6.1 Summary and Conclusions

The twin prime objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eradicating poverty and gender equality. Even though the world witnessed a fast economic growth in the past, it remained unbalanced because of the gap between covered and uncovered primary sector of the society (Sivasuvramanian and Ali 2009). To achieve these objectives, the International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has emphasized on three core strategies for strengthening the capacity of the rural poor and their organizations, improving equitable access to productive natural resources and technology, and increasing access to financial services and market (IFAD 2003; Maluccio and Flores, 2005). According to the National Sample Survey, more than one third of India’s total population i.e. 320 million live in extreme poverty and about its three out of four poor persons live in rural areas and majority of them suffers due to seasonal unemployment, underemployment and disguised unemployment etc. Policy makers in India have realized the need for generating employment opportunities at a large scale to bring these teeming millions of its population above the poverty line. In our country the labour force is growing at a rate of 2.5 percent every year, but employment is growing only at 2.3 percent. Due to this the number of unemployed is swelling in the country and is taking the form of huge backlog. To resolve this issue, the Government of India has adopted a multi-faceted development strategy through implementing various developmental and employment
generation programmes such as: Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), the Supply of Improved Tool Kits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), the Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), the Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) and the Million Wells Scheme (MWS).

Among all the programmes, the formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) is considered to be a viable alternative to achieve the objective of rural development and community participation in all the rural development programmes. SHGs are small voluntary associations of women created for enabling the members to reap the benefits out of mutual help, solidarity and joint responsibility. Benefits include mobilization of savings, access to formal credit facilities, capacity building and marketing. Under this programme, financial and non-financial services are provided to the poor people in general and the rural poor women in particular and a bank loan is given to the group at specified rate of interest but without any collateral security. The group may use this loan to start any income generating activity or to fulfil some other individual needs of their group members. The group can also get next loan after the repayment of previous loan. In India the number of SHGs has increased substantially. In the year 1992-93 the number of SHG groups formed were 255, which increased to 47, 86,763 during the year 2010-11. In India only 53.4 percent of poor rural household has been covered under SHG-bank linkage programme. Due to uneven geographical SHG distribution, these groups have done remarkable progress in some of the southern states, whereas, in northern states especially Punjab and Haryana, only 13.7 and 12.5 percent of rural household has been covered respectively (NABARD Annual Report 2011). Majority of the rural poor could not avail the benefits of this programme due to illiteracy, lack of awareness and inadequate managerial and marketing knowledge.
The main objective of the present study focuses on growth of SHGs and marketing practices followed to promote sales of their products/services and to assess their profitability and level of satisfaction of SHG leaders/members. For this study, primary data was collected from 100 SHGs of the district Sangrur (i.e. 50 from block Sangrur and 50 from block Sunam) and 100 SHGs of district Fatehabad (50 from block Tohana and 50 from block Jakhal). For collecting the information relating to income generating activities and profits earned for at least 3 years from the sampled group, many visits were made but only 91 SHGs from district Sangrur and 74 SHGs from district Fatehabad provided the relevant information and was analysed.

The review of various studies carried out in the field of SHG programme in different countries provides that SHG bank linkage programme is a major plank of the strategy for delivering financial services to the poor in a sustainable manner. SHGs had enhanced the economic status and confidence building of the group members and made them financially independent. Some of the studies also pointed out that group lending had distinct advantage in the form of excellent recovery rate and increase in income level of participants. On the other hand, some of the studies contradict these findings and revealed that women participants had limited control over the use of group loans, however, funds received by them as a member of SHG did not flow into the channel of investment, and thus, the programme resulted in limited empowerment of women participants. Most of the groups by and large had failed to turn up into micro-enterprises due to their risk-averse nature and generating very low returns. Many studies had revealed that some of the SHG members were not satisfied with their operational performance due to poor follow up, lack of knowledge and less market exposure. In this way, it was found that the literature available on microfinance did not provide a clear idea about the impact and success of SHG
programme. Hence, there is a need to further conduct impact assessment studies to assess the viability, marketing strategies adopted by SHGs and removing the shortcomings and problems in its way. In India, most of the studies had been carried out in central and southern regions and there is dearth of studies related to impact of marketing strategies on performance of SHGs in Punjab and Haryana. In Punjab and Haryana, the programme was started in 1999, and no comprehensive study, by any researcher or Government organization, is available so far, which assesses the sustainability and various marketing strategies adopted by these groups. The present research work is an attempt to study the viability and different marketing techniques adopted by the SHGs in Sangrur district of Punjab and Fatehabad district of Haryana.

