CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive review of literature is essential for any good research endeavor as it provides a background to aid the researcher in designing and analyzing research work.

This section presents a review of available literature relevant to the proposed study. Many NGOs have initiated the empowerment process of poor women by organizing them into groups and building their capacity to improve their lives through micro capacity credit programmes. Providing women with financial credit and helping them to set up small enterprises thus enabling them to increase their earning, is considered a means of poverty reduction and economic empowerment.

It is desirable to review the relevant literature while handling a research problem. A review of literature places a research study in its proper perspective by showing the amount of work published. Work done during 2000-2012 has been taken into consideration.

In the present study, literature based on SHGs, microfinance, Microcredit, livelihood finance, care economy and their relationship with poverty reduction and empowerment of women, particularly tribal women has been reviewed.

"Women's empowerment could be considered as a process in which women gain greater share of control over resource material, human and intellectual, like knowledge, ideas and financial resources like money and control over decision making at home, in society and in the nation and to gain power (Kapur, 2001).

The constitution of India provides a number of rights to women and several laws exist to protect women from discrimination. But still Indian women cannot say with pride that they possess complete empowerment equal to men. The author says that, so far as empowerment is concerned, still a lot has to be done to make them fully self-dependent and empowered equally with men. Problems like female feticide, torture for dowry, violence against women etc. still restrict the complete empowerment of women (Kapur, 2001).
Chauhan & Bansal (2002) have mentioned the various dimensions of 'women empowerment'. According to them, empowerment means giving legal and moral power to an individual in all spheres of life.

In the paper, Socio-economic Development in Gujarat: Rosy Picture with Concerns, Thakker and Shiyani (2009) has examined the socio-economic development in various parts of Gujarat. It has been found that there are many regional disparities and some regions are more developed than others. It was observed that development is more in the Golden Corridor i.e. from Vapi to Mehsana, while it is less in all districts of Saurashtra except Rajkot, districts of Banaskantha, Patan, Narmada and Kutchh. A careful analysis of the economic structure is necessary for a development process that is equitable, sustainable and efficient. The Government needs to become a facilitator instead of a regulator. Gujarat is varied in terms of soil, climate, water and rainfall and these factors have to be taken into account in its development strategy. A combination of public policies and private initiatives, like in Tamil Nadu, can be useful in development. Even though agriculture is predominant in Gujarat, there are very few industries to process these agricultural products. Hence, it has been suggested by the authors to set up more agro-industries. It has also been suggested by the authors that the level of development be evaluated at the Taluka level and data should be maintained and kept easily accessible at Taluka level.

2.2 EMPOWERMENT OF WOMAN

Prof. Dastgir Alam, (Alam, 2008) in his paper Women in Labor Market an Aspect of Social Justice, has stated that women have always got a lesser share in labour force participation rate (LFPR). He has described the concept of social justice as a sense of participation in all spheres of human activities, social, economic and political, in the mind of masses.

Women's share in LFPR can be an important indicator that may provide a sound economic base and confidence to be economically independent which helps in establishing a just society. But the study says that the situation of women is not so good. Male dominance prevailing in the labour market creates segmentations of women in the lowest paying jobs. Women have got lesser share in LFPR in both rural as well as urban markets. From the education point of view also the situation is not good. Illiterate women have always dominated the labour market. The percentage change in age specific usual status of labour force participation rate reveals those women are sometimes losers and sometimes achievers.
Overall their share in the LFPR has declined more than the males and that is a matter of great concern. Lastly, Prof. Alam has raised the question that, how can we expect a prosperous and affluent society if women suffer from many disadvantages in comparison to men with respect to LFPRs?

Dr. B. Suguna (2002) throws light on strategies for empowerment of rural women. According to her, empowerment is a phenomenon of the nineties and is defined as 'giving power to' creating power within and enabling. The author has categorized the concept into three broad categories – economic empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment. The author emphasizes on social empowerment of women. This includes equal treatment, equal respect, equal opportunity, equal recognition and equal status. She further says that, empowerment of women is, therefore, the process of controlling power and strengthening of their vitality.

She says that, even though rural women constitute 75 percent of the total female population of the country, they are poor and ignorant as compared to the urban women. Rural women need to be trained and organized so that they are empowered. The study has found that in spite of all government efforts, some basic problems like illiteracy, limited skills, restricted mobility and lack of autonomous status still remain to be tackled.

Dutta (2002), mentions about both, the achievement and failures of the government while trying to improve conditions of women in India. As per his study, women are still considered as the ‘Woe of Society’ the unwanted burden. And this is the reason why various policies and programmes fail to achieve the best results. Problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, unemployment, malnutrition are still blighting the lives of millions of women in India. Women cannot be provided proper education because of the general attitude of the poor parents. They want their girl-child to work and earn rather than go to school. Poverty is the main reason behind this.

The author also talks about women’s health issues. Lack of education about sexual and reproductive health issues, early marriage and child bearing, and miscarriages create serious health hazards. Female infanticide, child sexual abuse, molestation, rape and domestic violence are some of the problems. Dowry deaths are also common, eve teasing and many such problems are faced by Indian women at various places like educational institutions, offices or even in their own families. 'Women Empowerment' remains a distant dream due to
all these problems. The author says that, women need to be provided with better facilities and proper health care systems. This is important for the empowerment of women.

According to Parvathi and Karthikeyan (2002) education plays a role as a means for human resource development for sensitizing one's perceptions, awareness and for motivating and changing one’s behavior to suit arising needs, demands and opportunities for survival, growth and development. Education is the greatest force for empowerment. The process of education will not be complete without value content. Empowerment can only be acquired through knowledge.

Dr. Shaily Bhashanjaly (2002), talks about the need to empower women. She adds that most of the world's poor are women. So it is necessary to empower them. Women's contributions in both organized and unorganized sectors of the economy go unnoticed by the family and the society as well. Her work remains ‘invisible’ and under-rated. Women's empowerment can lead to some changes in this situation. Women's participation rate will increase, their work will get noticed and women can enjoy a reputed position both at home and the work place.

This author further says that, literacy and education, awareness, self-confidence, assertiveness, collecting strength, partaking in decision-making are some of the essential pre-requisites of empowerment.

Dr. K. Murugaiah (2002), talks about women’s work and empowerment, interventions to enhance women's income. The author says that, without economic empowerment, the development of women is an empty promise. In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the perspectives on women's work. The author has discussed the major tenets of empowerment:

Collectivization – This can be a major empowering force. This also brings in the possibility of pooling the resources, skills and other facilities. Pooling is an important way of strengthening the capacities of poor women to work together.

Capacity building – Once women start coming together, the next step is to enhance their capacity to work as a group and maintain the group.

Ownership and control – Once women acquire the capacity of working as a group, it becomes critical to take control over the whole activity. Women start work like record keeping, accounts keeping, handling cash, being signatories to bank accounts etc. These are helpful in building control.
Mediation – Another important aspect is to strengthen their capacities to mediate with the external world.

There are various types of interventions which can be initiated to increase income –

Activity Networking – In this, existing work of women spread and fragmented in places is networked and linked in an input-output process. For example, women using brooms for sweeping could buy those from women producing such brooms.

Upgrading Interventions – This means to improve the present level of work performed by the women.

Generating Better Returns – This means, focusing on generating better returns from some activity, without upgrading it.

Initiating New Activities – This set of interventions could entail initiating completely new activities by the poor women themselves.

The article written by Smt. Sushila Kaushik (2002) throws light on the different issues responsible for women's achievement as well as the pitfalls. She states that, even if the funds and credit is available to women, one should see whether it is available to women within the households. The author states further that, to improve the status of women, there is a need to integrate them into national structure and policy making rather than have policies on them.

Bose (2004), in his article "Empowerment of Women – How and When?" has discussed the problems and limitations of orientation programs which are important for awareness generation and advocacy of grass-roots democracy. He has also discussed how far they go in actually empowering women.

In development issues, a person is to be considered as successful if she takes personal interest in planning and development projects i.e. strengthening the Panchayat Institution, working on women's issues, working on leadership assets etc. According to the author, these women are not empowered. Here the author has taken one more example of Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) located at Chandigadh. Mr. Rashpal Malhotra, Director of CRRID pleaded for a 50 percent reservation for women as women are God-fearing and not corrupt. The author further remarked that, celebrations and orientation programs are certainly important for empowering women, but without action programs it is not possible. Here, before the conclusion, the author has given a spectacular case of women’s
empowerment in Bangladesh, where a woman, Nisha, joined the duty of a driver and her husband started bringing hot lunch for her. This was indeed women's empowerment.

When the author was studying the project area of Gono Swasthya Parishad in Bangladesh founded by Dr. Zafrulla Choudhri, he found that young women were going alone on cycles to villages with their medical kits for doing community health work. Here, also there was tremendous opposition and now, the young girls in the villages ask the women health workers (Sanstha Karmis) to teach them cycling. This again is empowerment of adolescent girls. A whole new horizon is opening up. In the author's vision this was the empowerment of Women.

‘Women and Empowerment, Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad’ by Malathi Ramnathan, (2004) and ‘Lijjat and Women’s Empowerment – Beyond and Obvious’ by Rajinder Chaudhari (2005) have thrown light on the role of Lijjat in empowering women. According to Ramnathan, Lijjat provided a beacon light to the lower class women in India, irrespective of their caste, religion or region – a path towards a better future. The capacity to earn one's livelihood and the resultant self-confidence was necessarily the first step in the ladder of empowerment. Rajinder Chaudhari has done a critical analysis of Lijjat Unit and its role in empowering women. He has pin pointed many things which have not been taken into consideration by Ramnathan. Ramnathan appreciates of the role of Lijjat "as a vital avenue for promoting women's empowerment" but, according to Chaudhari, women in Lijjat own it only to the extent that any ordinary shareholder owns a public limited company. According to him, they have not critically looked at the available records.

The author Radhakrishna Rao, in his article ‘Kerala Model of Women’s Empowerment (2010) talks about women’s empowerment in the state of Kerala, a place where there is highest literacy rate in India, best health care and low infant mortality rate. Women in Kerala enjoy a privileged position in the society. There is very little gap between rural and urban Kerala. The state has achieved significant progress in women's development through the process of democratic decentralization. This process has been emphasizing on the involvement of women at every stage of development at the local level. Women have been given space in political areas. But here, too, women have to face many problems from the male dominated society. Even though they are encouraged and allowed to have higher positions and make decisions, the male colleagues and family members discourage them by saying that they neglect their families or they cannot make proper decisions. But women in
Kerala have fought with all these obstacles successfully. Some of the women also get trained as truck drivers, conductors and masons.

The process of democratic decentralization has helped women to improve the quality of their life. Women get opportunities to get trained in various areas, work and earn their livelihood, decide on their own matters and develop their personality and improve family conditions also. The State Government of Kerala has linked all the local bodies to district headquarters and the state capital for providing more benefits, for the plans and projects to be implemented properly; and gain more success in the empowerment process.

Dr. Shaily Bhashanjaly (2002) explains the need and importance of women’s empowerment. She says that women’s empowerment is needed due to various psychological, social and cultural factors. According to the UN Human Development Report, (1995), more than 70 percent of the poor population in the world is women. This shows that women remain neglected, not just in India but all over the world. In India, the year 2001 was declared as the ‘Women Empowerment Year.’ It is important to empower women, since the women’s literacy rate is very low as compared to men. So women’s participation in economic and social growth is very low. Even if women contribute greatly to the society or economy, the contribution and women's work is ‘neglected’ by the society. Male members are preferred over female members for education, health etc. Female feticide is one big problem faced by India, especially in rural areas. There are cruel practices of killing a girl child immediately after birth. This must be stopped.

Women empowerment is necessary, because it has been widely recognized. Increased participation of women in social, political and professional fields will lead to overall development of a nation. Educated women can have greater control over their resources; they can make their own decisions that would be beneficial for their own self as well as their families; they can earn money and improve their families' financial condition, this empowerment will enhance women's image in the society.

It is a very difficult process to empower women. Various governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) are trying to do this job of women empowerment by creating awareness about literacy amongst women, organizing them into self-help groups, helping them with finances for starting business. But all this should be done on a large scale all over the country. Empowered women would help to improve the economy and social life.
The nation's development highly depends on the conditions of women. So, empowerment of women is very important.

Parvathy & Kartikeyan (2002), explain the importance of education in the process of empowering women. Proper training helps to use this information or knowledge in the best possible way. Education helps a person to grow. But the present education does not guarantee a value based life. A human should get some value based education for achieving success in a true sense. The authors define ‘value’ as a guiding principle that helps humans to make decisions in a proper and correct manner, and behave in a correct way. Such value education should be provided to people for their improvement of life.

The authors say that, in India, the status of women can be measured from the importance given to their education. Women are not given a fair chance to get education. In this male-dominated society, the male child is given preference over female child for education. This does not allow the poor women to develop and utilize their skills and talents. Neither can these women know some of the important facts of life that would help them to live a better life.

These women should be given proper education. They should be taught the value of equality in men and women. If these women understand gender equality, they would help to stop many evil acts like female feticide. They would learn to utilize their skills for the right purposes, earn their own livelihood and take good care of their families.

Government and various non-governmental organizations should take appropriate steps to provide education to women in rural areas. Education must be made compulsory to both boys and girls. Importance of women's education should be shown through various dramas, posters, lectures etc. More and more, women should be educated and empowered. Awareness should be created amongst the most backward classes. This is the only way to empower the poor rural women and make their life better.

Shrivastava (2002) discussed about the various policies and plans for the development of women in India. The author says, women’s status and conditions have changed to a great extent in the post-independence period. The constitution of India has provided equal rights for men and women. It has various provisions for empowerment of women. Looking at the work done by various social reformers in the past, Indian Government has made various plans and policies, especially for women. Various socio-economic programs started by the
Government aim at providing all the facilities to women for their health, education, employment etc. This is the reason why today women have successfully entered into almost all fields, which were male dominated for years.

According to Shrivastava, the main goal of a society is its economic development and to achieve this goal both men and women should contribute equally. Both should be given a fair chance to get education, work and earn and enjoy the benefits of this development.

The Seventh Plan Document had various provisions for women. It had policies for education, health care, reduction of infant mortality, skilled jobs for women in advanced areas like science and technology, medical fields, electronics, teaching etc. Women were given the power to decide on various matters of their own. The Ninth Five Year Plan also provided for development and empowerment of women. It provided for reservation of not less than 1/3 seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. This Plan also contained provisions for organizing women into Self Help Groups to adopt a strategy of women's component plan to ensure that not less than 30 percent funds flow to women from other development sectors, high priority health services, easy and equal education for women and supplementary feeding programs and various other benefits. It also encourages women to become self-reliant through vocational skills.

Government of India has made various plans and policies for women empowerment but a male-dominated society like India creates various obstacles in the development of women. There is lack of confidence in women because of lack of security – economic, social and legal; she does not get proper chances of making the best use of her skills and capacity. Women are exploited in many ways. It is necessary for the Government to make proper laws to overcome these problems. This problem of women's security should be considered as a serious one and a proper solution should be found. This is the only way to make the women feel secure and confident; then only they can work and develop their own status. Women should be considered and treated equally important as men. This will lead to women empowerment and socio-economic development.

Ranganathan and Rao (2011) highlighted the management perspective for women’s empowerment in their article. According to them, empowerment is the process of enabling an individual to think, behave, take action and control work in an autonomous way, which includes both, control over resources and over ideology. Empowerment can create social...
transformation by providing a social environment in which one can take decisions and make choices either individually or collectively. For empowerment of women, education and employment are very important as they are essential elements for sustainable development.

In today’s global economy, in the corporate sector, India requires talent to face the competition. Opportunities for women in management in India increase slowly. Women are entering professions which were previously male dominated in the corporate world such as advertising, civil services, police and armed forces, banking etc. The study of management skills and leadership style found that generally men are not comfortable working for a women manager and they want women to act like men. Women prefer an interactive style and men prefer control and command style. According to this study, the major barriers to women's advancement in corporate leadership include lack of mentoring of women, lack of awareness of company politics by women and an inhospitable corporate culture. Therefore, to encourage women in managerial roles, top management support is very essential and diverse management policies and opening of doors to women in management through proactive human resource policies and programmes is required. As highlighted by the Indian women professionals, some success factors are good education, family support, mentoring, strong communication skills and lifelong learning for Indian women managers today.

