CHAPTER I

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“A woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him”\(^1\). The role of women is more important in the world at different dimensions viz., mothers, wives, sisters, and workers in the family and outside. At present, they realize their importance in the entire endeavour’s and would like to be independent. Women have succeeded in changing their image as weak, dependent, passive and subservient persons to independent, active and strong human beings\(^2\). Women constitute half of the total population and play a vital role in the development of the family, the community and the nation\(^3\).

Women play a paramount role in the socio – economic development of a country. In fact, the pace of economic development of a country can be accelerated by enhancing the status, position and living conditions of women in a country. Women’s work in the household, in subsistence agriculture and such activities are generally not considered to be economically productive and is either not accounted for or is grossly undervalued if counted.\(^4\)

Even if a woman is employed, she may not have control over the money she earns, though this money often plays an important role in the maintenance of the household. In Indian culture, as in many other countries, women are expected to devote virtually all of their time, energy, and earnings to their family. Men, on the other hand, are expected to spend time and at least some of their earnings on activities outside the house.\(^5\)
In all societies, women had to struggle to improve their political, economic and social rights, upgrade their social role and status, and participate in production and management. However, this struggle still continues despite all improvements and welfare upgrades.6

In most of the developing countries today, more and more emphasis is laid on the need for development of women and their active participation in the main stream of development process. It is also widely recognized that apart from managing the household, bearing children, rural women bring income with productive activities ranging from traditional work in the fields to working in factories or running small and petty businesses. They have also proved that they can be better entrepreneurs and development managers in any kind of human development activities. Therefore, it is important and utmost necessary to make rural women empowered in taking decisions to enable them to be in the central part of any human development process. The empowerment of women is also considered as an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.7

Empowerment is an active multi-dimensional process to enable women to realize their identity and power in all spheres of life. Empowerment provides a greater access to knowledge and resources, more autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan lives, more control over the circumstances which influence lives, and freedom from customs, beliefs and practices. Empowerment demands a drastic and basic change in the system of marriage and family, husband and wife relationship, and attitude towards socialization and remarriage. Empowerment is a process that gives a person freedom in
decision making. Women’s development in recent years means on providing equal opportunities to women by removing gender bias, empowering women and creating self-reliance among them. In the recent years, empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in determining the status of women.  

Empowerment of women is essential for development of full potential of the total human resources. If half of the country’s population remains weak and dependent, development of the nation would only be partial. Empowerment of women is, therefore, the pressing need of the day. Various dimensions of empowerment include psychological, cultural, social, political, and economic empowerment. Psychological empowerment means to establish individual identity, self-image, increasing self-esteem and developing capabilities. Cultural empowerment will entail redefining gender rules and norms and recreating cultural practices. Social empowerment includes literacy, social leadership, community action and social inclusion. Political aspects include participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions, negotiating political power and then accessing it. Economic empowerment occurs when income security is attained, productive assets are owned and entrepreneurial skills are acquired. All the dimensions are very important for empowerment to occur in a holistic manner. Women now-a-days are relatively more empowered than their predecessors. Women empowerment leads to a silent revolution in the total socio-economic scenario of the nation. The empowered woman is able to exercise her judgment independently and correctly in a democracy. Empowerment is expected to develop confidence and faith in one’s self. Empowerment directly affects the life of women positively. The life style, social status, struggle against injustice, opposition to various kinds of harassment in the society etc., are the inbuilt qualities of
women empowerment. In the light of the above facts, in an enlightened society, both the government and non-governmental organizations are playing a meaningful, fruitful and effective role in undertaking various activities for women’s empowerment. The participation of women in Self - Help Groups (SHGs) has made a significant impact on their empowerment both in social and economic aspects.  

Self Help Group is a voluntary association of persons with common interest, formed democratically, without any political affiliations. They are small and homogenous groups of 10 – 20 members. The uniqueness of these groups lies in the fact that to a large extent they are self supporting, self governing organizations free from bureaucratization and politicization. The process empowers the poor and enables them to control direction of own development by identifying their felt needs. The movement of SHG’s is leading to women empowerment. They are becoming aware of power relations operational in their lives and gaining in self-confidence and strength to challenge gender inequalities. They are coming out of the vicious cycle of debt due to gains made by SHG’s through IGA and increase in bargaining power. Women are contributing to themselves and to their society by organising themselves in SHG’s under various JFM and other development schemes. At present SHG’s is widely used as an instrument to empower women socially and economically. Once socio - economic empowerment is achieved, it would have significant implication on the overall development of women. The economic contribution of women has been found to be related to their role and status in the society. Economic independence facilitates in bringing about gender equality, and increase in women’s income translates more directly into family wellbeing. Therefore, enhancing income earning opportunities through the formation of SHG’s is a viable pathway for empowerment of women.
Women in India are victims of a multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. Emancipation of women is a pre-requisite for nation’s economic development and social upliftment. The role of women and the need to empower them are central to human development programmes, including poverty alleviation. Inspite of the safeguards provided in many of the poverty alleviation programmes, it was observed that women in rural areas, especially from poor families, could be not benefited. The Self-Help Group (SHG) is a viable organised setup to disburse micro–credit to the rural women for the purpose of making them enterprising, and encouraging them to enter into ultimately a micro–credit project. The empowerment of women through SHGs would give benefits not only to the individual women but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action development. These SHGs have a common perception of need and an impulse towards collective action. Empowering women is not just for meeting their economic needs but also for more holistic social development. The SHG’s empower women both socially and economically. They encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sectors and prepare women to take up leadership positions.  

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

“A woman is the child of her father, her husband and her son.” The constitution treats women as minors, incapable of making decisions. Within the law, households [that do not have a “permanent” male in them] do not exist, which makes women even more vulnerable. Women constitute half of the humanity, even contributing the two thirds of world’s work force. She earns only one-third of the total income and owns less than one-tenth of the world’s resources. This shows that the economic status of women is in a
pathetic condition and this is more so in a country like India. Empowerment is a process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices. Economic independence is one of the means to empower women. Enhancing women’s economic productivity is an important strategy for improving the welfare of 60 million Indian households living below the poverty line. The existence of women in a state of economic, political, social and knowledge disempowerment is known to be a major hindrance to economic development. Income generating activities are considered as those initiatives that affect the economic aspects of people’s lives through the use of economic tools such as credit. The Self-Help Group provides an appropriate platform for initiating and sustaining income generating activities for the rural women.  

Women have not actively participated in their own emancipation due to their lack of economic independence and rampant illiteracy. Poor women, especially from backward communities and lower castes, are mostly illiterate, untrained, and have very little social and economic status. In India, there are over 350 million such people, mainly in rural areas. The unemployed are nearly 200 million people, a great majority of them belonging to these deprived sections of the society. Without meaningful skills, social status, and economic power, they are unable to do any business on their own even with financial assistance.

Economic empowerment leads to financial resources outside the household, reducing vulnerability of the poor women to crises like famine, flood, riots, etc., significant increase in women’s own income, equal access and control over resources at the household level, financial self-reliance of women. Self-Help Group (SHG) is a
small voluntary association of 10-20 people either registered or unregistered preferably from the same socio-economic background. They come together for the purpose of solving their common problems through self help and mutual help. Self - Help Groups are controlled and managed by the members. The mutual trust is the spirit of the organization. It has its own set of rules and regulations. There is transparency and accountability in SHG transactions. The self-help groups are functioning as the agents of development at the grass-root level and the primary units in the development process of the country.  

The illiterate and under-educated members of these groups learn many practical aspects from their groups and this results in availing various benefits from within and outside the groups by the members. There exists a need to assess the extent of improvement in the social and economic benefits derived by the members of Self - Help Groups through their income generating activities. Hence, the present study is a fact finding exercise to know the answer for the following questions:

a) What is the extent of variation among the members of Self - Help Groups on the social benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups?

b) What is the extent of variation among the members of Self - Help Groups on the economic benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups?
1.3 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The empirical study aims at the investigation of the perception of the members of the Self-Help Groups on the social and economic benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self-Help Groups.