6.2 Findings and discussion of the Primary Study

For the purpose of this study, primary data from 91 SHGs from district Sangrur (Punjab) and 74 from district Fatehabad (Haryana) was collected to assess the satisfaction level of SHG members, marketing strategies adopted by the them and its impact on sales, profits and viability of their respective business activity. The major findings of the study are as follows:

The socio-economic profile of the surveyed respondents shows that the financial assistance provided to SHGs members through DRDAs and banks have reached only a little bit to the downtrodden, economically backward section of the society for the development of their socio-economic status. It was observed that in both the selected districts most of the SHG participants were married women in the age group of 31 to 40 years. Most of the respondents i.e. 79.19 percent from district Sangrur and 74.14 percent from district Fatehabad were illiterate and majority of them belonged to scheduled caste categories. As
far as the family structure of the respondents was concerned, it was observed that most of the programme participants (82.89 percent) from district Sangrur and (86.73 percent) from district Fatehabad lived in joint families and had on an average more than four members per family. The residential status of the respondents showed that majority of them lived in their own semi-pucca houses but their condition was not up to the mark. It was also observed that most of the SHG members (39.56 percent) in district Sangrur had an annual family income ranging between Rs. 5000 to 10000. Whereas, in Fatehabad district most of the surveyed groups (56.76 percent) had an annual family income per group between Rs. 20000 to 30000.

The general characteristics of SHGs in the study area showed that in district Sangrur most of the groups had started their business activity since 2001 onwards and had a life span of more than five to seven years, whereas in district Fatehabad of Haryana, most of the surveyed groups had started group activity after the year 2005 and had comparatively a shorter life span. The size of the groups in the study area ranged from 5 to 15 members, and there were on an average 12 member in each group of district Sangrur, whereas, in district Fatehabad, the average size of SHG was 10 members. It was also observed that 67.03 percent of SHGs in district Sangrur and 45.95 percent in district Fatehabad were purely women group as the Government’s predominant focus remained on the development of women. In both the districts majority of SHG members saved and contributed on an average of Rs. 50 to 100 per month per member in their savings accounts.

The study also revealed that only 23.05 percent SHGs in district Sangrur and 12.16 percent SHGs in district Fatehabad provided loans to their members for meeting their day to day and contingency requirements. For their income generating activities, total bank loan amounting to Rs. 278.34 lakhs was disbursed among 91 selected surveyed groups in district
Sangrur (Punjab) and the average loan per group was Rs. 3, 05,868. Whereas, in district Fatehabad (Haryana), the total bank loan disbursed to 74 selected SHGs was Rs. 144.25 lakhs and the average loan per group was only Rs. 1, 94,932.

The study also showed that seventy-nine percent SHGs from district Sangrur and 64.86 percent from district Fatehabad had not faced any problem while dealing with the bank officials. However, 13.19 percent (district Sangrur) and 9.46 percent (district Fatehabad) of SHG respondents complained that they had to visit the banks many a times either due to the absence of bank officials or because of their incomplete documents. It was also observed that in district Sangrur of Punjab and district Fatehabad of Haryana most of the SHGs had not repaid their bank loan as per the bank norms and the major portion of their loan was still outstanding. Only 21.97 percent of SHGs from Sangrur district and 8.10 percent from Fatehabad district had repaid the full amount of the bank loan from the earning of their micro-enterprises.