K.S.R.N. Sarma (2011) in his article ‘Women Empowerment and Local good Governance’ has reviewed the overall situation of women development in India. He raises some questions as the former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere says, “How can we expect half the people to be able to develop a nation?” Three major factors show the very slow progress of women’s development: (i) Deep rooted gender bias in the social, religious, economic and political institutions; (ii) Funds crunch – During the last 25 years the percentage share allocated for the social sector in Central Government budget is stagnant at around 20 per cent; (iii) Institutional inadequacies – municipalities (urban areas) and Panchayats (rural areas) are entrusted with the actual implementation of the women development schemes but they do not have special skilled personnel in their employment.

Recent reviews show that, large numbers of women from marginalized sections are getting elected to the Councils of Local Bodies but they do not have any political connection. However, nowadays current batches of them are more knowledgeable than earlier ones and major political parties have already come to recognize women’s organizations as a major political force and are taking them seriously for their development.
Chiranjeevulu and Krishna Murty (2011) have described the role of women in the global scenario and at the national level in brief. They have observed that, the last decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of women in Indian society. In 1993, the national government has provided one third political reservations to women in local bodies and implemented it. Later these one third reservations also extended to education and employment sectors. But still there is oppression of women and male dominance continues in the social system in many parts of India. Therefore, it is important to educate women, which will be the key to development. Policies should be framed to bring them into the mainstream of society. Women must be provided with better health care facilities so that they can take up challenges.

There is a need to have women friendly economic policies that can enhance their social and economic position and make them self-reliant. There should be a clear vision to remove the obstacles in the path of women's emancipation from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be made for all round development of each and every section of Indian women and give them their due share.

Vinay Prasad Singh (2008) in his paper ‘Women Empowerment and Development : Global Scenario and Indian Experience’, has focused on the majority of opinions for women empowerment worldwide as one of the eight goals which are included in the Millennium declaration signed at the United Nation Millennium Summit in 2000. In the last few centuries, women have achieved much as far as their socio-economic and political empowerment is concerned, but still a large section of women in the developing countries are far away from the developmental process. Even in the developed countries women are not equally empowered in the political sector. He has given the best example of the USA, despite its more than 200 years of democratic governance it has not been able to elect any woman as its President. But merely electing a President or Prime Minister does not mean women's empowerment. For example, in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, women have been Prime Ministers and Presidents; but this could not deliver an adequate positive impact on women's empowerment. The empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality is one of the eight internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed to alleviate world poverty. Global experience has shown that, the low participation of women in development derails the overall process of development.
Though the women’s movement is very old phenomenon, even in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) United Nations, 1948) declaration, women’s rights are not considered as an integral part of fundamental human rights. But with the ongoing process of globalization women’s empowerment has become the focal agenda of the international system.

In India’s point of view, Dr. Vinay Prasad Singh (2008) has emphasized on the decentralized democratic way of governance through Panchayat Raj Institution in India for women’s empowerment process with special reference to 73rd Constitutional Amendment, December 1992.

Women communities have been backward in socio-economic and political areas for a long time. Since India’s Independence all round empowerment of the women community has been in the main agenda of governance of the successive governments at the Centre as well as States. In due process of implementation of various welfare schemes for the women community, one remarkable initiative is the Panchayati Raj System (PR), which has created a new chapter in the overall development of the country in general and women empowerment in particular. Without empowering rural India we could not even think of ensuring sustainable development and India's emergence as an international power within the next few decades. Rural India is the place where women are the steering wheel of the developmental process. The PR system has provided the direction to the women community to show their strength and ensure participation in the developmental process for bringing the country in the 21st Century it is a must to bring women community into the mainstream of the developmental process. Because of the decentralization of power involved in the PR system, women have started to show their strength and are implementing grass roots projects with excellent success rate and are showing other positive results. PR system exists in rural sector and women representation is very much one-third of the elected lot, therefore, we can tap women’s energy in more articulate manner to ensure sustainable development of the country. With increasing women dominated PR systems it is an experiment which has proved with its one decade experience that it is the perfect system to bring all round development at grass roots level.

According to the Approach Paper of the 11th Five Year Plan, (India Planning Commission, 2006), gender bias is deeply ingrained in our society and is reflected in indicators like sex ratio, literacy level of boys and girls, maternal mortality rates (MMR) etc. We must
emphasize the role of the PR system with fully empowered women community. Without including gender in the mainstreaming of the developmental process, our development would not be complete. The PR system with one-third women representation has the potential to create history but the need of the hour is to provide them all possible co-operation.

Dr. Nishikant Jha, (2008) in his paper ‘Women Empowerment’ (2008), has described the worldwide situation of women’s empowerment and several measures taken by the Indian government for women’s empowerment, such as giving them educational facilities, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

According to Dr. Jha, women’s empowerment has been gaining worldwide recognition and there are efforts to improve and enhance the creativity, ability and contributions of women to the society; improve literacy among women and reduce gender-based inequalities. For the overall development of women, it is necessary to nurture their abilities. Empowerment refers to a greater access to power for the underprivileged or vulnerable segments of the population. After the experiment of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1980s by Muhammad Yunus the concept of women’s empowerment got the momentum. Various countries including India introduced E-models for women’s empowerment as a strategy. Women- led organizations were formed mainly in rural areas of India such as SHGs, micro-credit, Kudumbasree (Kerala) and activities of NGOs which have common focus on poverty reduction and women empowerment. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment activated and accelerated the functioning of these grass-root level organizations. In 2001, the Women and Child Welfare Department of India evolved a comprehensive policy which throws light on the areas such as education, health, nutrition, legal system, institutional mechanisms, resource management, PR system etc. which can enable women in their life. During the pre-industrial economy, women had given importance to their family and household work. The desire of women to establish their identity resulted in separation of home and work for them. During the past 50 years, major changes have taken place in the work and status of women such as abolition of the marriage bar in several jobs and provision of right to maternity leave. Women’s participation in higher education has also significantly increased during this period. But it is still difficult for them to maintain a career, marriage and family simultaneously. Though various empowerment and poverty reduction programmes carried by central and state governments, studies show the level of empowerment of women in the decision making process. For example, in local purchases, schools or hospitals, it is very high. In bank transactions, social activities and
social forum it is moderate. Many case studies on women and development across the globe, report that women’s esteem grows when she begins earning herself. But due to the family structure prevailing in India, decision making problem is sociological. Still, education, employment and income together play a complementary role in empowerment of women.

According to the United Nations Millenium Development Goals Report (2009), “Women constitute half the world’s population, perform 2/3rd of the world's work but receive only one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.” The dominance of male values and family obligation are the biggest obstacles to recruiting and promoting women in management positions. Nowadays, there is a growing awareness and mounting evidence that gender equality boosts enterprise productivity, spurs economic growth and improves the welfare of families.

Azad (2008) in his analysis, ‘Empowerment of Women in Post-Independence Era,’ throws light on the situation of women’s empowerment in India. Almost everywhere women have been dominated by the males. Though the Constitution of India pledges equality of status, opportunities and dignity to men and women on an equal footing, the widening gaps between men and women indicate that the empowerment of women is still a far try; because still women are being subjected to deprivation, humiliation and brutality. They have been marginalized in both, the socio-economic sphere and the political mainstream. According to Azad, the role of SHGs is very important for empowerment of women, because it involves equality, participation, decision making process and access to opportunity.

Political empowerment of women is still a dream. Basically PRIs were established for decentralization of power down to the village level and for providing an effective instrument of rural development. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Bill (1989) made provision of reservation of 1/3rd seats for women at all the three tiers to increase the women's participation. However, these institutions failed to achieve the desired result due to other administrative, financial and political problems. The success of political empowerment of women will depend on organizational and policy changes for improvement of PRIs, electoral reform, drive for political education, importance of gender equality and justice.

In spite of the tremendous efforts taken during plan periods; India ranks 98th in nation-wide Gender related Development Index (GDI). This position will be improved only when women themselves develop self-confidence, positive self-image and knowledge of human values, rights and so this would enable them to take part in decision making and have access to
information and resources. Lastly, Azad suggests four processes that is (1) Access, (2) Conscientisation, (3) participation, and (4) decision making, through which empowerment of women can be possible.

Akhtar (2008) in his paper ‘Empowerment of Women in India: Issues and Challenges’, has thrown light on several aspects of women’s empowerment such as political, economic, capacity building, human resource development etc. According to him, a holistic approach is needed for women’s development. Poor women and tribal in particular deserve special attention.

The empowerment of women is an important issue in India as well as in the world. It is very much essential for societal, national and global development, since it will enhance the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. It is recognized throughout the world that grass roots women’s groups are redefining governance and development. But still women of India are facing many problems such as illiteracy, poverty, unhealthy living conditions, backwardness, criminalization, corruption, male dominance in most of the fields. In spite of so many laws, majority of women are deprived of their rights and benefits. They are insecure and crimes against women in various fields are increasing day by day.

The economic empowerment of women is very important for their development. Various plans and policies would be successful only when women receive economic powers. There should be targeted and specific programmes and measures to improve the condition of women in respect of issues where women are lagging behind the men and losing human rights. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) has admitted that there is a wide gap between various goals set in the constitution, legislation, plans and policies on the one hand and the real situation of the status of women in India on the other.

To bring the holistic approach for women’s development in future, combination of various programmes and efforts in different sectors of the government and their integration in appropriate manner to cover various services and facilities required by women is essential.

The World Development Report (2000) states that, to eradicate poverty not only is economic development required but also actions to expand poor people's opportunities, empowerment and increase their securities. There should be a revolution of consciousness in the minds of women in the way they think about themselves. They must realize that they have constitutional rights to equality, economic security, health care, access to education and
employment opportunities. The various conferences held worldwide such as the Human Rights Conference in Vienna, Earth Summit in Rio, The Beijing Conference etc. were milestone events in terms of advancing our understanding of the important role of women in development and focusing on the issues concerning the role of women in the society and nation-building.

Ahmad (2008) in his review on ‘Gender Inequality and Women Empowerment’, states that India shows bigger gender gap as compared to developed countries where the gap is minimum and it may be ignored.

In his review he says that, women empowerment means not only greater external control but also growing inner capability as greater self-confidence and inner transformation of one's consciousness that enable one to overcome external barriers to access resources and change the traditional ideology for social, economic and political development of women. In India, the socio-cultural structure of the society decides women's all round development. Therefore, economic empowerment of women is necessary to achieve gender equality in all sectors.

There is a need for healthy, educated, empowered women for the overall development of the country. The study indicates that the gender inequality in literacy among women has widened. Male dominance is prevailing in every sector, so women are deprived of the crucial needs of life. The comparison of women’s status in India with SAARC countries shows that India ranks third with respect to different amenities provided to women. Empowerment is clearly concerned with power and who holds the real power depends not only on economic and political structure but also on social structure. The world economic profile shows that women represent 50 percent of the population, make up 30 percent of the official labour force, and utilize 60 percent of all working hours, but receive 10 percent of world income and own less than 1 percent of the world property.

Lastly Prof. Ahmad states that, there are some hidden factors such as undervaluation of women's work, overburden of work, stress and responsibility of women that need to be qualified and should receive special consideration to increase the gender equality. There is need to pay attention to the interest of women to achieve the goal of gender equality.

Sanyal, (2008) in the paper Inequalities among the Rural-Urban Females: Some Reflections on Women Empowerment in Indian Economy’, has focused on the wide gap of inequalities between rural and urban females. There is a vast difference among rural-urban females with
respect to their education, their participation rates in the workforce and inequalities in their social status. She says that the basic aim of sustainable economic development would be to encompass between education, higher standard of health and nutrition, cleaner environment, equality of opportunities, individual freedom and a richer cultural life.

In our patriarchal society, it is men who operate the power and women often act as their agents. So, for women’s empowerment education is the basic parameter. Literacy empowers women by building up their confidence and enables them to share their views with others and take decisions. They can even participate in economic and political programmes. So Dr. Sanyal has given emphasis on spreading of educational level at least up to secondary level. The study shows the high rate of inequalities among the rural-urban females concerning education. Government has failed to make primary education compulsory. Uneducated rural parents, especially mothers, generally engage their daughters in household jobs or use their girl children to look after their younger ones. Apart from these reasons, majority of the schools, colleges, institutions have been established in urban areas which are beyond the reach of rural women. Besides this, the women participation rate is also falling and it is becoming an obstacle for achievement of sustainable development of the Indian economy. Interestingly, participation rates of urban females stand far behind those of rural females. This is because urban females are unwilling to accept any kind of jobs available to them like rural females and they give importance to their social status, traditions of their in-laws’ house and their husband’s social status and earning power. But where economic status is concerned rural females are far behind urban female workers and especially in rural areas there is no sound correlation existing between literacy rate and female workers’ job.

Lastly Sanyal has suggested that, for successful functioning of women’s empowerment, the combined action by the Government, media and male section of society could reduce the inequalities between rural-urban females.

Thakur (2008) in his paper, ‘Need of Women Empowerment in India’ observed that development processes have increased the male dominance over women and increased their deprivation. Therefore, there is a need of women empowerment. Women perform many activities at home and outside, but their economic value goes unnoticed and unrecognized. Nowadays globally, there has been acceptance of a role for women outside the household. So, for economic empowerment of women, work with remuneration is becoming very important.
The basic belief in the cultures of many societies influences the upbringing of girls and their exposure to education, skills and work outside the home. They do not expect the women to work and earn. The analysis of the Human Development Report, (1995) shows that men's work in the market place is the result of efforts taken by women for looking after their children and household work. So, it is possible that women would emerge as major bread winners or equal bread winners in most societies, since they work longer hours than men. If national statistics fully reflect the invisible contribution of women, it will become impossible for policy makers to ignore them in national decisions. During the last 50 years, the scope of women’s careers has expanded. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's development process.

Gainful employment of women is identified as a major entry point in promoting their economic conditions. Nowadays, women are entering the fields of public service, industry and business and becoming successful. In the Indian labour force the role of women and their contribution to the national economy is very important. Especially in the rural unorganized sector women are working in the occupations such as cattle rearing, sowing, harvesting, weaving, transplanting and handloom producing handicrafts etc. as low paid wage earners or unpaid family workers. In urban areas they are working as small traders, producing and selling various types of goods such as fruits, vegetables, groceries, flowers, or working as domestic help. In addition to this work they are also busy doing 7 to 10 hours of household duties. But in the service sector women workforce is very poor compared to the total employable population of women. Since women are the important component of national human resources, for the development of this resource adequate education facilities as well as free education, hostel facilities, proper diet and health care etc. should be provided. Strategies should be made for women’s empowerment focusing on their education, health, social justice, social status etc.

Ahmad (2008) in his paper 'Empowerment of Women through Employment - An Overview’ stated that, without gainful employment women's empowerment is meaningless. The role played by women is never valued in an economic sense. It is the economic empowerment which is of utmost importance towards women’s empowerment in urban as well as rural areas. Realizing this, various policies and programmes have been launched by the Government of India to empower and uplift the women, as a part of its welfare schemes. If
women are able to contribute a substantial proportion to the total family earnings then they stand a better chance to be empowered than others.

Dr. Ahmad has also given emphasis on gender biasness prevailing across the occupations. Instead of taking women's contribution for granted, it should be valued in the economic sense and there should be social and economic security for them. To tap the full potential of women power in the context of development, it is important to enhance her level of gainful employment, improve income position and independent decision making power.

2.3 EMPOWEMENT OF RURAL AND TRIBAL WOMEN

The book written by Bhowmik (2005), *Status and Empowerment of Tribal Women in Tripura* analyses the socio-economic status of tribal women of Tripura and attempts to answer the multifarious facts and the obstacles that come in the way of their empowerment. The author states that, though the tribal women's participation in almost all the fields of life is equal, their positions and authorities are limited. This discrimination is more acute in the remotest rural areas as the urban tribal women have been able to overcome both their backwardness and also rural disadvantages. According to the author, it was due to some unbalanced and incomprehensive work programmes which were unable to reach grass root level needy people.

Jayesh Talati & Venkatakrishnan (2001) in their article ‘Women’s Empowerment in Jabua District, M.P.’, explain the process of women's empowerment in Jhabua district in Madhya Pradesh. This is a tribal area where the women's literacy rate is very low, infant mortality rate is high, boys get priority over girls for food, medicines etc. There are various other problems like malnutrition, sexual exploitation, violence and other social evils. Women are not allowed to participate in economic and social activities. Women need to be given better facilities and better access to education, economic activities, and better health in this area.