1. Ahmad (1999) through a case study on “Thrift Groups in Assam” highlighted that women are coming to the administration directly for their just rights and to address their grievances boldly. It proved that Self-Help Groups are successful in North East India even in the midst of insurgency.18

2. Muhamme Hussain Bhatti, (1999) in his article, “Rural Women Empowerment: The Role of Extension and Micro-Credit Services in Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir” found that the improvement of women’s economic situation is the basic determinant of their empowerment. Women are being extended advice and financial assistance to generate income in farm and off farm sectors. These efforts of women are receiving significant response resulting in the recognition of women not only as income earning hands but also as responsible business partners in joint families as well.19

3. Puhazhendhi (1999) in his paper entitled “Evaluation Study of SHG’s: Important Findings of Evaluation Study in Tamil Nadu”, analyzed the functioning of SHG’s, in performance, sustainability, empowerment of women, economic impact on the members, future potentials etc. He observed that SHG’s in Tamil Nadu are performing well towards social change and transformation. The emerging trends are leading to positive direction of empowerment of members and promotion of micro finance.20
4. Bhatia and Bhatia (2000) in their article “Lending to Groups” through a few case studies highlighted that recovery, from SHG’s is higher than other credit extended to borrowers. Moreover, involvement of SHG's had helped the bank branches in recovery of old dues. They observed that there has been perceptible change in the living standards of the SHG's members, in terms of ownership of assets, increase in savings and borrowing capacity, income generating activities and income levels as well.\(^{21}\)

5. Dasgupta (2000) in his paper on “Informal journey through Self - Help Groups” observed that micro-financing through informal group approach has effected quite a few benefits viz.: (i) savings mobilized by the poor; (ii) access to the required amount of appropriate credit by the poor; (iii) matching the demand and supply of credit structure and opening new markets for Financial Institutions; (iv) reduction in transaction cost for both lenders and borrowers; (v) tremendous improvement in recovery; (vi) heralding a new realization of subsidy less and corruption less credit, and (vii) remarkable empowerment of poor women. He stressed that SHG's should be considered as one of the best means to counter social and financial citizenship not as an end in itself.\(^{22}\)

6. Datta and Raman (2000) in their study entitled “Can Heterogeneity And Social Cohesion Coexist in Self - Help Groups ; An Evidence From Group Lending In AP in India” highlighted that SHG's are characterized by heterogeneity in terms of social and economic indicators. The success of SHG's in terms of high repayment is mostly related to the exploitation of prevailing social ties and cohesion found among women members. Social cohesiveness among members spring not only from their diverse background of knowledge base, skills occupations and income levels, but also
due to the dynamic incentive system of progressive lending to the groups on the successful completion of loan repayment. However, SHG's are heavily dependent on external financial agencies for their lending operations.\(^{23}\)

7. Gurumoorthy (2000) in his article entitled “Self - Help Groups Empower Rural Women” maintained that SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. SHG is a viable organizational setup to disburse micro credit to the rural women for the purpose of making them entrepreneurs and encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Credit needs of the rural women can be fulfilled wholesomely through the SHG's. The women led SHG's have successfully demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift, appraise credit needs, maintain linkages with the banks and enforce financial self - discipline. SHG's enhance the equality of status of women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic and social and cultural spheres of life. They encourage women to take active part in the Socio-Economic progress of the society.\(^{24}\)

8. Nagayya (2000) in his article entitled “Micro-Finance For Self - Help Groups” states that an informal arrangement for credit supply to the poor through SHG's is fast emerging as a promising tool for promoting income-generating enterprises. He has reviewed the initiatives taken at the national level with a view of institutional arrangements to support this programme for alleviation of poverty among the poor, with focus on women. He mentioned that NABARD and SIDBI are playing a prominent role at various stages of implementation of this programme. There are other national level bodies also supporting NGO's/VA/s, viz. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi (RGNV) etc. He called for an imperative need to enlarge the coverage of SHG's in advance portfolio of banks as part of their
corporate strategy, to recognize perceived benefits of SHG's financing in terms of reduced default risk and transaction costs.\textsuperscript{25}

9. Barbara and Mahanta (2001) in their paper \textit{Micro Finance Through Self - Help Groups and it's Impact: A Case of Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi -Credit and Saving Programme in Assam}, maintained that the SHG's have helped to set up a number of micro-enterprises for income generation. Rastriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi’s credit and saving programme in Assam has been found successful as its focus is exclusively on the rural poor. It adopted a credit delivery system designed especially for them with the support of a specially trained staff and a supportive policy with no political intervention at any stage in the implementation of the programme.\textsuperscript{26}

10. Kapur (2001) in her study entitled \textit{“Empowering the Indian Women”} tried to discuss, analyse and answer the challenging questions as to why despite all the efforts and progress made, still there continues to be so much of gender discrimination and what strategies, actions and measures to be undertaken to achieve the expected goal of women’s empowerment. She opined that women’s empowerment is much more likely to be achieved if women have total control over their own organisations, which they can sustain both financially and managerially without direct dependence on others.\textsuperscript{27}

11. Manimekalai and Rajeshwari (2001) in their paper entitled \textit{“Nature and Performance of Informal Self - Help Groups – A Case from Tamil Nadu”} highlighted that the provision of micro-finance by the NGO's to women SHG's has helped the groups to achieve a measure of economic and social empowerment. It has developed a sense of leadership, organizational skill, management of various activities of a business, right from acquiring finance, identifying raw material, market and suitable diversification and modernization.\textsuperscript{28}
12. Puhazhendhi and Satyasai (2001) in their paper entitled “Empowerment of Rural Poor through SHG’s” attempted to evaluate the performance of SHG's with special reference to social and economic empowerment. Primary data collected with the help of structured questionnaire from 560 sample households in 223 SHG's functioning in 11 states representing four different regions across the country formed the basis of the study. The findings of the study revealed that the SHG's as institutional arrangement could positively contribute to the economic and social empowerment of rural poor and the impact on the latter was more pronounced than on the former. Though there was no specific pattern in the performance of SHG's among different regions, the southern region could edge out other regions. The SHG's programme has been found more popular in the southern region and its progress in other regions is quite low, thus signifying an uneven achievement among the regions. Older groups had relatively more positive features like better performance than younger groups.²⁹

13. Ramana Rao. D.V., (2001) in his article “Impact of Institutionalisation of Credits on the Socio-Economic Condition of Rural Women in Self-Help Groups- A Case Study in Bidar District of Karnataka”, has analysed the experiences of micro credit movement through self-help groups and found that the groups helped by the co-operative banks have mobilized more savings than that of groups sponsored by the Non-Governmental Organizations. The amount of membership and savings in Self-Help Groups were positively linked with their period of operation. The average amount of loan disbursed had a four-fold increase. Purpose-wise, the credit demanded by Self-Help Group members indicated that a good proportion of Self-Help Group members [25%] have demanded credit for business purposes. It was concluded that the Self-Help Groups have spread their outreach by serving a large clientele with small amount of credit but financial
deepening of credit system through Self-Help Group movement remains a far cry. It was further underlined that there seems to be a tendency among Self-Help Group members to borrow from various agencies, which may lead to repayment problems due to multiple financing. In this connection, it was suggested that the policy to integrate Self-Help Groups within the mainstream banking should receive greater attention. It was added that this could alone strengthen the process of integrated credit flow for production cum investment purposes on a sustainable basis.30