As per Government priorities the focus of SHG programme was not only to provide financial assistance but also to generate strong assets base among women entrepreneurs/assisted swarozgaris. The study explains that in both the concerned districts, the percentage of assets creation was high in case of live stocks i.e. rearing buffalos, cows and goats due to more dependency on agriculture sector by the SHG members. Data also revealed that in district Sangrur 10.99 percent groups had generated assets in trading (shop), 2.12 percent vermin-composit, 19.78 percent hosiery and embroidery, 1.09 carrier vehicles, 1.09 percent tools for repairs, 3.30 percent in furniture and fixtures and 13.19 percent had generated assets in miscellaneous activities respectively. Whereas, in district Fatehabad, 12.50 percent generated assets in shops, 6.25 percent in tools and repairs, 21.87 percent in furniture and fixture, 6.25 percent in miscellaneous activities respectively.
Generally all the SHG members had to conduct meetings, on an average once a week to share their views on the activities performed and to become a part of decision making process. It has been observed that about 75 percent members per group attended the scheduled group meetings from 50.55 percent SHGs in district Sangrur and 45.94 percent SHGs in district Fatehabad respectively. In both the districts, group leaders of SHGs i.e. 95.60 percent in district Sangrur and 93.24 percent in district Fatehabad had never been changed and thus the leadership remained in the hands of same person. As far the status of training programme was concerned, it was observed that 95.60 percent of SHGs in district Sangrur and 89.19 percent in district Fatehabad got trainings provided by the Government agencies to start their income generating activities and remaining SHGs could not avail any training facilities due to many reasons. To impart the trainings, lecture-cum-discussion method was most frequently used by the trainers. 67.81 percent of the participants in district Sangrur and 60.60 percent from district Fatehabad reported that training programme has improved their knowledge level to a large extent and also improved the productivity of their micro-enterprises. In order to further improve these programmes, 17.24 percent SHGs (district Sangrur) and 24.24 percent (district Fatehabad) suggested that training programme must be arranged on regular basis and 56.32 percent (district Sangrur) and 48.48 percent (district Fatehabad) of respondents demanded that the training programmes should be activity based.

6.2.1 Growth and Profitability of SHGs in the selected districts

The introduction of SHG concept and its implementation has empowered the rural poor masses especially women in India. The SHG programme through micro-finance has reached to such a position in the country that it is acknowledged as the biggest microfinance programme in the world. Data shows that 47.86 lakhs SHGs were given Rs. 3,12,211.65 million of bank loans up to March 2010-11 as per the NABARD Annual report
2011. And the share of the southern states in the numbers of groups linked to the banks was 56.5 percent, whereas, the share of northern region was only 3.1 percent. In the state of Punjab 8,647 Self Help Groups have been formed under SGSY scheme since its inception till 31.03.2012, out of which 7,396 (85.53 percent) were purely women groups. The findings of these studies also revealed that among the total enrolled groups, about 7.0 percent groups were formed in district Sangrur.

It was also found that the progress of SHGs in district Sangrur was remarkable in terms of number of SHGs formed and bank-credit linkage established. To inculcate entrepreneurial culture and self-employment opportunities in the district, 604 SHGs were formed from 1.4.1999 to 31.03.2012, out of which 359 (59.43) were purely women’s groups and 522 (86.42) percent groups had started various income generating activities under the umbrella of Swarnajyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY). The total loan disbursed among to these SHGs was about 1501.16 lakhs out of which Rs. 1042.56 lakhs disbursed as loan and Rs. 458.6 lakhs as subsidy. The annual compound growth rate of number of SHGs in district Sangrur for the study period was 28.79 percent and growth rate in total loan amount was 93.88 percent. Out of 9 blocks in district Sangrur, Bhawanigarh block had received the highest amount of loan and subsidy.

As regards to physical performance of SHGs in the state of Haryana is concerned, there were 26,014 SHGs formed since the inception of SGSY scheme out of which 17422 (66.97) were purely women’s group. Among total groups, 15,286 (58.76 percent) groups had started to generate income through various business activities. Within these SHGs, the greatest numbers were involved in the primary sector, as mainly engaged in dairy farming. The data also revealed that among the 21 districts in Haryana, Kaithal district secured the first place in the formation of SHGs and has formed 2,021 SHGs. In district Fatehabad, the
number of SHGs formed was 1031 and an amount of Rs.1820.53 lakhs was disbursed to these SHGs out of which 1101.60 lakhs was disbursed as loan and Rs. 718.93 lakhs as subsidy. The annual compound growth rate of number of SHGs in district Fatehabad for the study period was 70.04 percent and growth rate in total loan amount was 83.31 percent. The block-wise coverage of SHGs revealed that among all the 6 blocks maximum SHGs were formed in Ratia block. However, the highest amount of loan and subsidy was disbursed in the Ratia block, followed by Fatehabad and Bhunna block.