To improve the conditions in the area and stop the evil activities, the administration of Jhabua district started forming groups of women and encouraged them to save money for their various needs. They started various income generation activities in the area. An organization called World Food Programme offered to start a project for production of micronutrient fortified blended food. There was an assured market for this as this food was purchased for the beneficiaries of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The complementary food provided scope for economic growth. Women's groups formed in the villages helped to
create self-confidence amongst women, they could communicate with each other, discuss about their problems. In order to empower women, a core women’s group was formed which was registered as a co-operative society limited. It was named as

‘The Amrut Mahila Audhyogik Co-operative Society limited.’ The members of the group were properly trained for various organizational activities and were helped in various ways by the voluntary organizations. Women were motivated to take decisions on various social and economic issues; and they also learned to communicate and deal with the outside world.

This process of empowerment has led to a number of changes in the village. There is employment for women, their income is appreciated, women have become confident, and are willing to develop; they are now self-reliant; they have attained security and are independent. But this progress needs to be checked and evaluated regularly. The tribal people, especially women, should be given strong support in such activities; so that they keep on progressing and develop themselves and their society as a whole. Government should form fair policies and try to bring out empowerment of women on a large scale in tribal areas.

The author Sudhindra (2002) talks about the Devadasis reformation into Self Help Groups. Various organizations have worked to eradicate the Devadasi system and form Self Help Groups of such women in tribal areas. Mahila Abhivruddhi Mattu Samrakshana Saanstha (MASS) is one such organization that works to rehabilitate the Devadasis. Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA), a Bangalore based voluntary organization was working amongst the villagers to eradicate this practice. In December 1994, MYRADA began a revolution.

A large number of Devadasis came to the Yellamma temple and wore bangles. This was in contrast to the rituals of Devadasis. This was when the reformation movement started. Many of these thousands of women are now invited to various districts to share their experiences and create awareness about this movement. The volunteers of MASS visited places like fairs and festivals where a girl is dedicated to goddess Yellamma; to create awareness and stop these evils. The organization adopted various ways like street shows, folk songs, hand bills, loudspeaker announcements to convince the people of the ill-effects of this system. The volunteers of MASS also visited homes of the people; they cleaned the matted hair which was a symbol of Devadasis. This revolution was successful to a large extent. To support the women economically, MASS organized these women into Self Help Groups and made them
capable enough to face challenges and earn their own living. A rehabilitation programme has been started by the Karnataka State Women’s Development Corporation, where Devadasis are encouraged to participate in income generation activities. Legal advisory centers are set up to look after the legal aspects. Devadasis are being married to eligible persons. By the joint efforts of various organizations, more than 100 SHGs are formed in Belgaum district alone. The members are trained in various activities and are helped to start their own business, earn money and improve their life.

MASS has achieved great success in the eradication of the system of Devadasi in various areas. It has helped to empower women through its activities and SHGs. MASS is also working on its new strategies and works to provide a secured life to the reformed Devadasis.

B. Appa Rao and Susantha Kumar Barik (2011) in their article ‘women’s empowerment through SHGs in Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh’ discussed the case of tribal women SHGs in Visakhapatnam district. In recent times, micro finance is emerging as an important tool for alleviating poverty through social and economic empowerment of the poor, focusing on empowerment of women. Across the Andhra Pradesh state there are more than 4.8 million women who are mobilized into SHGs. Studying the case of tribal women SHGs in Visakhapatnam district they found that micro credit through SHG is effectively taking care of the present need and requirement of the people in this area. The unreached and excluded regions are given focus and within the Mandals, the poorest of poor households have access to financial support for business promotion and wellbeing. Through micro credit their level of household income is also increasing and micro credit intervention has provided a platform and encouragement to participate in public meetings, contest in elections and exhibit leadership. Therefore, the overall contribution is remarkable and is leading to the empowerment of tribal women.

Rama Rao (2011) has studied the empowerment of women through SHGs in the Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. He has analyzed the income, expenditure and repayment capacity of the SHG members. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken up the theme of women empowerment as one of the strategies to tackle socio-economic poverty. The State Government is consciously making an effort to assist SHGs by providing Revolving Funds under various programmes. Andhra Pradesh alone has about half of the SHGs organized in the country. The SHGs are also popularly called Development of Women
and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) groups, through which women’s groups were assisted initially. SHGs not only mobilize micro finance and provide micro credit to the needing members but also provide self-employment training, awareness programme, promote the leadership qualities and confident life among their members. SHGs are tools to promote rural savings and gainful employment. Through these women members are becoming economically independent and their contribution to household income is also increased.

This study of Vizianagaram district showed that, after joining the SHGs, incomes of women have increased and therefore their monthly household expenditure also has been increased considerably. So, the incremental income not only enhances the expenditure of the family but also promotes savings though savings are increasing at a slow rate. SHGs can easily approach the banks and other institutions to get loans with reasonable interest rate. Most of the members i.e. 73 percent promptly repay their loan to the banks in time.

Nowadays, many SHGs are starting small business, cottage industries, food processing units etc. So the conclusion is that, the economic viability at SHGs is quite successful. SHGs in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh are very successful and develop women in all the areas like economic, social, political and cultural.

Tarakumari and Masenamma (2011) have studied the area of Bheemunipatnam to analyze the socio-economic conditions of women and the impact of SHGs on empowerment of rural women. India has been mainly a rural country as about 78 percent of its population lives in villages. The main object of rural development is education to all women, men and children. The most potential tool against human deprivation is building human capital among the deprived through sustainable development. After the introduction of SHGs, micro finance through SHGs has become a leader for the poor to bring them up not only economically but also socially, mentally and attitudinally.

According to the study, the highest percentage of women members is found in the age group of 25-30 years. The literacy rate is also very low. The nuclear families are more predominant in the study area. A majority of the respondents were living in their own pucca houses. The members of the SHGs are earning more income. Hence, supplementing the family income seems to be a crucial factor to join the SHGs, which argue well for the development of the SHG programme. The impact of SHGs on empowerment of rural women in the study area is
quite impressive. The Government is planning to bring all the rural poor women under SHGs in the next 4 to 5 years.

Roy & Tiwari (2008) in their paper ‘Economic Empowerment of Farm Women through Vermitechnology – A Case Study of Tribal Areas’, have suggested bio-technology- oriented rural programme i.e. vermin technology as an important bio tool to strengthen tribal women’s economic power. Women in the rural parts of the country constitute the major workforce in agriculture and allied sectors. Despite their immense contribution, their efforts are generally underestimated.

According to the survey and earlier reports tribal women sustain their economy by performing various activities like collection and selling of minor forest produce, fuel wood and in animal husbandry with an average monthly earning of about Rs. 250 to 300. Globally, vermicomposting is the demand of the day to minimize the use of chemicals either in form of pesticides or fertilizer in agriculture. In vermicomposting, bio-degradable waste is converted into nutrient rich organic manure which is an eco-friendly and low cost input. It does not require sophisticated laboratory or industrial equipment and can provide employment to youth and women.

The study of Roy and Tiwari shows that, implementation of vermin technology programme among tribal women gradually empowers them economically. They can engage in this programme while continuing their routine work. Vermi technology programme will provide them support not only in the short term but also in the long term. So the findings of this study would help the Government and policy makers to come out with suitable strategies to uplift or empower the tribal women.

Dr. B. Suguna (2006) carried out a research on the empowerment of rural women through self-help groups, in which she stated that a self-help group is a small economically homogeneous and affinity group of rural poor which is voluntarily ready to contribute to a common fund to be lent to its members as per group decision, which works for group solidarity, self and group awareness, social and economic empowerment in the way of democratic functioning. The principle behind the concept of SHG is ‘All for All.’ It is for the people by the people and of the people. SHG has had a focus on the weaker sections, particularly women, for their social defense, which generates confidence, self-scrutiny and self-reliance in them. The empowerment of women through SHGs would lead to benefit not
only to the individual woman and women’s groups but also for the families and community as a whole through collective action for development.

The empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, greater decision making power and control and transformative action.

As Dr. Suguna also stated, as women’s economic status improved, their social mobility increased as also their team spirit, improved nutritional and health status, improved sanitary conditions, improved adoption of family planning, improved interaction with governmental officials, improved habit of newspaper reading, improved decision making capacity, achieved equality in the family, their food habits, dress pattern changed, education of children improved. They become more self-confident, and age at marriage was raised.

The author found some obstacles in the sustainability of SHGs i.e. irregular group meetings, irregularity in saving, large loans only to a few members, record keeping, re-payment of bank loan installments by raising loans from other sources. The author has also given the strategies for the sustainability of the SHG movement, and stated that its further development depends more on how far women are aware of their plight and avail the opportunities targeted for their benefit. Lastly, she has given suggestions for the improvement of SHGs. Removal of illiteracy, developing managerial and leadership skills, preparing an annual plan, programmes to change the patriarchal system and involvement in decision making, understanding legislation etc. are some suggestions made by the author.

In the paper ‘SHGs for Poverty Alleviation in Pondicherry’, the authors V. Nirmala, Bhat, K. Sham and P. Bhubaneswar (2004) have examined the determinants of earnings of rural women under SHG scheme in Pondicherry. 134 SHG respondents were randomly selected from the area under study, during March 2002. Averages, percentages, correlation, regression and Garret ranking technique were used to study the respondents. It was observed that most of the respondents were involved in non-farm activities and were, hence, receiving less remuneration for their work. It was observed that nature of occupation, higher asset possession and larger credit amount reduced monthly earnings. Due to the financial support provided, husband's higher income raised their earnings. The study also reveals that SHGs have helped in increasing participation in social service and organized action, knowledge of new skills and training, as also, better access to credit facilities. There were observed some problems like loans not received on time, difficulty in getting raw materials and labour and
marketing problems. It has, thus, been concluded that financial assistance alone does not help the respondents. They have to be provided with the necessary training, institutional support and information regarding the latest available technology. They also have to be encouraged to take up more activities which provide better remuneration. For poverty alleviation and empowerment of rural women, it is necessary to effectively implement the scheme in the SHGs.

In the paper entitled Self-Help Groups and Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women Sahu, (2011) has analyzed the achievements, prospects and challenges of microfinance and SHGs of tribal women in a tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district of Orissa.

According to the author, the SHGs are playing a vital role in the development of rural credit system and empowerment of tribal rural women. As the author observed, the SHGs are facing a lot of difficulties: The interference of male and local leaders is really harsh to the tribal women working in the WSHGs (Women SHGs). Inadequate leadership, lack of operation rules, inadequate bank and credit linkage are the main causes of unsatisfactory performance of tribal WSHGs in Mayurbhanj. The study reveals that, tribal women SHGs are performing better in Mayurbhanj district in comparison to non-tribal WSHGs and they build mutual trust and confidence between bankers and the rural poor. The role of NGOs in promoting tribal WSHGs in different stages is quite satisfactory. By linking with banks they encourage banking activities and evolve supplementary credit strategies for meeting the credit needs of the tribal women.

2.4 SELF HELP GROUPS AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

The article ‘Women Empowerment through Self-Help-Groups, A case study’ by Sahu and Das, (2007) attempts to analyse the role and of SHGs in promoting women's empowerment in the Guajarati district of Orissa.

The study reveals that, SHGs had set a new agenda for financial intermediation by banks in the form of micro-credit. By the formation of SHGs, credit is demanded for various purposes such as domestic, health, festivals, repayment of old debts, investment etc. Similarly, different economic activities like collection, processing and marketing of minor forest products, individual business, goatery, dairy etc. are undertaken by the SHG members after joining the group. Habits of savings, economic independence, self-confidence, social cohesion, asset ownership, freedom from debt, additional employment etc. benefits are
derived by SHG members. Thus, SHGs have served the cause of women's empowerment, social solidarity and socio-economic betterment of the poor for their consolidation. The authors have made the following suggestions:

a. Literacy and numeric training is essential to benefit from the micro-credit schemes.

b. Training in legal literacy, rights and gender awareness are important for the empowerment of women.

c. The members of SHGs should be more active, enthusiastic and dynamic to mobilize their savings by group actions.

d. The office-bearers should be given some honorarium.

e. The bank should advance adequate credit to the SHGs according to their needs.

f. Uniformity should be maintained in formation and extension of financial assistance to them by banks in all blocks.

g. Marketing facilities should be provided.

h. Periodical exhibitions at block level may be organized.

i. Meetings and seminars may be organized to develop their group strength by interaction.

j. Skill training, designing products, providing new technology and access to markets should be provided by the district administration, professional bodies and NGOs.

k. Diversified micro finance sector will make the real contribution to women empowerment.

Anand (2002) in her discussion paper throws light on 'Self-Help-Groups in Empowering Women.' It is a case study of selected SHGs and NHGs in Kerala. Empowerment of women working in SHGs was assessed by three indicators – namely, Economic (savings, income, increase in assets, repayment rates and skill development), Social (increase in self – confidence, change in attitude to women's role, improvement in communication skills and in social outlook) and Political / Legal (increase in participation in political process, removal of legal discrimination against women).

In economic empowerment the specific issues examined were, the Income Generating Activities (IGAs) taken up by the members of the groups and the monthly returns from them, their contribution to the monthly family incomes, their repayment behavior and changes in their physical assets and amenities after joining the group.
In political and legal empowerment area the author found a positive response towards women entering politics. When asked about the desirability of women entering politics and about the rationale of their choice of a woman as Panchayat president many of them remarked that they could approach a lady Panchayat president more easily and represent to her their woes and problems.

Social empowerment is a gradual process, which would take place only when the functioning of the group becomes sustainable. According to the author, the extent of empowerment varies with the age of the group. Members in older groups showed a higher degree of social and psychological empowerment than their counterparts in infant groups.

The most important aspect of empowerment, change in attitude towards a patriarchal society, was also examined. Their attitude towards gender equity and equality was not found to have been as impressive as it was in the other aspects.

According to the author, SHGs working in backwards areas can be called a take off stage and it has been successful. The author also found a gradual shift in women's perception about the roles of their daughters and it is a clear indication of their changing attitude.

It has been clearly established that delivering credit alone may not produce the desired impact. The supporting services and structures through which credit is delivered, ranging from group formation and training to awareness-raising and a wide range of other supporting measures are critical to make the impact of group activity strong and sustainable.

In ‘Women Empowerment through Self Help Groups – A study on Management of Women Micro Enterprises in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh’, Ramachandrudu & Appa Rao (2011), have studied the management aspect of women SHGs in the three north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Though rural women constitute half of the population, their participation in the labour force is very low as compared to males. The government is adopting policies to bring these eligible women into productive employment. Andhra Pradesh stood first among all the states in women empowerment programmes. One of the programmes is DWCRA programme which was introduced in early 1980's in Andhra Pradesh. The main objective of the programme was to provide all the support for a collective action of the women’s groups towards achieving sustainable livelihood and promoting the saving habit. Because of encouraging rural
environment supported by the government and NGOs, rural women have emerged as Self Help Groups and as an important micro-finance movement.

Ramchandrudu and Appa Rao have thrown light on the progress of SHGs and micro-finance in particular. They said the linkage of SHGs and Banks in Andhra Pradesh was the main reason for their success. As regards the type of rural micro enterprises, petty business constitute about 35 percent, dairies 22 percent and Kirana shops 15 percent of the micro enterprises. On an average 67 percent of the enterprises have employed three workers. The study shows that micro enterprises have the potential to absorb rural surplus labour. About 43 percent of the new micro enterprises are still using traditional methods of production and management in their enterprises while only 20 percent are using modern technology. During the last five years, in these three districts income increased by 141 percent due to micro enterprises.

P. Subba Rao, B. Siva Rama Krishna and T.V. Ramana (2011) in their paper highlighted the transformation of rural women through SHGs and public initiatives. They said that the self-help movement has brought a tremendous change in the socio-economic conditions of poor rural women. It introduced the concept of thrift and saving. They described the empowerment as a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalized women and disadvantaged and poorer sections of the society. The SHG movement has made enormous contribution in the empowerment of the rural women because of which they can improve their status both economically and socially.

This paper also talked about the origin and working of the women SHGs in Andhra Pradesh and initiatives taken by the Central and State Governments towards the empowerment of women. SHGs have led to an expansion in the economic spaces of members. The economic advancement of women leads to their empowerment; improves their standard of living and self-esteem. But the use of loans taken from the banks under the bank linkage programme, only for unproductive purposes like household consumption, consequently leads to them falling into the debt trap. So, this should be corrected by providing huge amount of credit to the groups so that interested women can undertake small business pursuits. Despite some defects in the delivery mechanism, empowerment of poor women through SHGs has been a successful experience. Some policy measures suggested are relaxation in bank rules for SHGs, so that borrowing becomes easy, arrangement of sufficient revolving funds by
Government to fulfill the needs of the poorer sections, policy makers should see that the MFIs function without any defects and deliver micro-credit at affordable rate.

