitate to recruit us! See, this society looks down upon us as Sex Workers and cheaters. But what mistake did I make in my life? Is having been born as Transgender my fault? Only in Sex Work and Begging, they don’t ask any qualifications”. Finally, 19 years old Transgender from Choolaimedu blamed, “there is no one in this society to care for us really. Many people come here to interview us like you. We cry in front of you, you would say something and go away. We know nothing big is going to happen”.28

Most of the Transgenders engage themselves in various social and welfare activities and they have come forward to donate their eyes. They have organized eye donation drive to send a message to the society and to create awareness about organ donation and this year more than 2,000 of their members have come forward to donate their body organs, including eyes, In addition, about 500 Transgender persons gathered in Coimbatore city to sign up for the cause and they feel very happy to donate their eyes which would benefit the needy after their death.29

II.5. Government and General Public Support to Transgenders

Rev. Fr. Alphonse Manickam, Principal, St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai said that education alone would bring in the real change in their lives and ensure transformation in their social status; they should be provided the right opportunity in education also. From next academic year onwards, any Transgender who has passed Plus Two with qualifying marks will be admitted to the undergraduate programmes of the college if they apply. Moreover, the college will also bear a portion of their educational expenditure and urged the organisers to formulate resolutions to be sent to the Central and State Governments for the benefit of Transgender. Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment D. Napoleon, while listing out the welfare measures being extended
by the State Government to them, said the Transgender should also be recognised as differentlyabled so that they could get more assistance including funds to start business ventures by starting their Self Help Groups. In Tirunelveli district, 12 Transgenders have been given free house site pattas.  

A recent study undertaken to understand the level of General wellbeing of Male-to-female (MTF) Transgender population living in Chennai, clearly reveals a strong need for both Psychologists and Physicians to first understand and accept Transgender persons and then improve their wellbeing from “Average to Better.” South India faces innumerable difficulties in their day to day existence such as barriers to accessing health care, social stigma and gender discrimination. Despite the government of Tamil Nadu being the first in India to initiate schemes to improve the social acceptance of Transgender persons, issuing ration cards, providing houses and free lands for their use, they are still highly vulnerable to several mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, risk of suicide and HIV/AIDS infection and substance abuse. As for the results of the quantitative data, 75.76% of the samples fell under Average Wellbeing Category, 24.24% of samples fell under Better Wellbeing Category and zero percent fell under Poor Wellbeing Category. From the In-Depth Interviews it is inferred that the socio-economic status of Transgender is very poor, they feel inferior to others and are constantly humiliated and ill-treated by the society at large. However, support within the community is strong. 

For the first time in Tamil Nadu Assembly election, held recently Transgenders exercised their franchise. Unmindful of some naughty comments by male and female voters, the Transgenders stood in the queues to cast their vote. They had earned the right to vote following election commission accepting their long pending demand. Though, the total strength of the Transgenders, who had registered themselves in electoral rolls as 'others', was around 3000, about 850 of them figured in the electoral rolls. Tamil Nadu is the first State in India to grant 'third gender' status to Transgenders and also set up a welfare board for them. The State government also declared April 15 as Transgenders Day. It may be recalled that former TV chat show host and Transgender Rose Venkatesan and Transgender
Rights activist Kalki Subramaniam, joined the DMDK and the ruling DMK, respectively. Their main goal was to work for bringing the Transgender community into the mainstream and provide them a decent living with suitable vocational training. They also sought party tickets to contest the polls- Rose from Karur and Kalki from Pollachi. 

There have been odd instances of Transgender persons occupying positions of political power Shabnam Mausi became Member of Parliament from Sohagpur in Madhya Pradesh in 2000 and Kamla Jaan was elected Mayor of Katni in Madhya Pradesh in 2000 but these have not significantly empowered the larger community. In fact, in the case of Kamla Jaan, in August 2002 the Madhya Pradesh High Court invalidated her election on the grounds that a eunuch is essentially male and therefore cannot contest from a seat reserved for women. The court, in effect, did not recognise a person's right to choose his or her gender identity. The General Public said, “Now a days we don’t hesitate to mingle with Transgenders while travelling in buses and in common places” when the Transgenders celebrate their Day on 15th April 2011.