14. Satish (2001) in his paper entitled “Some Issues in the Formational of SHG's” raised certain issues related to the functioning of SHG's and stated that adequate care should be taken to ensure homogeneity of socio-economic status of the members, while forming SHG's. The process of SHG formation has to be systematic whether a Bank or an N.G.O forms it. He emphasized that SHG's experiment has to be spread throughout rural India rather than being concentrated in a few pockets of the country. NGO's are more suited for forming and nurturing of the SHG's, and therefore, it is essential to strengthen them and their resources so that they should increasingly undertake this work.31

15. Sharma.K.C., (2001) in his study entitled “Micro Financing Through SHG's”, maintained that through SHG's women empowerment is taking place. Their participation in the economic activities and decision-making at the household and society level is increasing and making the process of rural development participatory, democratic, sustainable and independent of subsidy. Thus, macro-financing through SHG's is contributing to the development of rural people in a meaningful manner.32

explored the Socio Economic and Psychological changes associated with Self-Help Group activity. The area of study is a disturbed naxal affected district of Hazaribag [Jharkhand]. The groups are women’s groups comprising of women belonging to Below Poverty Line [B.P.L] and their period of association differs at different levels of association of work as per period of duration. Groups below 1 year, groups above 1 year but below 3 years, groups between 3 and 5 years, and the last period being groups above 5 years. These are rural groups located in remote rural areas and the period differences are taken to demarcate and see the changes in the process of group activities.

17. Holm Uibrig, Kanchan Devi (2002) in their study entitled “Self-Help Groups in India: a case study from Betul District, M. P. Micro Financing within Joint Forest Management Committees for the empowerment of women” stated that linkages between JFM committees, women SHGs and other related institutions would prove to be mutually beneficial to both the JFMCs and SHGs. From the perspective of JFM committees - 1) Improved fund mobilization by faster recycling of fund; 2) Easy monitoring and collection of loan as both JFMC and SHGs are stationed in the same village; 3) Easy accounting as only one account has to be kept for the SHG, instead of maintaining the number of individual accounts; 4) Higher regulatory in repayment of loans by SHGs. From the perspective of women SHGs – 1) Easy access to larger quantum of funds; 2) Doorstep credit with no hassles; 3) Flexible instalments for repaying loan; 4) Better negotiation power to finalise interest rate as SHGs representative being a member of the executive body of JFM committee; 5) Interest paid will add to the committee’s fund, improving chances for subsequent loans; 6) Strengthening of SHG’s position in the society. The study concludes that the much-needed financial linkage between JFM committees and women SHGs could be developed by proper integration of the government, NGOs and other training
institutes, and committed facilitators. This will have synergetic effect for both of them, resulting in the betterment of families, which would ultimately lead to the strengthening of both these institutions, too.  

18. A study conducted by Nabard (2002) covering 560 households from 223 Self-Help Groups in 11 States of India elucidated that there has been a positive result in enhancing the standard of living of Self-Help Groups members in case of asset ownership, savings and borrowing capacity, income generating activity and income levels. The average value of asset including livestock and consumer durables has increased considerably. The housing condition of the people has improved, from the mud walls to thatched roofs to brick walls and tiled roofs. Almost all members developed the saving habit in the post Self-Help Groups period. The trend of consumption loans has come down in contrast to the loan for income generating purpose which has increased considerably during the pre Self-Help Group period. Similarly, the overall repayment of loans improved and the average net income per household has increased by about 33%. The employments increased by 18% between the pre and post Self-Help Group conditions. It should be noted that after association with the Self-Help Groups, they have improved their self-confidence, self-worth and communication. In addition to this, they are involved in addressing various social evils and problems of the society.

19. Jaya S. Anand (2002) in her study entitled “Self-Help Groups in Empowering Women: Case study of Selected SHG’s and NHGs” found that one major impact of SHGs promoted by the Grameen Bank on the women members has been the creation of awareness about newer economic opportunities available to women and the abilities needed to tap them. More members of the poor households have to be
brought into the credit network together with necessary guidance and technical support. All the groups have taken up individual economic activities; but group activities are very few. There was apprehension among the leaders about the success of group enterprises because cases in which the group activity failed had led to financial imbalances and difficulty in loan repayment for all the members of the groups concerned.36

20. Jothy.K. and Sundar.J., (2002) in their study “Self-Help Groups Under the Women’s Development Programme in Tamilnadu: Achievements, Bottlenecks and Recommendations”, evaluated the programme of Tamil Nadu Mahalir Thittam and found that Self-Help Group women are currently involved in economic activities such as production and marketing of agarbathis, candles and soaps, readymade garments, pickles, appalam, vathal, fur toys, bags, palm leaf products, dhotis, herbal products, fancy sea shells, ornaments, eatables, coir mats and other coir products, mattress, chappels, leather good etc. In addition to that, the Self-Help Group women also monitor the normal functioning of the ration shops, maintain vigil to prevent brewing of illicit liquor, and help the aged, deserted and widows to obtain loan.37

21. MYRADA (2002) report entitled “Impact of Self - Help Groups (Group Processes) on The Social/Empowerment Status of Women Members in Southern India” observed that being a part of the SHG seems to have changed the lives of the members, especially in the older groups, in a significant way. As for its influence on the financial status of these women, in the old groups, 89% interviewees agree that their financial position has changed for the better since they joined the SHG, as against only 71% in the younger groups. Similarly, more members in the older groups than in the younger groups have reported a positive influence on their share in the
family income during this period. Also, the percentage of those saying that they get to participate in the family’s financial decisions more than before is also higher in the case of older groups. An important indicator of being practically empowered is whether the SHG member is sufficiently aware of the basic banking operations and can handle her savings account on her own. As for the awareness of the core purpose of a bank, on almost every point, more Old Group members are aware.  

22. Rao.V.M., (2002) in his article entitled “Women Self - Help Groups: Profiles From Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka” maintains that a review of the genesis and development of SHG's in India reveals that the existing formal financial institutions have failed to provide finances to landless, marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The origin of SHG's could be treated to mutual aid in Indian village community. SHG's encourage savings and promote income generating activities through small loans. The experience available in the country and elsewhere suggests that SHG's are sustainable to have reliability, stimulate savings, and in the process help borrower to come out of the vicious circle of poverty.  

23. Chiranjeevulu.T., (2003) in his article "Empowering Women through Self-Help Groups" has revealed that the multi-pronged strategy including local marketing to export has been contemplated. The product will be thoroughly popularized among all the Self-Help Groups in the district and channels for distribution of the product to all the strategic marketing locations will be developed. He has also highlighted that network with other marketing enterprises of Self-Help Group women in the neighbouring districts will be established. He also suggested that the consumption points under the control of government like hostels, Devasthanams would be approached for bulk orders and steps have to be undertaken for marketing of the products through PDS and Gruhamithra supply channels.
24. Ritu Jain, R. K. Kushawaha and A. K. Srivastava, (2003), in their work "Socio-economic Impact Through Self - Help Groups" have asserted that the Self-Help Groups enhance the equality of status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. They have also revealed that the impact of Self-Help Groups on socio-economic status of women was found to be significant on education, housing facilities, exposure of mass media, external orientation, occupation, size of holdings and material possessions. Only a few aspects were found to be non-significant and they are-caste and type of family.  

25. Amarjeet Kour (2004) in his study entitled “Self - Help Goups (SHG’s) and Rural Development” stated that the concept of SHGs is very successful in many parts of India like Hydrabad, Tamilnadu etc., where people, government and NGOs have come forward with true motivation and interest. And it is found that about 84.4% members have made the use of bank loan in household activities and other personal needs instead of some productive activities.  

26. Cheston & Kuhn (2004) in their study “Empowering Women through Microfinance” concluded that micro-finance programmes have been very successful in reaching women. This gives micro-finance institutions an extraordinary opportunity to act intentionally to empower poor women and to minimise the potentially negative impacts some women experiences.  