Lastly, it is the responsibility of the people to respond, react proactively and give cooperation to make the government schemes workable.

P. Usha and S. Pulla Rao (2011) have studied the Role of SHGs in Meeting Credit, Needs of the Poor Women in Srikakulam district. On the basis of his study they say that members of the SHGs are capable of saving and repaying the loans they have taken from the group fund and bank linkages. The concept of SHG has got significant success in empowering poor women. These institutions have developed a credit delivery model that helps to attain the objectives of economic planning namely economic and social development of women and eventually women empowerment. SHGs and bank linkage programme aims at banking with those who were considered not bankable so far.

The study shows that a major proportion of group credit was used for unproductive yet necessary household consumption expenditure. In the absence of SHGs poor women had to rely on non-institutional sources. So the SHG movement is successful to a great extent in reliving the poor women from the grip of money lenders. Proper repayment of group credit enables the group to have bank linkage. The members are insisting more on prompt payment of interest than on the principal amount. The data shows that poor women not only have saving potential but are also credit worthy if organized into groups. Poor rural women, who cannot dream of access to institutional credit, have become credit worthy by enrolling as members in the SHGs and thus an alternate development paradigm has emerged.

Chitratalapudi and Yanaki Ramadu (2011) have studied the regional spread of SHGs and how the SHG- bank linkages are helping the SHGs. According to them, the SHGs’ formation is mainly for the purpose of pooling resources, gathering information, offering mutual support, services and tackling common problems and through this starting the empowerment of their members. But the study shows that the concept of SHG has not spread uniformly over all the states in India. It is mainly spread in southern and eastern states and the rest of the country has minimum presence of SHGs. The status of illiterate women in the household and society can be the main reason behind it. The southern and eastern regions have the largest number of active SHGs with Bank Linkages and they have been generating more savings per SHG. So,
mostly these SHGs are getting more loans from all the banking institutions and are able to repay the loan amount.

D. Sujatha (2011) had taken up the case of Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh to study women empowerment through SHGs. She narrated the support to the SHGs given by various governmental agencies and how these agencies are bringing out women empowerment through their functioning.

She states that, the Indian Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. In recent years, determining the status of women empowerment is recognized as a very important issue. Empowering women puts the spotlight on education and employment which are essential elements for sustainable development. Andhra Pradesh has used development of self-help groups extensively as a primary tool of poverty alleviation and empowerment. The SHGs are based on the concept of member’s involvement and participation in bringing about change in their socio-economic status. The human development approach cannot be limited to just building relevant indicators and indices. It has to reflect and address the social concerns and the processes that underlie the various outcomes.

Naidu & Ramappa (2011) studied the impact of SHGs and micro finance institutions in employment and income generation in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. Though women hold a major share in the labour force, their role in employment generation and income oriented activities is hindered by many socio-economic constraints. But nowadays empowerment of women has been recognized as a central issue in elevating the status of women. Self-help groups are considered as one of the most significant tools to adopt participatory approach for the economic empowerment of women. In SHG the micro credit is disbursed to rural women for making them enterprising women and encouraging them to enter entrepreneurial activities.

The study of Anantpur district showed that, by joining the SHG the women have improved their saving capacity. It has brought some positive change in socio-political, employment and economic development of poor women. There is increased access of credit to women which has enabled them to undertake various economic activities like dairy, horticulture, livestock etc. This increased income was spent on the health and education needs of their children. The Government policy makers, bankers at the ground level, should ensure that the women
members become more self-dependent and achieve the implied objectives of SHG programmes.

Bhoi & Yoginder Singh (2011) evaluated the impact of SHGs in empowering women in district Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. Now women empowerment has become a global phenomenon and SHGs have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in rural areas. It has made women understand their potentials, rights and responsibilities in different activities and as citizens in the country. After joining SHG the level of employment increased and so did the income. The increased income has helped to supplement the incomes to reduce the level of poverty to a great extent in several families. Development of savings habit, better status, increased income, decision making power, access to larger quantum of resources are some of the major benefits received by the SHG members. SHG serves as a democratic tool for grass root development of women. It breaks the vicious cycle of debts.

To make the SHGs more effective, the members should be imparted regular training. It should be made compulsory to attend the group meetings. SHGs can be effectively used to curb many social evils such as child labour, dowry system etc. So, SHG is an effective agent of change and serves as a base for the platform for women empowerment.

Malathilatha (2011) studied the performance and economic activities of SHGs in empowering the rural women in Kamalapur village in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. Empowerment is one of the key factors in determining the success of development in the status and position of women in the society. When a woman contributes financially and professionally, the nation's condition is automatically stable and balanced.

The study showed that, the women of this village developed not only self-confidence but also courage to stand in the society. There is awareness among the women folk of SHGs in this village about the proper usage of savings and the government granted amount. The activities to increase education among the children of the poor are to be taken up. But sometimes they use the grant for non-productive purposes which results in non-payment of the loan in the stipulated period and then the entire SHG is in trouble and no grants are given by the banks or government. Therefore, members should use the grants for productive purposes.

Krishna Murthy & Naidu (2011) studied the level of awareness and perception of the SHG members with the help of some social and economic variables, in Visakhapatnam district in
Andhra Pradesh. The basic objective of any SHG is to inculcate the habit of savings and to provide the necessary financial assistance and develop the habit of prompt repayment.

The study in Visakhapatnam district shows that, the SHG members got a moderate level of awareness on different social and economic issues. After joining the SHGs there is improvement at a moderate level in the status of the SHG members in the family and the society. The rate of awareness is relatively better in these selected villages, which are nearer to urban centers. They are more aware than the average women in the society.

Dasgupta (2001) has explained that the government is required to create an environment where genuine NGOs can perform effectively as SHPIs and banks can conduct business with SHGs on their own. According to the author, finance is an important element in economic growth and development. Various financial institutions provide financial services to the needy. But these institutions are not interested in providing facilities to the rural and backward population of the country. They find it risky to invest in rural and backward areas due to reasons like lack of infrastructure, high credit risks and high cost of transaction of investment. Hence, the rural population depends on the informal and local money lenders. Rural people have to face problems of exploitation when they borrow from money lenders. Considering all these conditions the RBI advised the banks that lending to SHGs should be considered as an additional segment under the priority sector. Since then SHGs became an important component of financial services. These SHGs provide credit facilities to their members, and encourage the members to save money and generate funds. It becomes easier for the members to take loans from SHGs and make repayments, as the interest rates are low. The author mentions that the NGOs and the Self Help Promoting Institutions (SHPIs) play an important role in the success of SHGs. various informal groups and financial service providers have helped the rural poor in their development, women have been empowered as they are encouraged to earn their own income and improve their life. But the government agencies have not been involved in such activities as needed. According to the author, government provides various incentives, tax benefits and rewards or punishments to the banks. It should promote the working of NGOs and SHPIs and support them to help the SHGs and rural poor. The government should provide subsidies for various purposes like infrastructure, training the poor people to carry on various business activities etc. The government should ensure that the credit facilities are provided to the poor people on a continuous basis as per their requirements. This will help them to carry on business activities
properly and generate funds through savings. With all these financial services provided by NGOs and banks etc. and the government support, women empowerment and rural development would become easier.

Namboodri and Shiyani (2001) conducted a study to find out the basic features and financial operations of SHGs promoted by both SHPI & NGOs served by the Panchmahal Vadodara Grameen Bank (PVGB). A sample of five branches of PVGB was selected, out of these three were in Dahod District and two were in Panchmahal district in Gujarat. It describes the basic features and financial operations of SHGs. The study examines the potential role of SHGs in terms of reach, linkage with banks for saving and credit for weaker sections of the rural households. Firstly, the authors examine the basic features of SHGs promoted by NGOs and banks and a typical model of SHGs promoted by NGOs and banks.

The authors have given a brief account of the characteristics, coverage and financial deepening of SHGs formed by Panchmahal Vadodara Grameen Bank (PVGB) in Gujarat as a Self-Help-Promoting Institution (SHPI) as well as those promoted by the NGOs and finally they have tried to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of SHGs in both micro saving and micro credit.

The authors found that the repayment performance of the SHGs promoted by the SHPI was superior to that of NGOs, and the SHGs that were promoted by NGOs had a better saving performance compared to that of SHPI, in terms of credit saving ratio. The authors also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of SHGs. In the concluding part the authors say, the system evolved through the SHGs for collective savings, group consumption credit, integrating social and economic goals, forming small groups has the potential not only for financial deepening in the rural areas but also for the empowerment of women in particular.

Satish (2001) has described the need and importance of SHGs. He also discusses how these SHGs are formed, who are the people forming these groups and for what purpose these groups are formed. SHGs are a group of people having similar motives and similar needs. Members of such groups earn money by undertaking various activities. These groups get financial help from various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for various activities. Members of such groups save the money earned by them and use such funds for the various needs of the members, such as business purposes, repayment of previous loans etc.
SHGs provide a simple and easier way of financing services to their members. According to the author, such groups existed in India since ancient times. People formed their own groups and carried on some activities together to earn their income, without the intervention of any third party like NGOs.

This study was undertaken in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The process of SHGs formation should be systematic, whether it is formed by banks or NGOs. Members of SHGs involved in various productive activities make best possible use of available resources and earn from it. Formation of SHGs by NGOs or bankers and helping them has been a successful process in India, If skills of the members are utilized properly then even uneducated people also get a chance to earn their own livelihood in a proper manner. The author also says that, this process of forming SHGs and improving the life of the poor should be carried out at the remotest places in India and even those people should be given a fair chance to improve their life. At the same time the study concluded that the NGOs were most suited for forming and nurturing the SHGs.

Madheshwaran and Dharmadhikari (2001) talked about empowerment of women by forming SHGs in rural areas. The authors examine various factors of SHGs and micro-credit schemes on the basis of a survey conducted in the villages of Pune district in Maharashtra, in 1999. Maharashtra Rural Credit Project was implemented in these villages.

The study revealed that this project was successful in these villages to some extent due to various combinations of factors such as SHGs linkage with banks, easy availability of micro-credit, and simple ways of obtaining credit and low rate of interests, and participation of NGOs.

The study concluded that micro-credit should be used to meet the current demands of the rural women and this would lead to a gradual improvement in the quality of their life and would enable them to identify activities for economic betterment.

Krishna (2008) in her paper, ‘Women Power through Self Help Groups’ has highlighted the role of SHGs for women empowerment and the role of microfinance and NGOs in this connection.

SHGs are gaining tremendous popularity in rural areas. Lending to SHGs is a recent concept of rural lending and rural development. In 1992, NABARD launched pilot projects of SHGs-
Banks linkage, which was a great innovation and the SHGs in India have grown since then. In southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala several banks their rural branches and co-operative banks are ready to extend linkage facilities to borrowers through SHGs. Women and poor people play an important role in rural areas. NGOs gain importance for organizing these women in the villages as a new workforce. They could help to minimize the transaction cost of lending. Further, Dr. Krishna states that, the new relations between borrowing groups should not be only for giving loans but for promoting mutual help and mutual lending in between the members themselves. Banking is strengthened as effective social institutions provide micro credit to the SHGs. Cases of exclusive women SHGs show that women are not only better savers but also better planners. Even if the Government and financial institutions play important role, it is local participation and initiative which will make micro credit a useful concept.

In the article of Santharam, S. (2008), the author has discussed the relationship between Anganwadi workers/sevikas and SHGs. During the initial phase (1992-98) of the SHG bank linkage programme, NGOs were mainly used as self-promoting institutions (SHPIs). During the second phase of SHG-bank linkage programme, NABARD encouraged banks, particularly RBIs and Co-operative banks to take up the role of SHPIs. It also encouraged banks to innovate in promotion of SHG’s other modes. One such innovation was using Anganwadi Workers (AWs) as promoters of SHGs by the Chandrapur District Central Co-operative Bank (CDCCB) Ltd. in Maharashtra.

The success of microfinance in Chandrapur district can be attributed primarily to the social intermediation carried out by NGOs/AWs. The poor require the support of those whom they can trust; at least during the initial stage of development they need support, in order to take crucial decisions like mobilizing savings, taking loans from banks and others. According to Santharam (2008), the service of Anganwadis has proved to be critical, as they are local and recognized persons. Therefore, AWs for promotion of SHGs has become a model for the CDCCB-ZP partnership in development. Only AWs should be given incentives to make their functions more accountable and organized.

The article of Impact of SGSY on SHGs-Bank Linkages by Thakkekara (2008) throws light on the impact of SGSY on SHG and identifies the weaknesses, deficiencies and shortfalls in the method and process of implementation of SGSY in Maharashtra. The SGSY was launched in 1999 as a successor to the IRDP, which was perceived to have failed in bringing
about poverty alleviation in the country. Thekkekara, with the help of practical experience and primary data support, lists a few steps to be taken up immediately so as to obtain better results of SGSY. The present study intends to examine why SGSY has not yet lived up to expectations. There is also a strong need to train and sensitize the programme implementing staff for the challenging tasks of building the capacity of SHG members, ensuring sincere participation of the rural banks and providing the required social as well as institutional infrastructure for building strong and sustainable bank-linkage with the SHGs.

The author says, it is necessary to provide credit at the rate that very poor families can deal with in a responsible manner. The budget available for subsidy under the programme may be utilized to set up marketing and training infrastructure for SHGs in every district and Taluka place. The subsidy funds could also be used to set up a risk fund to cover business losses of first time entrepreneurs.

If programmes like SGSY meant to bring about poverty alleviation are to succeed, banks must revise their attitude to defaulters. The definition of defaulters must not include defaults by a family member. Women's need for credit must be recognized as a separate and legitimate right. The present policy or its interpretation by banks is gender biased and needs to be amended in order to make it sensitive to women's needs for credit.

Another issue discussed by the author is the release of SHG nurturing grant. Many persons with political connections / affiliations saw NGOs as a new income generation opportunity for themselves and set up NGOs to develop SHGs. According to the GR (16th August 2004; now; MPs, MLAs, members of local self-Government or their near relatives cannot become management committee members / directors of SHGs. Since then the release of nurturing grants to NGOs become more difficult. These points have to be kept in mind while forming SHGs and disbursing the credit to the poor.

The article ‘Sustainability of SHGs’ by Shrinivasan (2008) focused on some factors of sustainability of SHGs. From less than 500 groups to more than 1.6 million groups linked to the banking system in the last 13 years; of course, the growth has been phenomenal. The question that is being asked with increasing frequency in recent times is whether this mode of providing financial services to people of small means is sustainable. The question uppermost in the minds of people is whether microfinance in its present form is getting fatigued. Has the programme been loaded with extraordinary expectations?
The author has explained the concept of sustainability in a very broad sense. One concept of sustainability is the continued existence and functioning of groups providing unfettered access to financial services for their members, facilitating access to higher level financial institutions with low costs and high recovery rates. Again there are two aspects: one is the affordability of interest costs to the members of the groups and the second, easy access to services. At the group level, it means the ability to maintain integrity of the group without breaking up as it climbs through to higher order financial services. Another factor discussed by Shrinivasan is the policy environment supporting and incentivizing the microfinance effort at all levels. Availability of quality manpower in banks, NGOs, government and other support levels is a critical issue in sustainability; especially at a time when the programme is being scaled up.

According to the author, for financial services delivery model, the SHG approach is unique, it has emerged as a clearly superior model compared to the Grameen Bank or MFI models. By emphasizing savings before credit it takes care of both sides of basic financial services. People's participation is fully ensured with autonomy for the groups of poor in credit decisions. Linkage to bank branches enables groups to access loans as also keep their savings safely.

The banks are far more comfortable in financing the poor through this mode as they find the risk and transaction costs to be low. This would guarantee their sustained interest in the programme. The sustainability of the programme from the point of view of availability of resources is clearly established.