**6.2.2 Evaluation of Marketing Strategies**

In the era of globalization and industrialization, the major challenge is that there is an urgent need for sound and scientific marketing methods. The economic activity taken up by the poor SHG members for self-employment should qualify the test of market acceptance. These groups are not only facing the problems of scarcity of resources but also the issue is how to sell their products. To sustain in the competitive market, these groups has to take the help of various market strategies with special emphasis of 5 P’s of marketing mix to attract and create market for target consumers according to their un-met needs on price or product features and to develop new markets through unique positioning.

In the present study to evaluate the marketing strategies adopted by SHGs chi-square test was used. The test was applied to find out whether the 5p’s of marketing mix has led to increase the level of sales and profits of surveyed SHGs in district Sangrur of Punjab and district Fatehabad of Haryana. Here, 5P’s namely

1. Product strategy- type of business activity
2. Price strategy- basis of price fixation
3. Place strategy- location of SHGs
4. Promotion strategy- techniques to promote sale of their products
5. Personnel strategy- number of members in the group were considered as independent variables and profits and sales of SHGs were taken as dependent variables.

The findings revealed that in district Sangrur of Punjab, three marketing strategies namely pricing strategies, location of group, and number of members per group did not have significant influence on profits. The profits of the SHGs were only influenced by type of business activity and the sales promotion techniques as their calculated chi-square value was significant. Whereas, in district Fatehabad of Haryana, among the above stated five marketing strategies, only sales promotion technique influenced the profits of the SHGs/micro-enterprises. As far as the sales of SHGs was concerned, it was found that in district Sangrur of Punjab, only price strategy adopted by the SHGs influenced the sales of their micro-enterprises whereas, in district Fatehabad of Haryana, 5P’s of marketing adopted by SHGs did not have any significant influence on sales because their chi-square values were non-significant.

6.2.3 Factors Influencing Member Satisfaction

In this study, the level of satisfaction of SHG members with respect to a) subsidy availed, b) performance of Government agencies, c) maintaining of accounts and d) facilities provided by Government relating to marketing of their manufactured products etc. was assessed by collecting response from 660 group members belonging to 165 SHGs out of which 364 members were from 91 surveyed SHGs in district Sangrur (Punjab) and 296 members from 74 SHGs of district Fatehabad (Haryana). The data about Composite Satisfaction Level (CSL) of SHGs revealed that out of the total surveyed members in district Sangrur, 40.93 percent members were fully satisfied, 54.15 percent felt neutral and 4.12 percent respondents were unsatisfied towards the functioning of their micro-
enterprises. Whereas in district Fatehabad 42.90 percent beneficiaries were fully satisfied, 53.04 percent felt medium and 4.05 percent beneficiaries were unsatisfied from their business activities/micro-enterprises. To ascertain whether or not the selected determinants i.e. age of the participants, their community, level of education, reason to join the group, type of their family, number of dependents, occupation, type of house and their household income influenced the level of satisfaction of SHGs members, chi-square test was applied and tested.

After analysing the data it was observed that in district Sangrur (Punjab), among the nine selected determinants influencing satisfaction level of SHGs, only three determinants as community of respondents, number of family dependents, increase in income after joining the SHGs have shown significant influence on their satisfaction level. Whereas, in district Fatehabad (Haryana) type of their family structure, number of dependents and increase in income after post SHG activities have shown positive influence on the satisfaction level of members as calculated value was more than the table value of chi-square.

### 6.2.4 Assessment of Viability of SHGs

Discriminant function analysis has been used to classify the SHGs into successful and unsuccessful units on the basis of four variables namely total assets, average sales, average profits and loan from Government. Based on the calculated discriminant score, it was observed that out of total 165 surveyed groups’ only 55 units were successful (SHGs whose discriminant score was greater than table value) and others could not generate any effective activity and remained unsuccessful. It was also observed that out of total surveyed units, 160 (108+52) units were correctly classified by using discriminant model. Hence, the percentage of correct classification was 97 percent which shows the overall adequacy of the
model. The findings also revealed that among all the variables affecting viability, average profit was the strongest determinant affecting the viability of SHGs. It also showed that after profit, assets occupied 2\textsuperscript{nd} rank, sales 3\textsuperscript{rd} rank and loan from Government occupied last rank in classifying the SHGs into successful units or unsuccessful units.