27. Malhotra (2004) in her book “Empowerment of Women” has examined how women entrepreneurs affect the global economy, why women start business, how women’s business associations promote entrepreneurs, and to what extent women contribute to international trade. It explores potential of micro-finance programmes for empowering and employing women and also discusses the opportunities and
challenges of using micro-finance to tackle the feminisation of poverty. According to her, the micro-finance programmes are aimed to increase women’s income levels and control over income leading to greater levels of economic independence. They enable women’s access to networks and markets, access to information and possibilities for development of other social and political roles. They also enhance perceptions of women’s contribution to household income and family welfare, increasing women’s participation in household decisions about expenditure and other issues leading to greater expenditure on women’s welfare.  

28. Manimekalai (2004) in her article entitled “Economic Empowerment of Women Through Self-Help Groups”, commented that to run the income generating activities successfully the SHGs must get the help of NGOs. The bank officials should counsel and guide the women in selecting and implementing profitable income generating activities. He remarked that the formation of SHGs have boosted the self-image and confidence of rural women.  

29. Narasaiah (2004) in his study “Women and Microcredit” mentioned that the change in women’s contribution to society is one of the striking phenomena of the late twentieth century. According to him micro-credit plays an important role in empowering women. Giving women the opportunity to realise their potential in all spheres of society is increasingly important.  

30. Rosappu. K. and Kalyana Sundar, K. (2004) have stated in their paper "Economic Independence Through Self-Help Group" that in the absence of extra time government jobs, the role of Self-Help Groups in generating funds, getting loan from the banks and indulging in various businesses like making soaps, mats, chocolates, pappadas, coconut spoons, installing hand pumps, building toilets, purchasing road
rollers, running tea shops, stone quarries, installing gas plants and solar energy networks are highly commendable.\textsuperscript{47}

31. Senthil Vadivoo and Sekar (2004) in their study entitled \textit{“Self - Help Groups a movement for women Services: How the poor in India could be better served”}, stated that the self - help groups is a movement for women empowerment; it covered women collectively struggling against direct and indirect barriers to their self development and their social, political and economic participation. Women’s empowerment can be viewed as a continuous process of several inter-related and mutually reinforcing components. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision – making power and control the transformative action to overcome the constraints in this process.\textsuperscript{48}

32. Bharathi, R.A. (2005) in his study entitled \textit{“Assessment of Self - Help Groups Promoted Under NATP on Empowerment of Women In Agriculture”} has noted that majority of the respondents perceived help and cooperation from other members (99.2%); loan can be easily obtained (97.5%) and economic security (95.0%) as the advantages of SHGs. With regard to profit utilization by SHG members, majority (96.7%) of the respondents utilized money for their regular household expenditure, followed by education of their children (51.7%). Ninety five per cent of the respondents’ level of income increased after joining the project. Majority of the respondents had favorable opinion towards SHGs, improved agricultural implements, enterprises and NATP project. \textsuperscript{49}

33. Cheung Yuet, W Mok Bong-Ho and Cheung Tak-Sing (2005) conducted a study on \textit{“Personal Empowerment and Life Satisfaction Among Self-Help Group Members in Hong Kong”}. This study examined the relationship between personal empowerment and life satisfaction among self-help group members in Hong Kong.
Personal empowerment is viewed as a form of social capital derived from engagement in the social relations within the self-help group that allows members to obtain benefits such as increasing their life satisfaction. Sense of mastery and self-esteem are introduced as intervening variables between personal empowerment and life satisfaction. A path model is constructed to compare the direct effects and indirect effects of personal empowerment, sense of mastery, and self-esteem on life satisfaction. The same model is also tested across various socio-demographic subgroups. Their findings support a significant and positive relationship between personal empowerment and life satisfaction and show that there are socio-demographic differences in the effect of the former on the latter: Implications of the findings for future research and services pertaining to personal empowerment and its outcomes in Hong Kong are discussed.50

34. Das Gupta (2005) in his article entitled “Microfinance in India: Empirical Evidence, Alternative Models and Policy Imperatives”, commented that a paradigm shift is required from “financial sector reform” to “micro-finance reform”. While the priority sector needs to be made lean, mandatory micro credit must be monitored rigorously. Simultaneously space and scope have to be properly designed for providing competitive environment to micro-finance services. An extensive database needs to be created by the RBI for understanding micro-finance.51

35. Debotosh Sinha (2005) in his study entitled “Self – Help Group – Vehicle For Women Empowerment” stated that SHG members who are associated with self-help groups for over ten years have higher level of empowerment and SHG leads to the development of savings habit among the women and there was a remarkable change that after joining self-help group most of the women are in a position to take decisions independently and SHG members feel encouraged to participate in active
politics, and political affiliation increases their level of empowerment in the family as well as community. The study reveals that the vast majority of the women of self-help groups have been able to achieve consciousness about the function of local self-government, politics, health awareness and child health care. They are also showing a positive attitude towards self-reliance and small family norms as well as acceptance of services provided by development agencies. These women are gradually taking decisions independently in their 'household affairs', economic matters, child education, child health and family welfare.

36. Jayaraman.R.,(2005) in his study entitled “Performance Analysis of Fisherwomen Self – Help Groups In Tamilnadu” cites the following reasons for the success of fisherwomen SHGs in the coastal villages: Close interaction among the members, Unity and collective efforts in their aims (or) goals; Self confidence ; Financial independence; Personality development; Greater awareness about useful skills and various government programmes; Changed attitude for better living; Emphasizing psychological empowerment and awareness generation; Information sharing and motivation; Ability to solve community problems; Arresting alcoholism in their localities; Greater participation in family decision making; Improved family income; Better access to education; Access financial support to strengthen their husband’s occupation (especially in fishing) Eradicating the ‘usurious’ transaction in their villages; Financial independence of the destitute by utilizing the small saving credit loan; Increase in their leadership skills Greater participation in the PRI activities; Increase in their purchasing power (as reflected by increased expenditure on food, clothing, furniture, jewels, improvement of houses facilities, etc.); Awareness about family health, nutrition, etc.; Awareness about family planning, family size, contraception and sterilization, etc.; Awareness about legal marriage age, remarriage,
child marriage, dowry, etc.; Participation in outdoor activities, social and national functions, etc. Women have become more articulate when they take active part in all economic, political and social activities.  

37. Reddy. C.S., (2005) in his study entitled “Self-Help Groups: A Keystone of Microfinance in India Women empowerment & social security” stated that SHG’s have helped their members and their communities by taking a leadership role in community development. SHG’s are perceived to be a guiding force for the village. The role of SHG’s is both as an inspiration and as a financier. Impoverished women develop greater language and a financial skill through the SHG’s which provides the building blocks for higher levels of confidence to engage the world. Also, the SHG’s sometimes finances the campaign of its members that stand for election. SHG’s not only empower the members but also wield a powerful political role as a group as well.  

38. Sahu and Tripathy (2005) in their edited book “Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment” point out that 70 per cent of world’s poor are women. The poor women’s access to banking services is important not only for poverty alleviation but also for optimising their contribution to the growth of regional as well as the national economy. Self - Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as the most vital instrument in the process of participatory development and women empowerment. The rural women are the marginalized groups in the society because of socio-economic constraints. They remain backward and occupy a lower position on the social hierarchical ladder. They can lift themselves from the morass of poverty and stagnation through micro finance and formation of Self-Help Groups.  

39. Sinha (2005) in his study entitled “Access, Use and Contribution of Micro-Finance in India: Findings from a National Study” has observed that micro-
finance is making a significant contribution to both the savings and borrowing of the poor in the country. According to him the main use of micro-credit is for direct investment. There is of course some flexibility, depending on household credit requirements at the time of loan disbursement. Some studies reveal that micro-finance programmes have had positive as well as negative impacts on women.  