In the paper ‘Economic performance of SHGs in Karnataka with special reference to Venkatenahalli in South India’ by Nagraj, Chandrakanth, David, Chengappa, Shruti, Yadav, and Kanwar Ramesh (2009) have brought into light the importance and benefits of SHGs in Karnataka. MYRADA promoted SHGs as they were the groups where credit could be managed, savings were made, book-keeping and records and collective decision making was encouraged. The four SHGs were selected for study from Venkatenahalli. The University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore has collaborated with IOWA State University for an action research project on sustainable technologies for improving the livelihood of farmers from 2003-2006 in Venkatenahalli. It was found that the growth performance of SHGs in terms of increasing access to credit in India is around 10 percent on both per SHG and per family basis while in Karnataka it is lower. The SHGs comprise 64 members and work at income
generating activities such as fishery, dairy, goat and sheep rearing, sericulture etc. The members deposited Rs. 10 each per week and maintained good records of their finances. The SHGs were found to be taking loans for the activities they carried out but the loans were also always repaid immediately. The main reason for participating in SHGs was found to be the motivation for saving. Other reasons included intention to obtain a loan, overcoming financial problems and to undertake income generating activities. It was observed that education and training offered and the income generating activity chosen influenced the economic performance of the SHG. Out of the four groups studied, Group-I was found to perform the best and in Group-I the dairy's economic performance was much better compared to other IGAs undertaken. Group-II was the next best and goat-keeping had the best economic performance. Thus, financial institutions need to expand the credit network through SHGs and increase the access to credit for small and marginal farmers.

In the paper, ‘the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme: An Assessment and Future Strategies’, Shylendra (2004) has assessed the linkage programme between SHGs and banks. Strategies implemented have also been studied. NABARD had the vision of empowering the rural population through this linkage programme since it improves the access to the formal credit system in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. It has been observed in the results of the first decade of this programme that the set target was far less than the results achieved. A number of commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Co-operatives, NGOs and other developmental agencies have participated in this programme. The amount of success achieved can be credited to NABARD and it is hence the chief promoter of the programme. SHGs have an inherent strength for financial intermediation and this has also helped in the programme's success. The programme has allowed the poor to have sustained access to formal finance. But according to the author, to become the core strategy of the banking sector, the programme will have to undergo some improvements. The response of banks to this programme has been very weak. The author also added, to improve the programme and to take it forward, the stakeholders need to make a concerted effort. The NGOs working with the programme need more coordination between them; need to integrate SHGs while protecting the credibility; members' skills and basic feature and strengths of the SHGs need to be retained. The stakeholders need to make a coordinated effort to prevent this programme going the same way as the past suggestions and programmes which were formulated to help the poor.
In the paper, ‘Economic Impact of SHGs: A Case Study’, Banerjee (2009) has tried to estimate what is the impact of SHGs in the district of North 24 Paraganas of West Bengal during September 2005 to March 2006. Nationalized Commercial Banks provide loans to the SHGs; members treat this loan as joint liability. It has been observed that most of the women from families in North 24 Paraganas have joined the SHGs. Due to the shift from low-income group to high-income group; inequality in distribution of family monthly income has been decreased. It has also been observed that the average family income has increased whereas the consumption and food expenditure has decreased significantly. SHGs have also helped in encouraging savings habit in their members. The health related expenditure has decreased indicating better understanding by the women of hygienic habits and optimal allocation of food expenditure among the family members. The school drop-out rate has been observed to be significantly lower in group members of SHGs. It is necessary for members to undertake paper work in SHGs and hence it has encouraged education resulting in decreased school drop-out rate. Only programmes providing employment will not help, according to the author, it is also necessary to spread awareness relating to better health habits and necessity of child education.

In the paper by Devi Prasad and Vijayalakshmi (2010), the authors have discussed about how SHGs provide work to women to earn money and learn new skills and how they can start social work practice. The increase in number of SHGs nationwide is a proof that SHGs are very successful. They give women an identity, help them to access information, expose women to working and ideas of the outside world and give them the power to negotiate. SHGs have become very effective means of financial inclusion. SHGs are also seen as instruments which empower women by teaching them new skills, helping them to earn money and make confident financial and personal decisions.

Sambasiva Rao (2010) has written about the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme and how the programme has affected the working of the SHGs. Problems relating to the implementation of the programme have also been discussed by the author. At the end of the article, the author says that the SHGs have been developed for the poor people and any change in the design of this movement can vitiate the credit culture and change the relationship of the SHGs with the Banks.

Koli P.A. and Koli P.P., (2009) in their article, ‘Strategy for Improving the Status of Women through Cooperatives’, they have discussed the role of credit societies in forming the SHGs.
According to them the most important means of achieving improvement in the status of women would be to make them secure for a fair share of employment opportunities. According to authors, a major step to be taken to promote female employment would be to expand and diversify the education and training opportunities available to women. In order to promote self-employment and small scale industry, the most crucial requirement is the allocation of funds by commercial and cooperative banks.

The authors have given the examples of some women cooperatives, which are running nursery schools and medical centers. The women in rural areas can undertake handicraft, horticulture, floriculture, poultry, bee-keeping, sericulture, seed bank, cultivation of medicine plants, sheep keeping etc. Such societies are of immense benefit to women as they get employment and render services to needy women. The societies are supplying the credit facilities to their members as well as they have undertaken the production of milk also. Even the agricultural women laborers have also got loan facilities from this society. Such women credit societies have succeeded in forming the habits of thrift and self-help among the rural women.

In ‘SHG-Bank linkage in India: Empowerment and Sustainability’, Lal (2007) has drawn attention to recent and international literature on SHGs and microfinance in identifying experiences, issues, problems and future prospects of the SHG movement. Author has discussed various issues in her study, like feminization of poverty, importance of human capital and social capital. She has also discussed design of microfinance models, in particular the experiences of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and the unique SHG Bank linkage model of India. She has also analyzed the contribution of the SHG-Bank linkage model in promotion of SHG movement in the two states Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The author has raised here some questions, whether SHGs alone are the answer to poverty reduction and all development problems existing in India? Is SHG-Bank linkage model the only appropriate model effective towards women empowerment? Issues need to be tackled regarding strengthening of the participation of the poorest of the poor. According to the author, SHG-Bank linkage can be the only answer in Indian conditions and which can lead towards woman empowerment. Banks alone can play an important role in delivering microfinance, through SHG-linkage and definitely not by M.F.I.s which have only a small and declining share in the market. However, their importance and role needs rectification at a later stage.
Ulireppa and Siddalingappanavar (2008), in their paper 'Gender and Development: Role of SHGs' have thrown light on the meaning and concept of empowerment and self-help groups, tools of empowerment in the context of SHGs, and also explained the measuring tools of empowerment in the context of SHGs. The tools are: control over economic resources and participation in economic decision making, influence over women's own growth; participation in socio-political decision making; influence over general welfare of the family and improvement in the technical and managerial skills of women members. Authors have also reviewed a few case studies to support the above components.

Authors have come to the conclusion that, it is clear that the SHG strategies have positively contributed for the development of women and strategy of SHGs of microcredit, are an ideal and indispensable tool of women's empowerment. Authors also quoted that, SHGs are an important instrument to alleviate rural poverty in general and women’s poverty in particular.

In the article ‘Gender and Development: Role of NGOs,’ Kusugal and Ulireppa (2008) have discussed about the gender inequality and discrimination and the role of NGOs, for promoting women’s welfare in Belgaum district, Karnataka state.

The authors have analyzed the working of women’s welfare society (NGO) in Belgaum district, and the various centers and schemes that are playing a great role in educating women, making women self-employed, healthy and wealthy citizens of the country. Top most priority of NGO’s task is promoting social security through education. These factors are helping them to take decisions on their own, and to be socially and economically independent.

In the article ‘Empowerment of Women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs): A case study,’ Pazhani (2008) discussed about the problems of poor women in rural India and role of SHGs in bringing these women out of the poverty trap through collective action. SHGs are the tool for achieving social and economic empowerment and made women understand their potentials, rights entitlement and their responsibility as mothers at home and as labour in different activities engaged and as citizens in the country.

According to Pazhani, the engagement of women members of SHGs in various activities has reduced the dependent ratio. The author further states that, the participation in SHGs enriched the empowerment of women with regard to employment, income, savings and repayment. Self-confidence among the women also increased. When their participation is
high in the number of meetings, interaction with different officials, they are empowered to some extent.

Sunny (2008) in her article, ‘Self-employment and Sustainable Development through Self-Help Groups (SHGs)’, has analyzed SHG activities which facilitated, with the help of microcredit, in attaining sustainable growth through empowerment resulting in creation of employment opportunities in various states of India.

Lack of employment opportunities and bottlenecks in the generation of employment put enormous pressure on the material and economic resources of the country. The presence of ever-growing number of unemployed is a sheer waste of human resources, in any economy. In this context economic empowerment through formation of SHGs have a crucial role to play.

According to the author, economic empowerment enables the women as well as the poor to take up economic activities with very modest growth potential and uncertain future prospects with a view to alleviate poverty and to improve their standard of living.

The role played by women through SHGs in creating employment opportunities and attaining self-sustained growth in various states of India is really praiseworthy, according to the author.

Bhatia (2009) in ‘Status of Bank-Linked SHGs: Survey in Rajasthan’, described the mechanism of micro-financing the poor people through SHGs. He explains the status of Bank-linked SHGs in the state of Rajasthan. The survey conducted in Rajasthan covered 96 percent of SHGs. The various factors such as continued existence, meetings, and loans obtained, savings, repayment etc. were studied. It was observed that, the number of SHGs and the membership had declined over the time period. A large amount of loans were used for various purposes by the members, a large number of SHGs had repayment problems. These SHGs had built up considerable savings over the time, which had helped the members to a great extent. Despite such successful micro-financing programmes, SHGs-banks linkage suffers some constraints. According to the author, the quality of the group is an important factor for sustainability of SHGs, which depends on the promoters, to a great extent. These groups should be handled in a professional manner. A proper data-base should be maintained for all SHGs under the bank linkage programme. Banks should be cautious while dealing with SHGs. Representatives of banks should visit SHGs, check their activities and conduct a proper due diligence before dealing with them. A proper system should be there to lend
finances, review performances of SHGs and their repayments. They should be given ratings based on various factors and top rating SHGs should be preferred for more finances.

Prasanthi and Padma, (2010) discusses the role of SHGs to empower women on one hand, however, on the other hand their limited scope which are crucial to gender equality. The rural poor and non-literate women are now taking up the role of implementers of some development programmes from the village to the district level. It is this gap that makes SHGs limit themselves to a fixed pattern, develop like an institution, confined to service delivery, and rarely address women's empowerment issues. This aspect of the SHGs is taken into consideration in the paper.

D'Souza, (2010) in the ‘Role of NGOs in Promoting and Strengthening SHGs’, has thrown light on the crucial role of NGOs in making the SHGs successful.

According to her, the role of NGOs is crucial in the entire process of promotion, development and strengthening of SHGs in making them into self-sustainable, proactive, people’s institutions and thus sustaining the democratic process of development. Here, NGOs are involved with SHGs at the grass roots level, engaged in the promotion and formation of SHGs developing credit linkages to help start economic activities and connecting them with other stakeholders like government officials, banks and so on. However, this engagement of NGOs with the SHGs is beset with many dilemmas. The article not only makes an effort to look at the role of the NGOs, while working with SHGs but also the need for the renewal of involvement of the NGOs on Self-Help Promoting Institutions (SHPI).

In the article of Dijo and Minu (2010) ‘Women Empowerment through the SHG approach, The Kudumbashree Model’, authors have thrown light on Kudumbashree Model and women’s empowerment. Kudumbashri the poverty alleviation programme (launched by State Government of Kerala on April 1, 1999) as a key to bring families out of poverty trap and women empowerment has unique aspects like having a holistic approach to poverty reduction better diagnosis of poor families, building capabilities of the poor, enabling women from poor families to venture into microenterprises, self-government leadership, political empowerment etc. The authors consider empowerment as a process to take control of one's life and expanding choices. As voluntary executives of Kudumbashree, the authors had an opportunity to listen to the success stories and experiences of NHG women and observe their confidence.
The article by Narayanaswamy, Manivel and Baskar (2005), based on extensive field study, attempts to assess the extent of financial assistance provided to SHGs under the centrally sponsored SGSY scheme. The study evaluates the functioning of the groups with specific reference to economic activities in a newly formed district Tamil Nadu. The authors conclude that imparting of skill and disbursement of credit alone would not lead to promotion of entrepreneurship among the members of the groups; efforts should be initiated to cultivate risk-bearing ability among the members.

With the launching of SGSY scheme in the year 1999, the flow of credit to SHGs has significantly increased. The main aim of the scheme is to assure suitable income to the poor through self-employment. In order to realize its objectives it provides extensive financial help to SHGs through its credit-cum subsidy programme.

The study is confined to SHGs in a recently formed southern district, which availed of credit and subsidy under SGSY scheme during 1999-2002. Totally, 235 groups with a membership of 3,392 spread over 8 blocks in the districts were assisted under the scheme. A total of 100 SHGs have been arranged promoter-wise and block-wise. Out of 100 sample groups interviewed, only three groups are self-mobilized and the rest have been promoted by NGOs functioning in the district. Nearly 80 groups are 'women only' groups and two are gender-neutral groups.

The economic assistance provided to SHGs under the SGSY scheme taught deserving groups, having membership from socially and economically weak and downtrodden. The groups have been successful in all counts.

Meena Hemraj & Meena Kanta (2011) in their book ‘Women Empowerment and SGHS: Gender Disparity and Demographic Safety’ discussed about the two concepts of women’s empowerment and gender equality and explained how gender equality and women empowerment are two sides of the same coin.

Women-run enterprises benefit their families. Microfinance is seen as a tool to empower women here. Women may come together for various reasons. However, in the formation of SHGs, the issues of democracy and politics of the SHG process needs to be taken care of. Since there is a condition of homogeneity in the formation of SGHs, it has been found that often caste/religion specific groups are formed. In Andhra Pradesh, it has been recommended that a symbiotic relationship be worked out between the SHGs and the PRIs by statutorily
making the members of the SHGs members of the Standing Committees of the PRIs at all the tiers.

A study was undertaken by Nayak and Sahu (2011) with an objective of examining the existing process of group formation under SHGs and its impact on the economic status of women in the state of Orissa. The proposed study was designed to identify some key factors, which could promote strong, self-reliant, pro-active and sustainable groups for enhancing the livelihood security among the group members of SHGs Orissa to assess the strength and weakness of SHG approach in Orissa. Due to time and resource constraint the study concentrated merely on the economic aspect of empowerment of women. Authors concentrated on literacy, occupational status and health level of women to focus on their economic aspect. The authors have come to the conclusion that women have had marked success in the sphere of women empowerment.

Patra (2011) in his article discussed how SHGs have been viewed by the state as a strategy both women’s empowerment as well as poverty reduction. If small farmers, artisans, traders of small means and rag pickers have been able to improve their lives in any manner today, is because of SHGs and microfinance institutions. According to the author, inclusive growth is possible only through microfinance. The majority of the poor are living in rural India and the women are the main component. The SHGs are the best facilitators of rural employment and income generation, income distribution and empowerment of rural women.

The NGOs have increasingly been adopting SHGs as a strategy to bring women together, at a faster pace and larger scale than the collective building processes adopted by them earlier. The author also pointed out that slowly, the groups have become only the means of collection and distribution of savings among the members and other activities related to women’s development have become secondary. The author pointed out that there are many factors responsible for lowering the effectiveness of these groups via illiteracy, lack of proper leadership management, promotion of income generating activities etc.

Reddy (2008) discussed his experience mainly in A. P., about building the SHGs Federation. He observed that building SHGs is a very slow, tedious and challenging human resource development and institution building exercise. Unfortunately, these measures are expensive and cannot be realized overnight. The NGOs and similar institutions involved in these tasks need continuous policy as well as programme support. Today the need is to share SHG
Federation building experience with other institutions, NGOs, banks and government organizations. The SHG Movement is required very urgently in most parts of the country, especially in the north, eastern and north-eastern parts of the country.

The available literature suggests that the concept of modern SHGs in India emerged from the work of organizations like SEWA bank, PRADAN, and MYRADA. The experiences of these organizations and those of others had contributed to its emergence. (Mate, 2005). MYRADA through its various programmes reaches out to people in various districts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. While the objective is to help the poor help themselves, MYRADA achieves this by forming Self Help Affinity Groups (SHGs) and through partnerships with NGOs and other organizations.

Fernandez (2006) writes about the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The first grant from NABARD to promote SHGs was given in 1987. It was given to an NGO, MYRADA both to train the SHGs (about 300 had emerged in MYRADA’s projects at this time; many emerged from a breakup of the Co-operative societies) and to match their savings. Between 1987 and 1992 several studies initiated by NABARD provided adequate evidence that this alternate credit strategy would work. In 1991 the RBI gave permission for banks to lend to groups and in 1992 NABARD brought out guidelines and launched the SHG-Bank linkage programme. It was in 1999 that the Government of India officially recognized SHG based on the NABARD- MYRADA experiment.