Members of the Tamil Nadu Thai Vizhudugal Society celebrated the first “Thirunangaigal Day” with the District Collector S. Madumathi on 15th April 2011; Namakkal District Coordinator of the organization S.Devi told “Over the last five years we celebrated it on January 18 where we used to conduct eye donation drives and planting of saplings in an unorganized way”. It is worth recalling that it was on the same day (April 15) in 2008 that the Chief Minister launched the welfare board for Transgenders, she said. “Today this celebration is being organized in 18 districts across the State including cities like Chennai, Coimbatore, Salem and Trichy”, she added. The celebration continued with the participation of nearly 200 Transgenders who distributed chocolates and sweets to children in Namakkal town area, nutritious snacks such as baked grains foraged persons, turmeric, kunkumam and flowers for women and Annadhanam (free food) for beggars near the bus stand and temples. When asked about poor enrolment of Transgenders in the electoral rolls – with only four of them named as Transgenders – Devi said that there were nearly 720 of them in this district, of them many were with their families. She reasoned that those who lived with their families enrolled themselves either as male or female.
Tamil Nadu was housing more than 60,000 Transgenders, who were facing discrimination at all levels though the State Government had taken positive initiatives to transform their lives. The Tamil Nadu Government took the bold step to recognize Transgenders as a separate gender for the first time in the country. The Tamil Nadu Government on the floor of the assembly announced to constitute a welfare board for the Transgenders in the state and allocated ₹ 275, 000 for the year 2008-09. The welfare board that comprises of eight members is empowered to look into the various problems, difficulties and inconveniences faced by the Transgenders and based on these inputs, formulate and execute welfare schemes for their betterment.

The Welfare Board that the Tamil Nadu Government has announced could well be the first step towards reversing the discrimination suffered by the Transgenders community. Transgender persons can secure their entitlements such as social security and citizenship rights through the Board. They can seek support to alter the manner in which they are perceived in society. An important recommendation made by the jury, public hearing, was that cases against Transgenders women must be handled by women police alone to avoid sexual harassment in police custody. The jury also recommended that Transgender women be protected under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Eve-Teasing Act, 1998. Tamil Nadu being the first in India to initiate schemes to improve the social acceptance of Transgender persons, issuing ration cards, providing houses and free lands for their use, they are still highly vulnerable to several mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, risk of suicide and HIV/AIDS infection and substance abuse. The Tamil Nadu Government has also issued a Government Order for the admission of Transgenders into government run schools and colleges. This is the first instance when a third gender category is created for giving admission to Transgenders in government run institutions. Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment D.Napoleon said that the Transgenders should also be recognised as differentlyabled so that they could get more assistance including funds to start business ventures by starting their Self-Help Groups. The Department of Social Welfare in Tamil Nadu passed a Government Order (G.O.) in December 2006 with recommendations to improve the living conditions of
Aravanis. The Government Order strongly favours counseling as a means to deter families from disowning a Transgender child. It also recommends counseling for children with behaviour changes in schools, for which teachers need to be specially trained. Rose Venkatesan became the first ‘Transgender’ in the country to be making a film. Rose would be directing a film, tentatively titled as Cricket Scandal. Sheethal, the Transgender from Puducherry who became the first person to be enrolled as a member of the third gender under the Unique Identification Number project, is elated that a government agency has finally recognised the community's gender status. The inclusion of third gender in census enumeration is the result of an untiring struggle. The members of the Transgender community are not considered for any of the official documents like voters' identity cards and ration cards. “We have been discriminated against by others. We had lost our identity and had no place to stay”, 33-year-old Sheethal told. So far, members of the marginalized Transgender community were being categorized as either male or female for administrative convenience' by all government agencies. Sheethal became the first Transgender in the country to be enrolled as a member of the third gender when the Unique Identification Number project was launched in the Union territory on January 24 this year. Sheethal, formerly known as K Ganesh alias Rajesh, is also the president of Sahodaran, a community based organization which has launched a male sexual health project in Puducherry. K Dharshini (26), another member of the organization, was enrolled next. Sheethal, who established Sahodaran in 2003, has been working on creating awareness among transsexuals on AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, safe sex and safe blood transfusion procedures besides fighting for their rights.

Sahodaran was one of the first organizations to form a Self Help Group comprising transsexuals. The SHG, which also formed a music troupe, has been hosting cultural programmes and presenting traditional folk art performances to spread the message on AIDS and safe sex. "There are different views on alternate sexuality and Transgender community. Many view them as abnormal. Transsexuals are shunned and looked down upon. Can a human being be forced to be obedient to the predominant model and abandon his free will?" Sheethal asked. District collector G Ragesh Chandra told, the census enumeration was going on in full swing in 25
centers in the Union territory and revealed that Puducherry is the first territory in the country to recognize the Transgender community and categorize them as members of third gender without classifying them as male or female. "We propose to cover all Transgenders under the project in the next six months. There are roughly 2,300 Transgenders in the Union territory," Chandra said.  