40. Deepti Umashankar (2006) in her study entitled “Women’s Empowerment: Effect of Participation in Self - Help Groups” found that SHG is a viable organized set-up to disburse micro credit to rural women for the purpose of encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities. Credit can counter both the lack of access women have to formal banks and the very high rates demanded by local moneylenders. The membership of SHGs lessens monetary pressure occurring out of sickness, expenditure on wedding ceremonies, death of the bread winner and loss or seasonality of employment. It can also help in meeting expenditures which are an integral part of daily life: expenses on food, clothing, health, schooling etc. Micro credit helps in steering clear of expensive usurious credit: Women mention that they have found a new individuality through the self-help groups. Membership of SHGs aided the women to move from an inactive state to being dynamic agents and work for their own change. The women elucidate how they had discovered their power. They are fortified with information. They were thrilled about their newly acquired powers. Women who had so far been hesitant and inhibited have slowly shed their reserve and stepped out of the four walls of their homes to acquire an individuality of their own. They developed a sense of self-worth as they understood that self-empowerment comes from within. They have found strength in numbers.  

41. Raghav Gaiha and Mani Arul Nandhi (2006) in their study entitled “Microfinance, Self-Help Groups and Empowerment in Maharashtra” have studied the benefits
of microfinance through self-help groups in a specially designed survey in rural India. Some major findings are; while the targeting of microfinance through SHGs was unsatisfactory in terms of an income criterion, it was better in terms of other indicators of deprivation such as caste, landlessness and illiteracy. It is worth noting that the disadvantaged used the loans largely for health and education of children and for production-related expenses especially. The rates of return on such investments were high. Little, however, can be said about their sustainability. Savings mobilisation through SHG’s 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. Not only do SHGs benefit from the presence of networks, the former also contribute to trust, reciprocity and associational capital (e.g. through strengthening of local institutions). Domestic violence was reduced. However, greater responsibilities for women also involved longer hours of work.  

42. Abdul Raheem and Prabu.C., (2007) in their study entitled “Need for Economic Empowerment of Women; A View” stated that the SHG’s have been identified as a potential pathway for alleviating poverty. The number of poor women and men who are enrolling in SHG’s all over rural India has been increasing remarkably. SHG’s lay down the foundation for self – reliance through building up of institutions which have the capacity to generate employment opportunities for the rural poor and the poorest, and lead to job-led economic growth. In India, Self-Help Groups are the backbones of microfinance services. 

43. Monika Tushir, Sumita Chadda and Pankaj Ahlawat (2007) in their study entitled “Role of Micro Finance to Uplift The Economic Condition of Women..."
Households in Harayana Through SHG’s”, stated that micro credit is emerging as a powerful instrument for poverty alleviation in the new economy. It is a powerful instrument and has improved access of rural poor, especially women. The SHG- Bank Linkage Program had offered greater opportunity for closer and interaction between bank and group members. There is significant improvement in the recent years and the concept has picked up with the consent support of the state government, banks and NGO’s. The SHGs have helped the poor masses in earning their living, generating Self-Employment and maintaining their living standard.  

44. Ranjula Bali Swain and Fan Yang Wallentin (2007) in their study entitled “Does Microfinance Empower Women? Evidence from Self Help Groups in India” stated that microfinance programs like the Self Help Bank Linkage Program in India have been increasingly promoted for their positive economic impact and the belief that they empower women. The results strongly demonstrate that on average, there is a significant increase in the women empowerment of the SHG members’ groups. No such significant change is observed, however, for the members of the control group. The elegance of the result lies in the fact that the group of SHG participants shows clear evidence of a significant and higher empowerment, while allowing for the possibility that some members might have been more empowered than others.  

45. Shashikala Sitaram (2007) in her study entitled “Promoting Urban Social Development Through Self - Help Groups In Karnataka” found that the membership to a SHG has contributed to significant changes in the lives of women. This was revealed by focus group interactions and field visits in the six towns undertaken for this study. Most of the groups visited could be assessed as successful in social and economic terms. It increased entrepreneurial skills, increased access to credit, and supported establishment of businesses. Women now also have the
opportunity to change from one income generating activity to another. There is a noticeable change in the consumption pattern and better household nutrition. This study found that the participation in the movement by itself has been an empowering and liberating experience for many of the poor women. The strongest impact has been in terms of self esteem and increased social mobility as many women of urban slums had never attended such a program before and it increased mobility, increased exposure, increased awareness and made changes in decision-making, increase in social security. Many SHGs have helped in resolving family disputes.  

46. Singh.Y.K, Kaushal.S.K. and Gautam.S.S.,(2007) in their study entitled “Performance of Women’s Self Help Groups (SHGs) In District Moradabad, U.P.”, addressed issues related to the performance of self-help groups. Various research gaps have been identified that need to be studied immediately to strengthen the performance of Self- Help Groups. They found that the SHG’s followed normal patterns of group behavior. A greater percentage of women were impacted positively by being members of SHG’s. Women’s participation in SHG’s enabled them to discover inner strength, gain self - confidence, social and economic empowerment and capacity building. Women also gave suggestions for strengthening their groups and actively participated in them.  

47. Alagappan.V. and Abbas Manthiri.A., (2008) in their study entitled “Socio – Economic Impact of SHG Members”, found that the housing conditions had improved in the post – SHG period and when the period of membership increases, there is a significant change in the economic performance of the members during the two different periods. Further, it shows that the social empowerment of women is brought through the SGS’s but it is a matter of time and active participation.
48. Leelavathy.K.C., Mrs.Jothimani.R., Mrs..Kalaivani.P., (2008) in their study entitled “The Self - Help Groups in Kalappanaickenpalayam of Coimbatore District” stated that SHG’s helped the women to avail loans easily without any hardship. The awareness was created about nutrition and health. The awareness created among them seemed to be very positive in all the aspects related to nutrition and health. The women had become aware of general issues, which they needed for improving their living conditions and status. Women had the knowledge of bye - laws. 65

49. Ramachandram.T and Balakrishnan.S., (2008) in their study entitled “Impact of Self - Help Groups on Women’s Empowerment – A Study In Kanyakumari District” found that after joining Self - Help Groups no respondent is without any income. The increased income has helped to supplement the incomes to reduce the levels of poverty to a great extent in several families. SHG’s have the power to create a socio economic revolution in the rural areas of our country. SHG’s have not only produced tangible assets and improved living conditions of the members, but also helped in changing much of their social attitudes. SHG’s have served the cause of women empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic betterment of the poor. 66

50. Gladis Mary John (2008) in his study entitle “Women Empowerment Through Self - Help Groups” stated that self employment through Self - Help Groups has increased the earning capacity and economic independence and gave an important place in the decision making process within the families. They got more courage to go out and interact with others. Quality wise change is also seen in the food habits of the family of all women after joining self help groups. The women got awareness about the necessity of health of the family members and also awareness about keeping houses very clean and neat. 67
51. Heather Arney, Sait Damodaran, Michaela Meckel, Andrew Barenberg, Gary White [United States] 2008, in their study entitled “Creating Access to Credit for Water and Sanitation: Women’s Self-Help Groups in India” stated that women in the program expressed a sense of empowerment gained from participation. Many women for the first time in their lives entered banks to obtain loans. Work with the Federation also served as a launching pad for women to pursue community development activities and procure loans for income-generating activities previously not considered acceptable for women. Some SHG’s have started their own businesses, including a rock quarry and a brick production company that supplies materials for toilet construction.  

52. Meena.M. S., Dilip Jain and Meena.H. R. (2008) in their article, “Measurement of Attitudes of Rural Women towards Self-Help Groups”, made an attempt to assess the attitudinal changes in women about Self-Help Groups as a result of training. The evaluation of Self-Help Groups was conducted at attitude construct. A Likert-type scale consisting of 26 items was developed, for which Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Reliability was observed as 0.85. The survey instrument contained five sections namely: socio-economic upliftment; education and training; marketing and entrepreneurship qualities; technology adoption and participatory research; and banking/credit aspects. The training group consisting of 30 participants of Self-Help Groups responded to five-section survey instrument. Significant t-test results for mean values of attitude of women before and after the training showed a significant change in attitude of women in all the five areas as a result of training. 