In the article ‘Impact of self Help groups on formal Banking Habits’ Varman (2005) has tried to determine whether there is any direct relation between the growth of SHGS, and the increase in the number of female bank account holders. Also the study tries to understand if SHGS have an influence over account holding in formal banks.

It was found by the study that microfinance SHGS, intentionally or unintentionally, do help formal banks in increasing the number of account holders, especially women. This has become possible due to the inculcation of banking habits in rural people. The analysis also shows that women who have had leadership experience in SHGS are greatly influenced to become bank account holders. Hence, the author suggests that if all members of the SHG are given a leadership opportunity, they will be better exposed to formal banking systems. This will enhance the banks by helping them acquire more deposit accounts.
Kannabiran (2005) in his article, ‘Marketing Self-Help, managing poverty’ discussed about the participation of women in microcredit and formation of women’s SHGS, which have not even given them the assurance of short term relief to ease immediate needs. Here the author has also discussed the absenteeism of long term social, political and cultural vision of SHGS, which will help in ending the subordination of women exclude. The growing privatization only serves to the poor.

According to the author the Self-Help group functions as a policing and delivery agent. Looking at the country side one finds that people are systematically being alienated from their lands, livelihoods, and natural resources. Poverty particularly rural poverty is growing alarmingly and the permanent solution should be provided to women. SHGS can play a very important role and can fulfill their requirement of credit by making them habitual to saving. Homogeneous SHGS (Which automatically exclude those marginalized by caste, community and class) and provided credit and saving will enable them to lift their households out of poverty.

The author says that by expecting that the poor can bring themselves out of poverty, through entrepreneurship leads to the avoidance of challenging those factors which actually create poverty.

The process of building trust, reflection and solidarity is being erased. What is provided to women in SHGS is only a membership and it does nothing to help women to move towards citizenship and political power. The author says that it is necessary to critically review the outcomes of the self-help movement from a women’s perspective.

Jairam Ramesh (2007) in his article ‘Self-Help ground revolution: What next?’ Discusses about the Andhra model of SHGs, which can be replicated by the other states. In Andhra Pradesh, which has the largest network of SHGS and where the Government has been a strong supporter, they have gone beyond provision of credit and assumed many non-traditional responsibilities. Today in some parts of the country, SHGs are taking on new roles and responsibilities that lie at the very core of livelihood security for poor. Author also discussed another rapidly growing segment in the rural economy, i.e. micro finance or micro finance institutions.

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu – lead the country in SHGs. They account for almost 54 percent of the SHGs but more importantly, for almost 75 percent of the
In 2001-2002 almost 2/3 rd of the SHGs were promoted by NGOs. In 2007 a little over half of the SHGs promoted by government (State Government), less than a third by the NGOS and the balance by the bank, what makes the Andhra experience unique are not just the numbers. The existence of strong local commercial banks like the Andhra Bank and the State Bank of Hyderabad and the presence of healthy RBI and has undoubtedly given fillip to the SHG movement in Andhra Pradesh.

The author has also discussed Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP), which brought about a dramatic change in lakhs of women in Andhra Pradesh. Author further discussed about the SHGs in Andhra Pradesh which have gone beyond traditional responsibilities. They had taken the marketing of maize, neem, soyabean, coffee, lac and redgram. They also disbursed old age pension in 2006-2007 through the SHGS. Thirdly, the elements of a community based food security are put in place and fourthly dairy interventions have started with livestock which were purchased through SHG bank linkage.

2.5 SHG – MICRO CREDIT / MICRO FINANCE

Vyas (2008) has discussed the issues related to SEWA Bank and importance of women's own bank. A small number of self-employed poor women formed their own organization in 1972 when the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) was registered as a trade union in Gujarat. Its main objective was to strengthen its members' bargaining power to improve their income, employment and access to social security.

In 1973, the members of SEWA (4000) contributed a share capital of Rs. 101/- each to establish a women’s co-operative bank. In 1974, SEWA bank was registered. Since then, it has provided banking services to poor, illiterate, self- employed women and has become a viable financial venture. The main objective of SEWA bank is to help poor women, reverse the process of recapitalizations at the micro level and to begin the process of capitalization.

SEWA Bank is a bank where women are the users, owners and managers.

From the point of view of the sustainability of the microcredit programme itself, if the people own the institution and participate in its management, the benefit of the small guarantee group approach will extend to the operation as a whole. Collective responsibility covers not merely agreeing to loan proposals and ensuring repayment for a small group but also raising and maintaining capital, including setting interest rates on savings and credits. From the point
of the poor women themselves, their involvement in a successful institution enhances their collective strength and the quality of empowerment that comes with the organization. Poverty is associated with vulnerability, powerlessness and dependency as well as lack of income. SEWA is the microfinance institution with the most democratic structure. Democracy and development require active and informed participation from the grassroots. According to the author, democratic people's organizations and institutions can provide a valuable learning environment for the poor.

Thakur and Tiwari (n.d.) have done a case study of SHG programmes in Patan district of Gujarat. Whether SHGs based on micro-credit programs can remove poverty, has been discussed in this paper. This study advocates that, for SHGs to have a marked and sustained impact on poverty it is necessary for them to adopt a more encompassing approach with various community-based organizations and programmes by laying far greater focus on processes, capacity building, and convergence with various on-going programs. This paper seeks to examine the nature of impact that the SHGs are having on poverty reduction and also the key factors that can contribute to their improved functioning.

Empowerment simply means transformed awareness. It is a complex process, which involves a change in the perception of the women and their relationship. The vision of empowered women that authors have used to fulfill the purpose of this paper is of women who have — (i) demanded their rights from family, community and government, (ii) increased access to and control over material, social and political resources, (iii) self-confidence, self-esteem and enhanced awareness and (iv) been able to raise issues of common concern and take action through mobilization and networking.

A few well-known projects are nurturing women's SHGs in the Patan district of Gujarat. An effort was made to compare the processes of Swa-Shakti, Jeevika, SGSY and Watershed Development Projects in this district to evaluate their approaches and strategies for long term sustainability of SHGs. The SHGs of Patan were tested against some parameters. They are (i) Establishing proper SHG process, (ii) Financial viability of SHGs, (iii) Involvement in community based activities, (iv) Convergence with other schemes and (v) Saturation of SHGs.

Basically, sustainability of SHGs is important for gender awareness, health, education and legal literacy, so that social, political and economic empowerment takes place.
The article, "Convergence of Programmes by Empowering SHGs and PRIs" written by Bandhyopadhyay, Yugandhar and Mukherjee (2002) throws light on the integration of Self-Help-Groups (SHGs) with the democratically elected and empowered Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs).

According to the authors, there is an urgent need to work out mechanisms/systems that will allow the SHGs and PRIs to work in tandem and establish a system of reinforcing each other's work. Functions of SHGs and Gram Panchayat in Andhra Pradesh are representing more or less the same or similar type of activities. The authors mention here that, the Gram Sabhas shall co-opt one or more representatives of the SHGs into the respective Standing Committee of the Gram Panchayat. These co-opted members would fully participate in the proceedings of the Standing Committees except voting. According to the authors, since Gram Panchayats would have to function under the constant watch and vigil of the SHGs, the Gram Panchayats will have to fulfill their duties and obligations more effectively and sincerely to the satisfaction of the villagers. Here the authors have given various steps and recommendations to strengthen the capability and capacity of PRIs. To enhance their responsiveness, accountability, and transparency there should be an institutional and functional linkage with the self-help groups.

In Micro Finance in India: Empirical Evidence, Dasgupta (2005) has discussed the financial services of small quantity provided by financial institutions to the poor. The author has compared the SGSY scheme with SHG- bank linkage programme. The study points out that while credit under the SGSY schemes across states has been extended in proportion to the poor in the population, this is not the case of SHG credit, and it has been growing at the rate of 120 percent per annum.

The author further explains however that growth in SHG credit is uneven. The financial services may include any type of financial service provided to customers to meet their normal financial needs with the only qualification that (i) transaction value is small, and (ii) customers are ‘poor’. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu may be categorized as SHG developed states, whereas Bihar and Madhya Pradesh may be classified as SHG backward states on the basis of the characteristics discussed in the paper.

Badal Chandra Das (Das, 2002), talks about the rural women in micro-enterprises and their challenges. The author says that, women have been receiving some importance in every draft
of the five year plans but women's empowerment received a fresh impetus in the 1980s when they were recognized by a separate target group in the Sixth Five Years Plan.

The term 'micro-enterprise' has been defined as the small enterprise that is very small in nature and is undertaken with the small savings of the individual. In Purulia, most women involved in the small savings and credit group are introducing various kinds of micro-enterprises as a part of their way to economic development.

The intervention programme undertaken by ‘Kalyan’ to mobilize the rural women into SHGs to enhance their productivity through micro-enterprise is really a positive attempt. It is a fact that SHGs of women are becoming an effective instrument in transforming the so called 'unproductive human beings' into a 'productive human resource.'

In the article ‘Empowering women contributes to social development’, T.R. Gurumoorthy (2002) focuses on economic empowerment through self-reliance. The author says that, the outreach of SHGs can become an important link for formal credit institutions as an entry point. Rural women have enough entrepreneurial potential but due to poor financial strength they are not able to convert their entrepreneurial dream into reality.

The SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. SHGs undertake entrepreneurial activities at smaller level with minimum capital requirements. In future, the inbuilt strength of the SHGs will pave the way to undertake mega projects like those performed by joint stock companies, public sector enterprises etc. They have the power to create a socio-economic revolution in the rural areas of our country. They have proved that they could indeed bring about a change in the mindset of the very conservative and tradition bound population in rural areas. SHGs have paved the way to bring the rural women in the main stream of social and economic progress of our country and affinity groups of rural poor.

According to Pandian and Eswaran (2002), complete flexibility combined with familiar knowledge of the micro-environment of the village, are formidable weapons in the possession of the SHG. Activities promoted by SHGs are situation and need specific and are moulded around the availability of local materials and the market for products. SHGs mobilize the savings of the members and lend it back to needy members. Further they enter into commercial relationship with banks and access credit from banks. SHGs not only provide
credit, but also empower women socially and economically. They prepare women to take up leadership positions.

The authors have studied the SHGs and related aspects at block level in Tamil Nadu. This study shows that, SHGs' thrift starts with fixed savings and then progresses to maximum savings. The animators motivate the members to raise their savings with the increase in income.

SHGs have inculcated the habit of savings in the minds of women. The effort taken by the SHGs is the path of women's development. Such programs make women empowered.

Ranga Reddy and Raju (2011) highlighted the concept of development and working of SHGs and micro credit institutions in India. SHGs are mainly designed to empower the poor rural women. While strengthening SHG initiatives, policies and schemes, the 11th Plan will increase women's bargaining power, awareness, health, the literacy and vocational and entrepreneurial skill. Describing the many facilities provided by the SHGs to empower women, they also present the other side of MFIs. Micro credit should be seen as an opportunity to help people to overcome poverty through business, but not as an opportunity to make money out of it. But this concept is not justified in some of the MFIs. Today, some of India's leading MFIs face charges of both corporate and mis-governance and leading irregularities.

SHG’s main aim is to provide finance to the poorest of the poor and make them regenerate income by doing entrepreneurial activities. They are getting finance from commercial banks or non-banking financial institutions. Due to RBI's help many institutions were started. Though some ugly issues are coming up in the process of development, achieving the goal of welfare and empowerment of women should not be ignored.

Suryanarayana (2011) has expressed views regarding ‘Women empowerment through micro finance and its problem and challenges.’ He says that, empowerment is a multi- dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, communities and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important. For empowering women and their sustainable development, education and employment are essential elements. Women empowerment is the key to socio-economic development of the community, and therefore, the government is trying to bring women into the mainstream of national development by providing special components for women in its programme.
Micro finance is emerging as an important instrument for eradication of poverty in the new economy. It deals with women below the poverty line. In India, the micro finance scene is dominated by SHGs – Bank Linkage Programme, whose aim is to provide a cost effective mechanism for providing financial services to the rural poor. Learning to manage money and rotation of funds builds women's capacities and confidence to intervene in local governance beyond the limited goals of ensuring access to credit. According to the author some evidence suggests that the impact of micro finance on women empowerment is small or negative as many women use micro finance mainly to invest in their already existing low profit and insecure activities or in their husband's activities. Failure to take into account the impact on income also has potentially adverse implications for both repayment and outreach and also for financial sustainability.

A promising solution is to provide multi-purpose loan or composite credit for income generation, housing improvement and consumption support. Gender strategies in micro finance need to look beyond just increasing women’s access to savings and credit and organizing SHGs to look strategically at how programmes can actively promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

The focus should be on developing diversified micro finance sector where different type of organizations, NGOs, MFIs and formal sector banks collaborate and work together to make a significant contribution to gender equality and development of poor.

The authors, Datta and Raman (2001) have talked about the micro-credit institutions which provide credit services to the poor women. These credit institutions give various types of loans such as loan for business, loan for repayment of loans taken previously etc. This credit facility provided by such institutions helps the members of SHGs to earn their own livelihood and improve their standard of living. These institutions provide loans and credit services to the poor by identifying the need of each type of member. According to the authors, these micro credit institutions design the credit plans by properly analyzing the purpose for which the poor women would take loans. These institutions classified women according to their requirements and their social and economic conditions. This helps the poor women to utilize the funds in a proper manner and make timely repayments of loans taken from various sources.
Dadhich (2001) has highlighted the importance of micro-financing in rural areas in Deharadun District in Uttar Pradesh. The author says that, micro-finance can help reduce poverty and bring about empowerment of women to a great extent in rural areas. The author explains this significance of micro-finance with the help of an example of Oriental Grameen Project in India.

In the year 1995, the public sector bank, The Oriental Bank of Commerce started a project named ‘Oriental Grameen Project.’ Under this project, the bank provided financing services, initially to eight villages and by the year 2000 it provided these services to 64 villages in the States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The most backward and poorest families were selected for this project for formation of SHGs. These groups were formed on the basis of their gender, religion and other social and economic conditions. The project could provide micro-finance services to 450 SHGs; which included 447 women SHGs and 3 men SHGs.

According to the author, women make the best use of the finances as compared to men. This helps in women empowerment. Women use their finances efficiently for their business activities which results into high income earnings and they can give good contributions to the family income. This leads to overall improvement of the family, and their socio-economic status. The main finding of the study revealed that a large number of women had taken up subsidiary occupations and consequently their family incomes had substantially increased. The recovery of the loans was more than 100 percent of the demand.

The Oriental Grameen Project proved successful as it provided good micro-finance services to the poor as per their requirements and considering their economic backgrounds.

Narayan and Mridubhashini (2008), in their paper 'Empowering Women through Economic Measures' have described the poor status of women and the need of women empowerment. Empowering women ensures their economic development, social development, political participation and strength to fight injustice. Though women are the biggest contributors to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), they are hired last and fired first and in spite of spread in education and developmental measures the discrimination between male and women continues.

To improve the status of women by indirectly empowering them with new opportunities, the Government of India and some State Governments have introduced a number of programs. They have emphasized on micro finance/credit and SHGs movement and role of NGOs for
women empowerment and education. Micro finance has proved to be an effective and efficient mechanism for eradication of poverty. It has introduced a new hope among the poor women in villages as well as towns. Because of SHGs women are able to enhance their business and investments with very little initial capital. Apart from SHGs, NGOs who extend help in implementing government policies play an important role. They act as links and mediators between the government and the people. NGOs are known for their virtues of dedication, human touch, self-reliance and nearness to community.

Narayan and Mridubhashini have stated that women can achieve big results if involved as partners. They have the potential to be the asset if taken into consideration and entrusted with responsibilities. They want equality, dignity and opportunity. To gain the status in the society, economic independence of the women is very important which will lead them to real political empowerment.

Ahmad (2008) has highlighted the micro-financing through SHGs as the very successful measure for eradication of poverty of women and their empowerment on the basis of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh started by Prof. Muhammad Yunus in 1976. Most of the governments of developing countries are giving encouragement to microfinance for women empowerment and eradication of poverty. In India, NABARD is playing a very important role in micro financing programme. To establish and expand small self- supporting business, the poor, mostly women, use small loans, other financial services and support from local organizations called micro finance institutions. So the objective of microfinance is to improve the quality of life of the poor and backward section of the society.