II.6. Self Help Groups is a Panacea for Transgenders

Transgenders have various problems in starting SHGs activities in Tamil Nadu. In 2003, a group of Aravani women who had worked in the HIV sector decided to work with an NGO in the Theni District of Tamil Nadu called Arogya Agam, setting up Self Help microfinance groups and small businesses for Transgenders women. When attempting to register the organization, they were informed that without a bank account, ration card or electricity bill to confirm their identities, they would not be able to register Arogya Agam. As Transgenders women, they would be unable to procure official forms of identity? Because they present themselves as women but are forced to call themselves men for the sake of legal identification, their documents have no legitimacy. The main problem is they are too inferior in the aspect of lade of help to them and if there is a proper financial and technical support to them they are ready to form SHGs and to do business.

Transgenders’ Support Groups should provide a safe place for them to meet providing members various types of help. Some groups are facilitated by a professional social worker or psychologist and provide professional advice. Transgender peer support groups are non-professional and share a commonality where relevant information and personal experiences can be shared between the members of the group. A Transgenders’ Support Groups might be the one spot where an individual can have their thoughts and concerns vocalized to sympathetic audience, listening to other’s concerns and evaluating those concerns. The support group becomes a social network where a Transgender person no longer feels isolated. Many Transgenders’ Support Groups work to educate the public about Transgender issues as well as advocate for the Transgender community.
Likewise the Researcher hoped that the concept of Self Help Groups can improve the Social Development of Transgenders in the way of: Imbibing “we for our” concept among Transgenders. Brings unity among Transgenders and reduces the difference of caste and religion and improves the social and health awareness among Transgenders. Involvement of Transgenders to fulfil the basic needs of rural living gets enhanced. Participation of Transgenders in democratic activities and Panchayat system gets multiplied may encourage Transgenders participation in eradication of social problems like violence against them. Provide initiative for basic education to Transgenders Making awareness of legal rights and legal aid access to liberate Transgenders from exploitation. Hence there is no way of Socio-Economic Development of Transgenders without the concept of Self Help Group. Changing Attitude (2012) says that integrating into society at large and finding a job continues to be a challenge for Transgenders in the city, but they have not given up. Instead, they have begun finding self-sustaining, innovative ways of earning a livelihood. Transgenders in the city have been working in Self Help Groups with the hope of making some money and becoming economically independent. Vasantham, Vanavil and Seven Stars are three such groups that are helping empower lives. Initially S. Sudha, like any other woman, was welcomed into the Bharatiyar SHG for women in Porur, where she resided. She learnt the rules of the game, but felt that many like her were not lucky enough to be part of a similar group. “All the women in my neighbourhood were great friends and considered me one among them. But then I decided to move ahead and form a group which had only Transgenders,” she says. With seven members and a loan of ₹1 lakh, she founded the SHG ‘Seven Stars’. Members took up hand work, pottery and glass painting and sold the items produced. Some SHGs buy products in wholesale and sell them to shops. Komathi of Vasantham sells saris while her friends sell snacks and other food items. This alternative income prevents them from begging or taking to commercial sex. The group Seven Stars was given 64 marks by bank officials. “They told us that our repayment was much better than most other women’s SHGs,” says Sudha. Like any business, they have their lean days and days when they have made good profit. The groups sell handmade products at exhibitions and other places where people assemble. While such efforts
make them slightly more confident about moving ahead in a society that has, for long, been insensitive to them, the women are also making efforts to become part of women’s Self Help Groups43.

Thus is our state Transgenders have started improving their livelihood by launching Self Help Groups exclusively for Transgenders. This trend should gain momentum. This study aims to give this momentum.

Research gaps

Through a thorough investigation of review of literature, the researcher identifies the uniqueness of the study. Here the researcher aims to specify the research gap and highlight the way which her research study is different from other studies narrated below.

There has been a number of valuable research works on self employment and evaluation of the economic status of Men and Women members in the Self Help Groups in various states in India using cross section data and all of them present a number of self employment opportunities. However, none is of a comprehensive study about the Transgender members in the Self Help Groups and their socio economic status in India or in any particular state.

This is the only study to which aims to evaluate the positive and negative impact of socio economic achievements of Transgender members through legal and illegal business activities.

There has been some research work on the general impact of unemployment in the society and very little research has been done on the effects of unemployment among the weaker section like Transgender in the society. As far as researcher’s knowledge goes, this is the only study aimed to evaluate the present socio economic and political status of the Transgender people and find out the permanent remedial measures to relieve them from the miserable life.
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