53. Kanniammal.K. and Jerinabi.U., (2008) in their study entitled “Role of SHG’s in Empowerment of Women”, analysed the impact of the programme in economic and social empowerment of the women SHGs and the results indicated the change in
their social status which slowly help them for gender equality. 93 per cent of women indicated that their self-confidence has increased. On an average, 75 per cent of women feel that they have acquired communication and leadership skills, health and environment education, equal development, breaking the social and culture barriers, increased power of decision – making at home and habit of banking. SHG movement helps for abolition of child labour and sending girl children to schools. The study shows that the SHGs are the effective instrument of women empowerment. The SHGs have also created better understanding between the members of the different castes and religions. This is a welcome change to have understanding and tolerance towards the members of other religions particularly in a country like India where there is a diversity of religion and caste.70

54. Nirmala.V. (2008) in her study entitled “Achieving Gender Equality Through Capability Development: Efficacy of SHG’s Micro Credit In Rural Pondicherry Region, India” examined the role of SHG’s micro-credit as a tool of capability development and women’s empowerment in rural areas of Pondicherry region in the Union Territory of Puducherry, India. It is based on primary data collected from a random sample of 300 poor women during March 2006. The findings revealed the sample respondents to be possessing poor human and economic capabilities due to poverty. As a result, majority of them were engaged in traditional and less remunerative non-farm activities. Access to SHG’s credit significantly improved their employment opportunity and annual family income during the post-credit period. Analysis of the determinants of rate of return to SHG’s credit indicated that while experience and education had a positive significant effect on it, the impacts of current education, skill and experience acquired were negative and significant. This indicates that human capabilities development, in terms of further education, relevant training
and experience were important to improve the rate of return to SHG’s credit of the sample respondents. While socio-economic development was their main benefit, their major problems comprised credit not received in time, low profits, and competition from mechanized products, besides marketing and work place problems. The study indicated that the economic inclusion strategy combined with capabilities development would go a long way in empowering and improving the well-being of the rural poor women in the study area.71

55. Radhakrishana.S.G., Eswarappa.G and Manjunathab.N., (2008) in their study entitled “Empowerment of Women in Sujala Watershed Programme Through Income Generating Activities” revealed that maximum number of Self-help group(SHG) members (55.00 per cent) had savings level upto 1000-2000. Employment status of majority of the members (79.00 per cent) improved after joining in the Self-help groups of Sujala Watershed Programme. Most of the SHG members had taken up subsidiary enterprises like dairy, petty business, sheep rearing, goat rearing, tailoring and got maximum income from petty business. After joining the SHG all the members started saving for the future. Majority of the respondents were fully employed and started self-help employment. This indicates that most of the SHG’s formed under Sujala Watershed Programme are exclusively of women. It has empowered them socially and economically through income generating activities to such an extent that they have started asserting their genuine demands collectively. Therefore, the implementing officials should plan more number of income generating activities by linking the SHG’s with banks so that they can derive more benefits out of them and thereby individuals can progress through groups.72

Experiences” found 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.  

57. Saraswathy Amma. K.P, K., Panicker.S.M. and Sumi. M., (2008) in their study entitled “Micro Credit and Women Empowerment: A Study in India” have stated that economic benefits [Rank I] is the major criteria for women to become members of Kudumbasree units. Personal benefits got second preference and social benefits are ranked as third. From the study it was seen that the major economic benefits are income, loans, wealth and savings. Out of this, income has the highest rank followed by savings, loan and wealth. The second benefit taken into consideration is personal which includes freedom, recognition, self-confidence, communication, dignity, and model to others, security, not to be shy, awareness and personality change. From the analysis it is observed that the freedom has the highest order of preference followed by self-confidence, security, recognition, personality change, awareness, dignity, communication, not to be shy and model to others. The social factors considered are mutual benefits, unity, sympathy, mutual cooperation, knowledge sharing, mutual help, group strength, discussion, feeling of togetherness and greater interaction with the society. Among them the unity has the highest rank. The order of rank that follows unity are mutual benefits, mutual co-operation, feeling of togetherness, mutual help, group strength, greater interaction with the society, discussion, sympathy and knowledge sharing.”  

58. Tangirala H.S.K., (2008) in his study entitled “SHG is A Tool of Economic Development of Cooperatives and its Members” says that the economic development of the members’ is said to be attained when the society improves the quality of members life through increasing per capita income, reducing poverty, enhancing individual economic opportunities, better education, improved health and nutrition, conservation of natural resources, a cleaner environment, and a richer cultural life. And their study concluded that the cooperatives play a tremendous role in the economic development of its members and in alleviation of poverty in the country. With the advent of the SHGs, the cooperatives got another tool in their toolbox to quicken the process of developing the members financially.75

59. Vasantha.S.V. and Rathika.V., (2008) in their study entitled “SWOT Analysis of Self – Help Group for Women of Puliyakulam area in Coimbatore District” stated that Self - Help Group helps in creating economic self - reliance of the members by meeting consumption and production credit means as and when they arise, and strengthens women’s relative position within an interdependent relationship with their husbands than seeking independence and autonomy. It also develops group activity, leadership qualities and also improves decision – making skills. It inculcates thrift habits and increases the level of savings among the members. It helps to develop self- confidence and unable the members to meet any bank official without fear and shyness.76

60. Balamirtham .P. and Uma Devi. I.V., (2009) in their study entitled “Women SHG’s in the Upliftment of Tsunami Victims” analysed the extent of benefits extended by Self - Help Groups to their members in ameliorating their problems after tsunami. They found that SHG’s have been very active after Tsunami in Kanyakumari District. The active role played by SHG’s in assisting Tsunami affected women wiped the
tears of those who have been slashed by Tsunami. It is possible for the SHG’s only through co-operation of the Government and NGOs who have sponsored the SHG’s. 77

61. Bishnu Maya Dhungana (2009) in his study entitled “Role of Self-Help Groups in enhancing quality of life of Nepalese disabled women” stated that SHG’s were playing a larger role expanding the scope of employment for their members by building social and economic skills and linking them to the outside employment. Women having a job through the job placement of the SHG’s and majority of them acquiring training prior to employment. Having access to resources, the ability to provide economic support and care for their family members is so strong in several cases. Other non-income benefits to women like changes in personality, greater self-confidence and greater say within and outside the house are recognized because of their economic contribution. These are considered the most important benefit of participating in SHG’s by women. A woman’s feeling of complete dependence on their families - emotionally, socially, economically is substituted by the feeling that they could support themselves. Group living provides women independent living skills and helps them to start family life. Women are gaining recognition and changes in families and community due to their earnings. 78

62. Kumararaja (2009) in his study entitled “Performance of Self - Help Groups in Tamil Nadu “ analyzed the performance and evaluation of SHG’s in Tamilnadu and their role in women empowerment. The study reveals that micro finance, micro credit through SHGs has reached the people. There is a steady growth in SHG’s and millions of households are being helped through Micro Finance. Therefore, a timely and regular check through SHG’s is necessary for a healthy progress of the overall development of the rural women. 79
63. Nidheesh K. B. (2009) in his study entitled “Strengthening tribal communities through tribal women's Self - Help Groups in Kerala” stated that SHG’s have become a prevailing, imperative, and valuable means for empowering women in parts of the mainstream humanity. When scamper on participatory point and within enabling partnerships, they can facilitate the strength of women in Kerala to renovate their position away from creature marginalized, towards transformed agents in a participating society.\(^80\)