According to Dr. Ahmad, the micro financing to women through SHGs has helped the groups to achieve a measure of economic and social empowerment. It has developed a sense of leadership, organizational skills, management of various activities of a business. In micro financing each loan is repaid and the money is redistributed as loans to others, multiplying its impact. Therefore, financial self-reliance of women, both in the household and in the external world lead to empowerment of women in other spheres.

The experience of NABARD of linking SHGs to the banking system achieved great success to cater to the micro credit need of the rural poor through SHGs. NABARD is targeting that by the end of 11th Plan (2011-12) 40 lakh SHGs will be formed and about 56 crore families will be assisted through SHG-Bank linkage programmes.
Still, micro financing is facing some problems such as to find an economic activity that will yield sufficient profit necessary to cover the interest rate on the loan, marketing of the produce. Many schemes which are intended to provide credit to poor have been designed not as businesses but as welfare programmes.

Finally, Dr. Ahmed suggests that India should also set up a National Microfinance Bank of India on the pattern of Gramin Bank of Bangladesh and all the RRBs should be merged in this bank. This new bank may be quite successful in empowerment of women through micro credit and eradication of poverty from the country. Every state should have a separate micro financing bank which will be linked with National Microfinance Bank of India.

Over the last one and a half decade NABARD’s, microfinance initiatives through its Self-Help Groups (SHGs) Bank linkage programme have passed through various programmes i.e. pilot testing, mainstreaming and expansion. During this movement, many innovations have taken place in the credit delivery system. The innovations have taken place in tribal areas as well. In the present article Karmakar and Mahapatra (2008) have discussed about the various experiences in credit innovations as well as 'Credit-Plus' activities in the rural areas, especially for the marginalized tribal people.

In credit innovations authors have discussed various types of SHG-Credit linkages. Authors have discussed about Joint Forestry Management (JFM) for empowering tribal people, this can be the solution to degradation. Authors also discussed NABARD’s role in supporting JFM through rural infrastructure development fund.

Grain bank or grain 'Gola' refers to the contributing and storing of grains in community storages by cultivators to secure seed and food during the lean season (monsoon) for the members. It may check seasonal migration, control exploitation by moneylenders, inculcate saving – investment behavior and nurture entrepreneurship skill among the members. The concept of credit plus approach is the members jointly contribute some portion of grain, preferably paddy and ragi, during the harvest season to raise a village- based grain fund.

Members of the grain bank borrow the required amount of grain during the lean season and repay the loan along with interest in the form of grain during the next harvest. When the fund becomes large, the surplus fund may be issued to needy people of the neighboring villages with higher rate of interest in order to earn profit. Some portion of surplus fund (grain) may be sold when the price of the grain goes up. The money earned by selling the surplus grain
and remaining fund may be considered as savings/security for sanctioning loan to members of grain bank from formal banks.

The grain bank scheme was an age-old practice among the tribal cultivators of KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) in Orissa as well as in Jharkhand. It was prevalent among the Munda tribe of Chhotanagpur. NABARD has taken the initiative to link these grain banks with Banks under the SHG bank linkage programme. The tribal population is known to use the concept of grain Golas for saving grain during the harvesting seasons and use it during lean period. Therefore, NABARD thought of an intervention through SHG Bank linkage programme so as to facilitate monetization of savings and loan in kind and integration of the traditional approaches into the microfinance model so that it will enable the poor tribal population to access need based financial services and also address issues of food and seed security.

In the article ‘Promoting Linkages between Banks and MFIS’ Satish (2008), has reviewed the experience of various MFIs and challenges of SHG-Bank linkages in the country. The author appraises the relative strength of different micro finance institution models and SHG bank linkage methods. The SHG-Bank linkage programme has expanded at a fast pace in India to evolve into the largest microfinance programme in the world. However, there are also microfinance institutions operating in the country following a variety of saving and credit systems. It is estimated that the share of MFIs in the total microfinance business in the country is about 8 percent.

The author further states that there are large numbers of NGOs that have undertaken the task of financial intermediation. A majority of these NGOs are registered as a Trust or a Society. Many NGOs have also helped SHGs to organize themselves into federations and these federations are also registered as Trusts or Societies. Many of these federations perform non-financial functions like social and capacity building activities, facilitate training of SHGs, undertake internal audit, promote new groups and some of these federations are engaged in financial intermediation, acting as apex level financial service providers. These institutions are strong on social and community capacity building but are inexperienced as far as financial management issues are concerned; hence, these NGOs are structurally not the right type of institutions for undertaking financial intermediation activities.
Various models are in existence in India though the most widespread with regard to depth and outreach on the linkage models. The basic feature here is that financial resources are being sourced from regular banking channels as well as members' savings. The author come to conclusion with the thought that, NABARD's SHGs-Bank linkage programme and other linkage programmes for accessing mainstream finance exclusively formed the formal banking sector for microfinance.

In the article ‘Microfinance revisited’ K.G. Karmakar (2008) has discussed the various concepts and models related to microfinance. Microfinance refers to the entire range of financial services such as savings, money transfers, insurance, production and investment credit as also housing finance and includes the need for skill up-gradation and entrepreneurial development that would enable them to overcome poverty.

Author has discussed major issues in microfinance. For example, up scaling of the programme, capacity building, sustainability of SHGs, graduation from microfinance to microenterprises, attitude of partners, and impact of government programmes with subsidy component. Transparency, sustainability with outreach and self-regulation are some important issues faced by microfinance institutions.

Karmakar has also discussed several positive features of microfinance, through empirical evidence. The overall impact of micro-credit is increased confidence of the poor and empowering the women. But there are several areas of concern as well. For example, most of the groups formed, are not natural or voluntary, but need based. In most of the SHGs there is a dominance of two or three members. The links with PRI are weak and financial management and book keeping practices of SHGs are totally inadequate and weak. They are lacking in development objectives. Hence, SHGs are neither a panacea for all the ills of rural society nor are they a tool for poverty alleviation.

In the book *Micro Credit, Poverty and Empowerment: Linking the Triad*, authors Burra, Deshmukh-Randive and Murthy focus on the impact of microfinance activities on women's empowerment and poverty reduction in India. Authors have taken six case studies of governmental and quasi-governmental bodies in 5 States of Peninsular India several of which have been supported by UNDP. It was aimed at identifying the contribution of economic empowerment in the overall context of women's empowerment and also understanding the type of social mobilization strategies suitable for sustainable empowerment.
The book studies and evaluates women's empowerment at individual, collective (group) and wider (societal) levels. Authors found no linear link between micro credit, poverty reduction and women's empowerment. It is true that women members point that their access to economic resources and generic basic needs has improved through their participation in micro-credit programmes, and that gender disparities in access to basic needs has reduced, though not eliminated. They have access to independent sources of savings and credit, when the loan is for their own purposes, women exercise control over the income generated. They have now started entering new economic domains in the macro environment like marketing, procurement and financial management. They have started entering local self-governance institutions. But there are some questions remaining in the author’s minds. Positive impacts depend on poverty and also on the gender sensitivity of the programmatic and institutional strategies adopted by the intermediary organizations in respect of micro-credit. Even if it is sensitive to poverty and gender discrimination how micro-credit itself will reach the poor, enabling them to improve their economic position and remove gender discrimination at macro environment, how they will solve the problems at household level, in caste and religious structure, are some problems that have to be discussed, according to the author.

In the paper ‘Socio-economic impact of Microfinance: A Study of Neighborhood Groups (NHGs) in Nilamber Block of Mallapuram District, Kerala,’ the author Reji (2009), has selected the Malappuram district in Kerala in order to study NHGs and their socio-economic impact on the lives of women. Microfinance is now becoming a mainstream intervention for poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor. It enhances the development of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Differences in the conditions between pre and post NHG periods has been interpreted by the author in order to study the socio-economic impact. It was found that the NHG was able to develop savings habit among the members; it also served as a major source of credit for its members; loans were provided. Majority of the respondents belonged to the monthly household income group of Rs 2001-3000 (43%), Rs 1001-2000 (33.5%) and above Rs. 3000 (15%). The respondents were also found to have business related assets like livestock, sewing machine and work related implements. The NHGs also helped the respondents by making loans available for construction of new houses, repair of existing houses, construction of new latrines etc. Activities like dairying and broiler rearing were encouraged, as were other income generating activities. NHG members also showed an increase in the ability of making household decisions and hence an increase in the role in the house. The social impacts included an increase in self-confidence of the NHG members and
their involvement in decisions with respect to savings, credit and income generating activities etc. Members have also reported that group activities were very helpful in coping with adversities in their personal and professional lives. NHGs have also helped in generating a great sense of solidarity, closeness and also shouldering responsibilities within the group.

In the paper, ‘Micro Credit and Empowerment: A Study of Kudumbashree Project’, Raghavan (2009), has discussed about the Kudumbashree project introduced by the Government of Kerala in India. It aims at improving lifestyles of poor women in rural and urban areas. It is a massive poverty eradication programme focusing on empowerment of women to eradicate poverty. The programme involves training women, educating them, helping the women to share their grievances and joys, training women to become Community Health Volunteers, construction of latrines and other sanitary measures, the Poor Women's Bank, formation of thrift societies and giving training to women in community financial management. The programme has encouraged women to take up income generating-cum-developmental activities. These have helped in boosting confidence and building morale in women. Status of women has improved in their families. The programme has proved that women empowerment is necessary for eradicating poverty. The Kudumbashree programme ensures sustainable livelihoods to poor women.

In their paper Ghanadas & Geetha (2009), have thrown light on the loan repayment problems in ‘Employees Cooperative Thrift and Credit Society (ECTCS)’. It is a non-agricultural society whose main aim is to save employees from the hands of moneylenders. Its other objectives are to encourage thrift and cooperation among members, to borrow funds from the members and use them as loans to members; also to act as agents for joint purchase of domestic and other requirements for the members. There are many problems faced by these societies, but default in repayment of loan is a major problem. The samples taken were from Nagercoil and Thuckalay. In the societies at Nagercoil, reasons for default were mainly stated as mismanagement of debts and unexpected financial problems, while the factors influencing the default are financial and personal. In societies at Thuckalay, the reasons for default were unexpected financial problems and higher monthly installments. A number of suggestions have been provided by the authors in order to strengthen the ECTCS.

In the article ‘Women’s Empowerment and Micro-Credit: Emerging Spaces for social Work Practice’, Zubair (2010) has explained that the education and skills are required at each stage of development of SHGs to prepare social workers to work effectively. The author states that
to meet women’s need for improved access to credit, thrift and credit SHGs have to be promoted. The SHGs provide women the opportunity to acquire the ability to control their lives, set agendas, gain skills, solve problems and develop autonomy. Thus, the SHGs offer great potential in the field of social work. However, skeptics argue that the SHG-Microenterprise programmes rarely reach the poorest. The poorest women may feel burdened due to the repayment of loans or may even not consider themselves ‘credit-worthy’, due to which they themselves stay away from microenterprises. It has been recognized that microcredit is ineffective in helping the poorest. To improve the effect of microcredit on poverty, financial as well as non-financial services should be provided. Apart from financial intervention, the qualities of team work, leadership, confidence, conflict resolution need to be developed for better use of microenterprises.

In the paper, Purushotham (2010) has reviewed the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and has given a few suggestions for enabling the Yojana to be more effective. According to the author, it is necessary to create a professional and dedicated umbrella institutional structure at the state, district and block levels. It is also important to help SHG members to inculcate good financial habits like saving, repaying loans on time etc. The capacity of the SHGs should be built for microenterprise by proper training of the members and market exposure for the finished products. The author also says that proactive state policy support will help SHGs and improve development of the microenterprise. It is also important that powers be given to local elected bodies as this will lead to self-employment. The umbrella institutions designed at the state level should be flexible like the NGOs but also have the support of the Government. Institutions at the district and block levels can function and hire human resources, thus ensuring effective performance during their work with formal government offices.

In the article ‘Cooperatives and Microfinance’, Kannan (2009) has mentioned that, the microfinance can play a powerful role in the alleviation of poverty in rural India. It has emerged as a major innovation in today's rural financial system. This system can help to identify the entrepreneurial talents available among poor, particularly rural women and encourage them to become the backbone of the rural economy. It will also help to eradicate the menace of traditional moneylenders by providing cheap microcredit. By proper guidance rural women can be encouraged towards small savings and effective investment. Kannan was the Registrar of Co-operative Societies of Tamil Nadu, when the Assembly elections took
place in May 2006. He has discussed in this article a large non-monetized sector, where barter trade composed a large part of the economy. Measures of paddy or rice were the dominant medium of exchange serving much like currency (till the end of 1980s). This non-monetized sector representing the farmers, small artisans, small traders etc; was exploited by the moneylenders by using barter.

Till the 1980s NGOs were largely unknown. When the author was the Collector of Erode in 1991, he started Rural Thrift and Credit Societies for women in Theravada area (then Veerapanternitary) with the help of MYRADA, a professionally run respectable NGO at that time. Women formed themselves into groups, with a certain amount of seed money, opened a saving bank account in the name of group and invested their money. The group used to give some loans to its members.

They also availed loans for production purposes from the banking sector for various activities undertaken by the groups like basket making, sericulture etc. This was the first foray of the NGO sector into microcredit. The rate of interest was 14-15 percent, very reasonable at that time.

Tamil Nadu has several firsts in the cooperative sector like the first village land credit cooperative, the first urban bank, the first consumer cooperative store etc. Whenever we think about have-nots (poor) we wish to have a liberal and more caring society. Self Help Group is the answer for this problem. They can fill the void, created in finance for the have-nots. The cooperatives can finance them especially as their repayment record is excellent.

The word ‘microfinance’ did not exist before the seventies. According to Selvaraju (2005), credit is important in the lives of the rural poor. It is estimated that more than 50 crore disadvantaged people across the world need access to financial services.

The author has focused on the difference between microfinance and the other poverty alleviation schemes. Microcredit has some important features; first, loans under microfinance programmes are very small. Microcredit continues to target the rural and urban households with emphasis on women borrowers. Thirdly, microcredit follows thrift. The first stage is the formation of groups by individuals themselves followed by the mobilizing of petty saving and recycling this by lending to group members. Fourthly, the repayment period is generally very short; and lastly, loans are devoid of any concessionality and bear a comparatively
higher rate of interest. It is a significant departure from the earlier exercise of providing credit to the poor through financial institution at subsidized rates with high default rates.

According to Edwinraj and Raja (2009), cooperatives are owned autonomously and operated democratically by members. Cooperatives can strengthen the participation and inclusion of the poor in financial decision making and management. Anti-poverty programmes have been strengthened over the years to generate additional employment, create skill and raise the income level of the poor.

The experience of many microfinance institutions so far strongly suggests that it is possible for these institutions to reach the goal of serving people in extreme poverty without having to sacrifice their profitability. Cooperatively managed microfinance institutions enable the poor to lift their resources, so that they can be used for productive investments and jobs creation within a sustainable future.

The paper, ‘Microcredit, NGO and Poverty Alleviation’, by Dass (2009) discussed the challenging issue, whether Self-help microcredit programmes can be the tools for empowering poor women. Most microcredit programmes extend small loans to the poor people for self-employment projects that generate income allowing them to care for themselves and their families. Microcredit is a powerful anti-poverty tool. According to author, SHGs intermediated by microcredit have shown positive effects on women. It is for the first time that government's attention has been drawn to women as a focus of developmental change.

The role of microfinance is far more than helping families cross the poverty line. NGOs working the field of microfinance have observed that they cross the poverty within three to four years of taking the first loan. This is because the microfinance loan helps the poor to start their own micro (small) enterprise and increase their income. If it (microfinance) is properly designed, it can make an important contribution to women's empowerment.

Suganya (2009) has expressed her opinion regarding the role of microfinance in Poverty Alleviation in her article ‘Micro-finance and Poverty alleviation’. Several authors say microcredit can contribute to substantial reduction in poverty. Many critics are of the view that the extremely poor often decide not to participate in microfinance programmes since they lack confidence or they value the loans to be too risky. But according to the author, most studies conclude that microcredit positively contribute to poverty reduction.
The first step towards setting up SHGs was taken up by Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) which built upon rural chit funds and informal networks to evolve credit management groups. One clear positive result of the growth of SHGs is increased availability of credit to poorer households especially in rural areas.

The involvement of commercial banks in microfinance is growing rapidly round the world. But increased competition among banks has led to lower level of welfare for the poorer borrowers. Poor households are excluded from the formal credit network because mainstream lending institutions have a different set of attitudes while dealing with them. These attitudes have negatively affected the role of self-help groups, microfinance. Hence a major change in the attitudes is necessary.