\textbf{‘t’ test of Significance of Financial Parameters}

‘t’ test was applied to four predictor variables namely total assets, loan from Government, average sales and average profits influencing viability of SHG and the results shows that ‘t’ test was significant in respect of total assets, average sales and average profits. Therefore, it proves that there were significant differences in the total assets, average sales and average profits of the successful and unsuccessful groups, whereas, no significant differences in the loan from Government of the successful and unsuccessful groups were observed.

\textbf{6.2.5 Weighted Average Analysis of Strengths, Benefits and Problems of SHGs}

To analyse the strengths, benefits and problems of SHGs, weighted average analysis was done and based on the calculated weighted average score, ranks were assigned to the various strengths, benefits and problems pertaining to the SHGs. In the present study, the strengths of SHGs were classified into four categories as member-cooperation and involvement, choice of business, efficient management of business, good potential of products in the market. It was observed that in both the districts under study ‘member’s cooperation and involvement’ was the major strength of SHGs, followed by choice of business.

The benefits of SHGs were categorised into five group’s namely economic freedom, greater exposure to the outside world, social recognition, better decision participation and financial benefits by increasing income. The findings had revealed that in both the surveyed
districts ‘economic freedom’ acquired the top rank and the financial benefits by increasing income secured 2nd rank.

The problems of SHGs were divided into eight different groups as lack of finance, production problems, low level of sales, lack of interest of group members, lack of support from Government, poor transportation of products to the specific market, lack of marketing information, miscellaneous problems. It was observed that in both the districts, low level of sales was the major problem faced by SHGs. In district Sangrur ‘inadequate financial support’ and in district Fatehabad ‘lack of marketing information’ secured second rank in the order.

6.3 Policy implications

Since the dawn of planning era in India, one of the primary objectives of the Government was to streamline the strength of its rural economy and to uplift the standards of living especially of the weaker sections. Majority of the rural folk were not able to meet their day to day requirements from their own sources of income and have to generate alternative resources for employment generating activities on one side and to create market for products manufactured by micro enterprises/SHGs on the other. India has a huge, sustainable and growing market potential to tap and can be achieved effectively by integrated efforts of entrepreneurs, government as well as NGO’s. A multi-disciplinary approach is required to achieve the full potential of rural entrepreneur’s especially micro enterprises and SHG’s. To make micro-enterprises/SHGs viable, vibrant, market driven units for generating gainful employment following suggestions have been incorporated.
The success of SHGs depends solely on how well knit is the group. It was observed that for SHG’s formation group members were selected on voluntary basis from rural poor among Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) families. But the real benefit of the different government schemes/programme does not percolate to the needy people due to lack of proper coordination between government agencies and village panchayats, proper planning and inadequate selection process etc. So it was suggested that for SHGs formation, the group members may be selected by the concerned government authorities at Gram Sabha open house meetings after conducting extensive survey at the village level.

For SHGs loan was provided by the bank at the initial stages generally one time incentive. SHG-bank linkage programme has to be viewed from a long term perspective. Its mission goes beyond development through credit for poverty reduction. Micro-credit management by SHGs sow the seeds for a self-reliant economy incorporating certain business culture and social development action within the community as essential elements for economic and social mobility of the poor.

It was observed that in both the surveyed districts most the SHGs were entitled to equal amount of loan irrespective of their needs. In this way, some of the needy persons were deprived of the required amount while non-needy persons got the extra amount over their requirements. Therefore, it is suggested the loan amount should be disbursed as per requirements.

The SHG’s were weak in many aspects of management and resources vis-a-vis medium/large scale industries. They could not compete with large scale units in making certain consumer products. It was observed that in certain products the large units had threatened the existence of small units/micro enterprises. If certain products could be
reserved by the government for micro-enterprises/SHGs, only then these units can make progress.