64. Husain, Zakir; Mukherjee, Diganta and Dutta, Mousumi (2010) in their study entitled “Self - Help Groups and empowerment of women: Self-selection or actual benefits?” showed that SHG members were involved in undertaking activities like selling garments, handicrafts, trading in rice, embroidery, tailoring, dairy farming, spice making, and other activities. Such activities yielded a substantial income – consisting of about a fifth of household income. However, such activities were not uncommon before the introduction of the program in the survey sites. The achievement of SHG’s was that it injected capital into the system, mobilized individual activities into group-based activity, and intensified participation in economic activities.\(^81\)

65. Nagabhushana Rao and K. Geetanjali (2010) in their study entitled “Self – Help Groups and Women empowerment: A Case Study” evaluated the impact of selected Self-Help Groups in women empowerment. The study shows that the impact was significant on issues related to child health care, child marriage, awareness about legal implications of the matrimonial litigations, hygienic practices, family planning practices, value of unity and education, inculcation of self-confidence, awareness on articulation decision making and change in expenditure patterns.\(^82\)
66. Shiralashetti .A.S., (2010) in her study entitled “Women Empowerment Through Self-Help Groups in Bijapur District: A Study” found that monthly income of majority of sample respondents has increased after joining SHG’s. Monthly expenditure of the sample respondents has gone up after joining SHG’s. Savings of sample respondents has gone up after they became members of SHG’s. Majority of sample respondents opined that their power has increased in taking family decisions after joining SHG’s. The majority of sample respondents opined that their power has increased in purchase and sale of current assets, domestic animals and ornaments, purchase of home appliances, purchase of clothes, performance of functions, participation in social and political activities, etc. This shows that the SHG movement is in the right direction towards eradicating the poverty of the people.  

67. Shanmugam .N.K., (2010) in his study entitled “Empowerment of Women through Women SHGs: A Micro Study” examines, empirically the empowerment of women managerially, financially, and socially by having joined SHG’s. The study reveals that most of the members are empowered to take financial decisions in the family, developed the art of interaction after joining SHG’s and most of the members became earning members, they became politically affiliated and most of the members agreed that they were empowered and could solve their personal problems.  

68. Velu Suresh Kumar , Thaha Sahad. A, Karuppiah .M., (2010) in their article titled “SHG’s : Micro – finance Strategy in Empowering Rural Women” observed that Women Self-Help Groups are increasingly being used as tool for various development interventions. Through forming informal SHG’s, rural women in India are getting credit and extension support for various production-oriented, income-generating activities. The SHG approach has proved successful not only in improving the economic conditions through income generation but in creating awareness about
health and hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness, environmental protection, importance of education and better response for development schemes.

69. Lakshmi R., (2010), in her study entitled “Influence of SHG Scheme on Rural Women Empowerment” found that the SHG - Bank linkage programme has made enormous contributions to empowersments rural of Tamilnadu through SHG’s. The credit from banks flow from a position of dominance of supply side considerations to a more healthy demand oriented service system. It has been observed that empowerment through Self - Help Groups approach made remarkable empowerment of poor women. The strong social ties among the members, increased business loan per member and lower SHG’s expenditure will contribute to the higher income of the group members.

70. Shashilkala and Uma H.R., (2011) in their study entitled “Women Empowerment Through SHG’s: A Study” analyzed the role of micro finance and the role of SHG’s in the empowerment of women. They found that income generating activities taken up by the members of the groups had given the monthly returns to them. Their contributions to the monthly family income, their repayment behavior and changes in their physical assets and amenities have changed after joining the group. After joining the SHG’s the group members’ access to resources and local group activities increased and also enhanced their decision – making ability to meet some psychological needs like self- esteem and confidence.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study “Social and Economic Benefits Derived by the Members of Self - Help Groups in Coimbatore District” aims to probe into the various Social Benefits and Economic Benefits that have been derived by the members of Self-Help Groups in Coimbatore District because of their membership in Self-Help Groups and the factors that influence the same.
1.5 OBJECTIVES

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To trace the origin, growth and progress of Self - Help Groups.

2. To assess the level of Social Benefits derived by the members because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and the factors that influence the same.

3. To measure the level of Economic Benefits derived by the members because of their membership in Self - Help Groups, and the factors that influence the same.

4. To offer suggestions for enhancing Social and Economic Benefits derived by the Members of Self - Help Groups because of their membership in the Self Help Groups.

1.6. HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses have been formulated in tune with the second and third objectives of the study that various independent variables relating to the sample members such as Age of the members, Marital status of the members, Social category of the members, Taluk in which members reside, Literacy level of the members, Occupational status of the members, Family type of the members, Family size of the members, Status of the members in their family, Monthly family income of the members, Average monthly expenses of the members, Average monthly savings of the members, Value of assets possessed by the members, Reasons for joining as a member in the SHG’s, Period of association with SHG’s, Member’s status in their groups, Grade status of their groups, do not significantly influence the social and economic benefits derived by the members because of their membership in SHG’s.
1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

SHG:

Self - Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association of 10-20 people either registered or unregistered preferably from the same socio-economic background. They come together for the purpose of solving their common problems through self help and mutual help.

Member:

A member means any woman who is the member of women SHG’s.

Leader:

Leader is the member person selected by the members of SHG’s to lead the group.

NGO:

NGO is Non-Governmental Organization which helps to form and monitor the workings of SHG’s.

Social Benefits:

Attaining equal status, Participation, Power in decision making of women at household, community and village level to overcome Social, Cultural and Religious barriers to attain equality and recognition in their day to day affairs.

Economic Benefits:

The various monetary and non – monetary benefits such as financial self-reliance, changes in their consumption pattern, additional employment, increase in their level of changes, contribution to overall development of women.
**Women Empowerment:**

Empowerment is an active multidimensional process to enable women to realize their identity and power in all spheres of life.

**Social Status:**

The status enjoyed by the member of SHG in the society because of her membership in the Self - Help Group.

**Economic Status:**

Economic independence attained by the members of SHG because of her membership in the Self - Help Group.

## 1.8 METHODOLOGY

The present study undertaken by the researcher is empirical in nature and is based on survey method. The whole data required for the present study were collected in three stages. The primary data relating to the perception of the members on the social benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and their perception on the economic benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups were collected by interviewing selected sample members with the help of an interview schedule. The secondary data relating to the study, like the origin and growth of the Self - Help Groups and their performance were obtained from various published and unpublished records. Lastly, the researcher held discussions with the officials of Mahalir Thittam and various Non-Governmental Organisations in Coimbatore District. These discussions were helpful to the researcher in identifying the problems of the study.
1.9 CONSTRUCTION OF TOOLS AND PILOT STUDY

The researcher constructed the tools for collecting the primary data required for the study. In order to find out the variables for the study, the researcher held informal interviews with the fifty members of various Self-Help Groups, various Non-Governmental Organizations functioning in this district and the officials of Mahalir Thittam in Coimbatore District for the purpose of gathering information for construction of schedules. Interview schedule for the members of Self - Help Groups were constructed in English and translated into Tamil for the convenience of the members. The pilot study conducted during August 2009 covered fifty members of various Self-Help Groups and in the light of the pilot study the schedule was revised.

1.10 SAMPLING DESIGN

The Coimbatore District comprises of a wider network of various types of industries of large and small scales and hence Coimbatore is popularly known as the ‘Manchester of South India’ and the ‘Textile Capital of South India’. Agriculture was a major activity in the earlier stages in this district but it has also pioneered the growth of various industries in the state of Tamilnadu. The slowdown in the growth of textile mills and it’s allied industries and the transition from agricultural sector to the industrial sector has resulted in bringing vast changes in the industrial scenario of the district. The increased unemployment and under employment in the industrial sector and the agricultural sector has affected the livelihood of the people of this district. As a result, the affected segment of the population started thinking about the alternative sources of livelihood. It has led to the formation and tremendous growth of Self-Help Groups in this district. As the people of Coimbatore are known for their entrepreneurial skills, the share
of Coimbatore District in the total number of Self-Help Groups functioning in the state of Tamilnadu is considerable when compared with other districts in the State. Hence, the Coimbatore District has been selected as the area for the present study.