It was observed that large number of SHG members felt disappointed at the initial stage of setting up their units because of bureaucratic delay and procedural problems resulting in dampening the spirit and endeavour of the members. The process of group formation, working out the business profile, getting loan from banks and starting up the group activity takes a long time and by the time the market conditions change and the entrepreneurial spirit hampers. Hence it is suggested that the government should establish a micro-enterprises/SHGs corporation at the district level to meet the requirements of new enterprises/SHGs.

With regard to marketing problem, there is a vast marketing potential for the products of SHGs both internally as well as overseas. For this, the government should set up some agencies to purchase the products of this sector at reasonable price. Though, the purchase by the government departments for their own consumption from these micro-enterprises will be of great help. If proper marketing and adequate remuneration are ensured, the micro-enterprises/SHGs will develop both in quality and quantity.

It has also been observed that due to illiteracy and less exposure, participants in both the districts did not start any non-traditional profitable activities such as mushroom cultivation, bee-keeping, soap/surf making, garland, chalk and rope making etc. Discussions with the participants provided that they prefer to produce only such products which they can easily sell in their village itself. The study revealed that in both the concerned states 72.70 percent of the SHGs were engaged in trading activities i.e. dairy farming, Karyana shops, selling cloths in the nearby areas, 22.40 percent concentrated in homemade manufacturing units like, Dari making, shoe making and welding works etc.
Only 4.84 percent groups were engaged in service activities such as tailoring, scooter cycles repairs and hair saloons etc. Therefore, it is suggested that SHGs should diversify their product lines and marketing activities to earn more profits from their enterprises.

Under the SHG programme collateral free micro-loans are provided to the poor people through various financial institutions and banks. But it has been observed that these financial institutions charge a very high rate of interest from the poor borrowers. The collected primary data provides that the banks charge 9 to 10 percent interest per annum. It is evident that the affordability of loan is equally important for an easy access of financial services. This high rate of interest reduces the borrowing capacity of the poor and it may further weaken their economic conditions. Therefore, the poor people must be provided loans at low rate of interest in order to improve their economic conditions, thus as a part of fulfillment of social responsibilities, banks should waive service charges at the time of sanctioning loans to the SHGs.

Mass communication media is not playing an active role for the promotion of products being manufactured by the SHGs due to lack of funds and awareness among the groups. It had been found that 49.4 percent SHGs in district Sangrur and 63.5 percent SHGs in district Fetehabad were not adopting any promotional tool to sell their products. They had adopted only self-marketing and had lack of coordination with the outer market. Therefore it is suggested that Government should take appropriate steps to propagate the SHG products through its own media free of cost or with a little charges.

The quality of SHG products do not attract the buyers due to lack of quality product and attractive packing as they have to compete with the products of large manufacturing concerns. The products of SHGs lack attractive packing which makes the buyer hesitant to buy such products. Since product quality is the essential ingredient, which commands
customer’s faith in the product, it is imperative that these units standardize their products in keeping with the user’s needs and make efforts to qualify the quality standards. Therefore, it is suggested that government should establish laboratories for maintaining the quality standard of the products manufactured by SHGs and should earmark some products manufactured by these small business units/SHGs.

To improve the quality of product and to conduct market survey the state government should recognize certain reputed institutions or educational bodies which can undertake market research on behalf of small scale entrepreneurs at a reasonable cost. It is also suggested that the promotional agencies such as District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), Block Development Officials (BDOs) etc. should use the services of experienced management consultants by paying 50: 50 per cent ratio to increase the SHG’s profitability.

It has also been observed that District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) provide training to SHGs but only for the pre-decided activities like dairy farming, pappad, pickle making, soap making etc. and for all these they cannot compete with the available brands. There is no training programme for vocational courses like beauty parlour, herbal products, opening of cyber café, gym etc. Therefore, it is suggested that government authorities should explore new areas of training for which competition is at very low level.