In Coimbatore District, 17,020 groups are functioning. In the first stage, among these total groups, the groups which have the membership of fifteen and above were considered for the purpose of carrying out the present study. On the basis of criteria stated above, 5022 groups were selected as the sample groups for the study. As the response was not proper from twenty two groups, these groups were left out and the effective groups considered for the study remained 5000. Among these 5000 groups, ten percent of the groups were selected as sample groups by applying simple random sampling method by using Tippets random numbers and it worked out for five hundred groups. In the second stage, two members from each group were selected as the respondents for the study and it worked out for a total of one thousand respondents. The respondents from each group were selected by applying random sampling method using lottery method. Thus, on the whole, one thousand members of Self - Help Groups were selected as sample respondents for the present study.

1.11 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The area of coverage of the present study is Coimbatore in the State of Tamilnadu in India.

1.12 THE FIELD WORK AND COLLECTION OF DATA

The field work for the present study was conducted by the researcher during the period between October 2009 and October 2010. The researcher conducted personal
interviews with the respondents of the study and it was the major tool for data collection. For obtaining the necessary data required for the study from the selected respondents, an Interview Schedule (Appendix-II) was used during the interviews. Proper rapport was established by the researcher before the conduct of the interview with the selected sample respondents. The data were recorded by the researcher in the interview schedule. In order to ensure the accuracy, consistency and completeness of the data collected during the interview, the completed schedules were thoroughly checked. On an average, each interview took about 30 minutes. The data thus collected were properly categorized and posted in the master table for further processing.

1.13 RELIABILITY TEST FOR THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The components which were considered for scaling for the purpose of assessing the Social Benefits derived by the members of Self-Help Groups because of their membership in SHG’s accounted for seventy four in number and for the purpose of assessing the Economic Benefits derived by the members because of their membership in SHGs accounted for forty six in number. For the purpose of conducting the reliability analysis, data were collected from fifty members of SHG’s through the Interview Schedule. The components which were included in the scale were divided into two parts, each part containing sixty items selected randomly. The correlation between two parts was found to be 0.995 for the dependent variable i.e, Social Benefits derived by the members, and 0.994 for the dependent variable i.e, Economic Benefits derived by the members. This revealed that the components between the two parts in both the dependent variables i.e, Social Benefits derived by the members and Economic Benefits derived by the members because of their membership in SHG’s correlate well. Cronbach’s co-
efficient alpha (α) uses variance for k individual components and the variance for the sum of all the components. If there is no true score but only error in the components, then the variance of the sum will be the same as the sum of variance of individual components. Therefore, co-efficient alpha will be equal to zero. If all items are perfectly reliable and measured by the same thing (true score), then co-efficient alpha is equal to one in both the cases. The reliability of Cronbach’s alpha revealed that the reliability of scales constructed for measuring the perception of the members on the Social Benefits derived by them because of their membership in SHG’s is 0.995 and for measuring the perception on the members on the Economic Benefits derived by them because of their membership in SHG’s is 0.994 and it indicates that the scales constructed for this purpose are fairly reliable.

1.14 DATA PROCESSING

The analysis required for the present study has been processed with the help of the computer.

1.15 QUANTIFICATION AND MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES AND CONSTRUCTION OF SCALES

The present study has been carried out by the researcher with the primary objective of assessing the perception of the members on the Social Benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and to assess the Economic Benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups. The researcher has formulated two major scales such as ‘Social Benefits Perception Scale’ (Appendix - III), and ‘Economic Benefits Perception Scale’ (Appendix - IV). These scales have been constructed based on the scores for various components which were
identified by the researcher for determining the perception of the members on the Social and Economic benefits derived by the members because of their membership in Self - Help Groups. The various independent variables related to the sample members have been categorized and the perception of the sample members on the Social and Economic benefits derived by them has been measured through the respective scales developed by the researcher for this purpose.

1.16 FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The general plan of analysis for the present study ranged from simple descriptive statistics, bivariate tests, testing of hypotheses to multivariate techniques. The extent of variation in the perception of the members on the social benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and the perception of the members on the economic benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups have been analysed by the researcher. The perception of the members on the social benefits derived by them and their perception on the economic benefits derived by them have been measured through the scales constructed by the researcher for this specific purpose. These scales were constructed by the researcher on the basis of scoring for the factors which contribute to the perception of the members on the social benefits derived by them and their perception on the economic benefits derived by them. Then the factor-wise analysis was made. The dependent variables such as the perception of the members on the social benefits derived by them and their perception on the economic benefits derived by them were related to various factors which influence the dependent variables. The mean and range scores of each group of the respondents on the various components were calculated. In order to find out the significance of the differences between the mean scores, Analysis of Variance has been employed. Contingency Tables have been formed and Chi-square Tests have been applied for testing the association between the variables.
The Co-efficient of correlation between the dependent variables of the study and the selected independent variables have been put into Multiple Regression Analysis to explain the extent of variance of the dependent variables influenced by the independent variables combined. Factor Analysis has been used to find out the components which are similar and form a factor. The direct and indirect effects of the independent variables to the dependent variables were measured through the Path Analysis.

1.17. CHAPTER SCHEME

The first chapter deals with the introduction, design and execution of the study. This includes introduction, statement of the problem, review of previous studies, scope of the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses operational definition of the concepts, methodology, construction of tools and pilot study, sampling design, geographical coverage, fieldwork and collection of data, reliability test for the interview schedule, data processing, quantification and measurement of variables and construction of scales, framework of analysis, and chapter scheme.

The second chapter traces the origin, growth and progress of Self-Help Groups.

The third chapter measures the level of social benefits derived by the members because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and the factors that influence the same.

The fourth chapter assesses the variations in the economic benefits derived by them because of their membership in Self - Help Groups and the factors that influence the same.

The last and fifth chapter deals with the summary of findings, suggestions for enhancing the provision of higher social and economic benefits to the members because of their membership in Self - Help Groups, scope for future studies and conclusion.
SUMMARY

Women play a paramount role in the socio–economic development of a country. In fact, the pace of economic development of a country can be accelerated by enhancing the status, position and living conditions of women in a country. Women’s work in the household, in agriculture and such activities are generally not considered to be economically productive and is either not accounted for or is grossly undervalued if counted. Even if a woman is employed, she may not have control over the money she earns, though this money often plays an important role in the maintenance of the household. Empowerment of women is essential for development of full potential of the total human resources. If half the country’s population remains weak and dependent, development of the nation would only be half-hearted. Empowerment of women is, therefore, the pressing need of the day.

Self-help groups intermediated has been shown to have positive effects on women, with some of these impacts having ripple effects. They have played valuable roles in reducing the vulnerability of the poor, through asset creation, income and consumption smoothing, provision of emergency assistance and empowering and emboldening women by giving them control over assets and increased self-esteem and knowledge.

Government had designed a variety of measures to reach the poor women with SHG’s. The innovative SHG’s have become one of successful measures in the recent past. It focuses on building human, financial and organizational capacity. NGO’s, Government machineries, educational institutions, commercial banks and corporate sectors have acknowledged SHG’s to be an effective body of implementing the divergent
programs. It enabled women to benefit economically by monetizing their contributions and in the process have empowered them to become agents of change. Self – Help groups intermediated by microcredit have been shown to have positive effects on women, with some of these impacts having ripple effects.

With suitable support, Self-Help Groups can move on to collective action at the community level but more remains to be done for Socio - Economic development of women in India.