It has also been observed that SHGs face various constraints and difficulties in selling their products in the competitive market. To overcome these problems, the SHGs should take initiatives themselves by involving in mutual selling, selling between the group members. They should choose the products collectively like pickles, pappads and home-made products in which they can fight with the competitors. One common platform is required for showcase their products which should be non-adulterated and of good quality.
To create an eco-friendly marketing environment, Government should establish SHGs clusters on the pattern of SEZ and industrial areas at the block level. Government should also provide subsidised raw material to these SHGs clusters and help them in selling their products through Khaddi and Village commission outlets and also through state tourism departments. In addition to it, a marketing consortium sponsored and supported by the state government may be constituted either as a company or as a registered society. The constitution of the consortium should provide to include small entrepreneurs/SHGs as its members and its services should be exclusively for the member units. A consortium of units for marketing purposes may generally perform the following functions:

- to organize and establish distribution channels
- to organize market research and sales promotion in the local as well as foreign markets
- to participate in trade fairs and exhibitions at national and international level
- to establish common facilities for testing and quality control
- to provide a brand name or trade mark to the products of member units
- to organize and promote other facilities such as product development, building product image etc. for the benefits of member units.

It has also been found that 83.51 percent commercial banks in district Sangrur and 79.12 percent in district Fatehabad provided loans to SHGs to start some income generating activities and many of them show lethargic attitudes towards SHGs. Therefore, it is suggested that to strengthen this sector, private bankers should join hands with the government/SHGs and banks should sanction additional need based loans to SHGs, provided bankers are satisfied with the paying capacity and performance of SHGs.
The study has also revealed that among the 5P’s of marketing, only sales promotion strategy seems to influence the profits of the SHGs in both the selected districts. Therefore, it is suggested that SHGs should adopt aggressive marketing technique for their sustainable development and growth. These groups should give more attention to the sales promotion activities such as advertisements, publicity, credit sales and offering discounts etc. District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) should provide sale counters in the cities at nominal rates through the block development agencies.

Poverty and illiteracy is an obstruction to a dignified life. Self-employment is a significant step to have sustained incomes and remove the shackles of poverty. Women in India especially from rural poor families could not be benefited due to multiple socio-economic and cultural and educational factors. It had been observed that 79.19 percent of surveyed participants in district Sangrur and 74.74 percent in district Fatehabad were illiterate, many of them were capable of reading and writing and first time involved in business activities. Among them 82.89 percent in district Sangrur and 84.50 percent in district Fatehabad were living in joint families and additional source of self-employment has influenced their level of satisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested that in addition to the financial assistance, education may also be provided under the umbrella of Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Adult Education Programme to the group participants of SHGs. The SHGs may also be made aware about the evils of early marriage, consequences of large family and defects of child labour etc.

The study further shows that loans used for productive purposes directly influence the level of income, employment and women empowerment. It has been observed that the participants who utilised more amounts of group loans for productive purposes were generating more income and have shifted above the poverty line. The study revealed that
23.08 and 12.16 percent of SHGs from district Sangrur and Fatehabad have given personal loans to their respective group members for meeting their day to day and contingency requirements. Therefore, it is suggested that group members must be motivated and assisted to utilise the group loans for productive purposes only. The bankers and government agencies should monitor the progress of each SHG on quarterly basis.

The development of a nation is vested on the shoulders of both men and women. Now a days, the women self-help groups are playing a predominant role in the eradication of poverty among the rural poor. It is suggested that the SHG concept for men can be adopted in the study area. If this is implemented, the youth especially unemployed can be benefitted and they can involve themselves in the process of poverty eradication.

### 6.4 Limitations of the Study

Every research has certain limitations and this study is no exception. In the present study, the researcher collected the primary data with the help of schedule which was filled by the respondents at the time of field visits and there might be biasness in their responses in spite of utmost care and expert supervision. Due to poor economic base, most of the SHGs did not supply the profits and loss account/ balance sheets or any other document which can be considered helpful in this study. Only the data of those SHGs were considered for the study which remained engaged in income generating activities and had earned profits for at least 3 years. The present study is restricted to district Sangrur of Punjab and district Fatehabad of Haryana so results cannot be generalized for SHGs working in other states.
6.5 **Scope for further research**

The following areas are suggested for further research in Self Help Groups:

1. A study may be conducted on comparative role of NGOs and Government to remove poverty through SHGs.

2. The present study analyzed the viability, marketing strategies and satisfaction level of SHG members in district Sangrur of Punjab and district Fatehabad of Haryana. It is suggested that the similar study may be carried out in other parts of the states and country.