Kumarvelu and Nedumaran (2009) have discussed about the Socio-economic Empowerment of Rural Population through the Microfinance. The women led SHGs have successfully demonstrated how to mobilize and manage thrift, appraise credit needs and enforce financial discipline. According to the authors, the study of self-help women groups reveals the effectiveness of these groups with linkage programmes and awareness among the rural folk about the significance of women empowerment and rural credit. Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, involving the SHG concept, has been launched to provide self-employment and economic empowerment to the rural poor on the initiative of the Union Ministry of Rural Development. According to the authors, an Indian housewife often plays multiple roles as producer, entrepreneur, consumer and worker. In the Indian scenario poverty in general and extreme poverty in particular have a significant 'gender' dimension. Women are more sensitive than men to the extremes of poverty and its consequences. Although women often have little control over their earnings, there is enough evidence to show that given some discretion, they prefer to spend their money on family needs. Thus, the most desirable option to generate their own income is through self-employment, despite the problems they face in gaining access to assets and resources. Poor need loans for consumption and the banks do not entertain this. Microcredit goes directly to poor people. It creates employment in villages. It helps women develop confidence and independence. Microcredit has proved to be a tool to strengthen various programmes in poverty alleviation.

Selvachandra (2009) focused on the ‘Role of Microfinance in Poverty Alleviation’. To him India has promoted institutions for providing microfinance to the poor under various poverty
alleviation programmes. According to him the core of SHG bank linkage in India has been built around an important aspect of human nature - the feeling of self-worth.

In India, efforts are made to promote microfinance in a sustainable manner. An important vehicle for this has been the SHG programme and its linkage with banks. SHG meets the smaller consumption and emerging needs of members form its own savings and common fund generated. According to the author, the consumption loans include subsistence needs, health care, social and religious ceremonies etc. The production loans are for the purpose of purchases of agricultural inputs, investments on poultry, sheep and for small business like vending, hawking etc. The credit needs of members are usually assessed in group meetings. As the age of the group increases the capacity of the group and credit also goes up.

SHGs have been able to mobilize small savings either on weekly or monthly basis from persons who were not expected to have any savings. SHG-bank- linkage approach is the core strategy that could be used by the banking system in India for increasing their outreach to the poor. NGOs get recognition as socio-economic change agents and also emerge as the bridge between the poor and the bank.

In the article of Shibalal (2007), ‘Impact of Micro-Finance on Poverty: A Study of SHGs in Orissa’. There is a focus on how Micro-Finance can be an alternative source of credit for the poor. This thought has received wide attention in the recent years owing to its contribution to poverty alleviation. The formation of SHGs ensures the best participation of the poor in a credit programme.

The author conducted a study in Koraput, a poor and backward district in the state of Orissa in India, which forms a part of the so-called underdeveloped KBK (Kalahandi, Balangir and Koraput) region. The study adopted multi-stage sampling method. A combination of poverty line indicator, asset holdings, accessibility and vulnerability are used. The impact of micro-finance through SHGs on poverty is also seen through head- count measure and poverty gap measure. The findings show that SHGs have the potential to tackle poverty and can be an important weapon for poverty alleviation in Orissa.

Micro-finance through SHGs has the potential to fight against poverty and can be an important weapon for poverty alleviation. The findings in Orissa show that SHG-based micro-finance has better outreach and positive impact on poverty. However, the process of
empowerment is found to be poor. The success of this programme depends on both better outreach and the ability to empower the poor, particularly women groups.

Different indicators have been taken into consideration by the authors. Within the domain of social empowerment, authors found that, all groups in this study scored ‘high’ in case of awareness regarding education, but scored ‘low in case of awareness regarding health care. There was a mixed impact among the three groups regarding their importance in the family. It means social empowerment through SHG helped a lot to this group (Muslims).

Considering the economic empowerment, the authors found that the improvement in economic empowerment by the members of all the groups was low. It shows a gloomy picture as economic empowerment is a prime requirement for empowerment in social and political spheres. The political empowerment in case of all the groups was found to be moderate. Low percentages i.e. below 40 percent of the total members have shown positive change in empowerment. This indicates that there is much to do for improving the quality of life of the members. Promoting institutions have not given much emphasis to this respect and they need to do more in this regard for better impact of SHG.

The report of Srinivasan (2010); indicated that the SHG Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP) growth might be in a declining trend both in outreach and loan portfolio. SBLP has gone into a decline relative to the MFI’s performance as the MFIs added 4.1 million clients and Rs.66.10 billion to their outstanding loan portfolio. SBLP added 4.7 million clients and Rs.45.87 billion to loan portfolio. However, SBLP continued to grow on the savings side with 88.5 million savers, SHGs are a significant first point of access to a directly needed financial service. Among the states, Andhra Pradesh had the maximum savings mobilization at Rs.12.54 billion. Gujarat witnessed the highest average savings per group among mainstream states at Rs.19, 410. In terms of regions, NABARD had identified 13 priority regions and the northeastern region for giving a fillip to microfinance activities. According to Microfinance Penetration Index (MPI) 2010, the southern region had more than proportionate coverage of microfinance.

In 2009, commercial banks had a larger share of borrowing groups but smaller share of saving groups. However, banks typically mentioned recovery levels of between 80 percent and 85 percent of loans. The author has also presented various case studies of SHGs in Andhra Pradesh, such as Indira Kranti Patham, Swayanshree etc.
Christabell (2009) has presented us with an overview of the origin, development as well as progress of various MFIs. There are case studies of various organizations such as Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) Caribbean and South US, Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI), Banco Sol or Banco Solidario S.A. of Bolivia, The Thana Resource Development and Employment Programme (TRDEP), Government of Bangladesh, Smallholder Agricultural Credit Administration (SACA). The author has done appraisal on the basis of physical and socio-economic environment, Group-based Savings and Credit System, the percentage of women borrowers in the total number of borrowers. Author, also lays stress on the emergence and growth of microfinance in India through various government schemes, Long-term and rural credit and NGOs.

Patel (2011-12), in her article she discussed about the Women's Leadership in Micro Finance including the issues and challenges. India is the home of the biggest microfinance movement in the world. On one hand the UN Commission on Status of Women 2007 perceives microfinance as an effective strategy to reach Millennium Development Goals (MDG), while on the other hand most of the SHGs are marred in controversy of engaging women in traditional stereo-typed low return activities, politicization of microfinance movement, lack of code of conduct and accountability etc. The following case studies of SHGs throw light on these contrasting details and how they have rescued women's fate from the negative externality created due to globalization. Notable among these are Sakti and Masum which give loans to women at a very low rate of interest (2% p.m.) for various personal purchases and business (mostly agricultural) transactions.

Various SHGs in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, Bangladesh, India and Honduras have used several methods of mentoring to evolve women leadership for development of organization, efficient governance and human resource development through Exposure Trips (Sakti), Vocational training, animated discussion on violence against women (Sakti), rescuing the deserving women, Monitoring schools, Using SIM and IT enabled services for women empowerment (Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank Ltd.) etc.

Eleventh Plan Subgroup on Gender and Agriculture, Planning Commission, GOI has recommended that WSHGs should be allocated land for agricultural activities after identification of land from the open market and its quality to be assured by the Committee of SHG Federation. The state should provide all the necessary agricultural inputs and grain storage facilities and preference is to be given to women who have mortgaged their land and
are engaged in agricultural labour. A significant contribution to women's cause has been
given by Stree Mukti Sangathana's SHGs for women's empowerment (most training in Solid
Waste Collections and Treatment in major public and private sector housing colonies and
office premises).

Currently, women comprises only 1.25 percent of the entire Indian banking sector's lending
portfolio where microfinance institutions report an average repayment rate of 98 percent and
beyond for female clients. The SHG movement has taught women the value of saving and the
strength of working as a group. However, there is a need for some all India organization both
for SHGs and MFIs, for sharing experiences, learning lessons and for advocating on policy
related issues with the government and other authorities.

Bharti (2009), in her article, ‘Approaches to Microenterprise Development: Experiences from
Maharashtra’, explained the approaches to microenterprises and its importance for
employment and poverty alleviation in developing countries. According to the author, three
basic approaches for promoting the microenterprises are – (1) Building human capital
approach; (2) Financial system approach (3) Holistic approach.

The importance of microenterprises is explained by making a brief study of approaches and
strategies of three organizations in Maharashtra namely, Mann Deshi Samajik Sanstha,
Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust and Sampada Trust. The study reveals that, even though
microenterprises are an important tool of employment and income generation, lack of credit
availability restricts the growth and development of such microenterprises. Poor people are
not given microcredit as it could lead them into a debt trap if they could not generate income
from their activities. For development of microenterprises the microfinance organizations
much provide financial as well as non-financial services to the poor and support them in their
entrepreneurial activities so that they can carry on various activities in a proper manner and
gain more returns. This would help to avoid the debt trap and poor people could get more
credit facilities.

In the article, ‘Microfinance and Women Empowerment: A case study of Punjab’, Mahajan
& Bansal (2009) talked about the impact of microfinance on women empowerment. Women
should be given a fair chance to participate in the development process of the nation; they can
contribute to a great extent to the development of the country. The authors explain this by
making a study of conditions of rural women in Punjab. According to the observations, the
microfinance programme started in rural areas aims at women empowerment and development. This programme is a method of providing microcredit to the poor rural women. Due to this programme women have become confident, and more participating than others who do not get such benefits. Micro finances have empowered women socially, economically, psychologically. Women earn income, take their own decisions and can develop the conditions around them. The study shows that since this programme is run by the government through Aanganwadi workers and no NGO is involved, there is lack of training, proper guidance, supervision to the rural women. The programme is like any other scheme organised by the government and so it restricts the impact of microfinance. To achieve best results, the NGOs and other promoting agencies must step in to run the microfinance programmes. They must encourage women to take up profitable activities, provide training, guide them and help them to give their best.

Mishra (2009) has explained the Poverty Impact of Microfinance in India with the help of the data from National Family Health Survey-III. According to the author, the participation of women in microfinance programmes may not necessarily lead to empowerment of women and gender equalities. Levels of mobility, purchasing power, political, social and legal awareness are the indicators used to measure women's empowerment level. On the basis of the survey conducted in 29 states of India, it was found that, microcredit programmes have both positive as well as negative impacts on rural poor women. Poor women borrow money from microcredit programmes, but cannot decide the use of that money. The study also shows a negative correlation between statuses, having higher percentage of people 'Below Poverty Line and proportion of women borrowers. This shows that there is very little women empowerment in these statuses. Lack of access to microcredit programmes is also one of the major constraints faced by the poor. Microcredit programmes should reach more people; educate them and encourage them to take microcredit and utilize the money for productive activities. Poor women should be properly trained, given full information of these credit programmes and encouraged to make their own decisions on how to use the money.

Satyasai & Jayaraman (2009) in the article ‘Microfinance in India: Issues in Sustainability’, have discussed about the issues of sustainability of micro finances in India. Sustainability of microfinance means the ability of MFIs to repeat loans over time. The income earned from the business should be able to cover the costs incurred. The authors discuss this issue on the basis of information collected from field visits to different districts of Andhra Pradesh. The
authors analyzed various internal as well as external factors that pose threats to micro-finances. External factors like changes in government policy can have adverse effect on functioning of SHGs. For sustainability of microfinance, the SHG members must be properly educated and must refrain from making unhealthy interventions. Microfinance needs to maintain its unique features, institutions and systems to remain focused.

In the view of Mayoux (2003), if women are to benefit fully from microfinance programmes, aims and strategies for women’s empowerment need to be mainstreamed rather than providing marginal add-ons to programmes designed for financial sustainability or household poverty alleviation.

Flexibility to women’s needs and deciding the best ways of combining empowerment and sustainability objectives can only be done on the basis of extensive consultation with women, research on women's needs, strategies and constraints and a process of negotiation between women and development agencies. Although millions of poor people require access to financial services, such services are only likely to address poverty if they are part of a broader agenda for women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. It is, therefore, crucial that microfinance programs are adequately supported to build on their organizational strength, challenge gender inequality and economic injustice and complement effective policies to transform national and international economic and political inequalities.

The Visakha Mahila Seva Sangham (VMSS) is an all-women organization run and managed by women. In The article by Devi Prasad, Judra Rani Haranath (2010) on VMSS has demonstrated how a microfinance institution like VMSS has gone beyond providing financial services for social vision among its members. According to a study conducted by the authors in 2007 to review the performance of VMSS, it had made a significant difference in the lives of poor women and their communities, without losing sight of its development agenda. However, a few women found it difficult to cope up with personal business and family together with the group meetings.

Pati (2010) in his book ‘Financial Sustainability of Micro Finance’ attacks the belief that "poor are not bankable" among the providers of credit and highlights the role of microfinance through SHGs in building confidence and empowerment among poor. If poor are provided access to financial services, including credit, they may very well be able to start or expand a micro-enterprise that will allow them to break out of poverty.
The author differentiates between microfinance and microcredit and categorizes the latter as the buzzword. He also classifies the former as 'credit plus' and the latter as 'only credit'. The two concepts are also being classified on the basis of women empowerment and participation, empowerment of the poor, sustainability and technology etc.

Microfinance Institutions act as intermediaries engaged in microfinance activities supplemented by formal and semi-formal sources. Organizations implementing microfinance activities are divided into three basic groups viz. one directly lending to specific target groups; second who only promote and provide linkages to SHGs; third directly dealing with SHGs. There are Resource Organizations and Support Agencies and other Formal Financial Institutions too that are involved in the process of delivery of microfinance. The formal financial institutions provide funds to SHGs and also operate their accounts. They prefer to route credit through SHGs, though they directly lend to individuals also.

To touch the core of poverty, women are the best agents. A typical SHG constitutes 10-15 like-minded poor women, who pool together their savings and sanction loan to a needy member.

However, despite a phenomenal addition of retail outlets across rural areas of the country by the formal banking sector the share of the informal sector in the total flow of credit is still very insignificant.

Singh (2008), in his book Empowering Rural Women through Micro Financing; highlights the role of microfinance through SHGs as social capital facilitating financial linkage of poor borrowers with Formal Financial Institutions (FFIs). SHG in essence is forging 'collaborative' ties between individuals who need each other's cooperation in solving their day-to-day crisis. The author's study highlights the functioning SHGs in building confidence, providing mutual support for women striving to social change, enabling women to critically analyze their situations and devise collective strategies to overcome their difficulties, act as a vehicle for promotion of economic activities and developing community self-reliance and collective action.

In 1992 NABARD launched the SHG-Bank linkage programme with the policy breakup of RBI. According to Shanmugam (1998), it was in active collaboration with NGOs and enhanced the coverage of rural poor under institutional credit. RBI and NABARD have tried
to promote 'relationship banking' i.e. improving the existing relationship between rural poor and bankers with social intermediation.

Further, the author has developed various models to explain SHG-Bank linkage. The author has also highlighted the regional outreach of various SHG financing institutions and their constraints and problems.

Sankar (2005) has written in ‘Social Mobilization and Micro Finance for Women’s Empowerment Lesson from the ASA Trust’ about how women are deprived of access to improved means of production and productivity, have lesser access to power and resources and how they play key roles in managing their households and coping with poverty. Activists for Social Action (ASA), based in Tiruchirapalli in Tamilnadu, is one such NGO promoting micro-credit among a variety of other programmes for Dalit women’s empowerment. This case study, commissioned by United Nation’s Development Programme (UNDP) and the ICICI Bank, examines the ASA experience in terms of the role of social mobilization and micro-credit for poverty reduction and women’s empowerment. It seeks to throw light on the role of women’s economic empowerment through assistance provided to women creditors.

ASA was founded in 1986 for empowering women, landless poor, Small and marginal farmers and dalits in Tiruchirapalli and the neighboring districts of Tamilnadu. By 1993 ASA had transformed itself into a micro-finance institution based on the Bangladesh Model of forming SHGs and federating them into centers (4 SHGs), Clusters (20 Centers), Branches (5 clusters) and Franchisees (6 Branches).

The article of Chaudhari and Kalyan (2011), examined evidence from major impact studies on microfinance to answer the question: Can microfinance reach a very large number of poor mass and remain sustainable to yield important impact?

According to the author, in order to cover all the poor households, particularly BPL households, there is need for providing full support by the government, financial institutions and NGOs to SHGs programme. The author further stated that, so far the SHGs-Bank linkage programme has become very successful in achieving quantitative targets and qualitative output. The programme should be more qualitative, because it enriches the lives of the poorest of the poor in the context of globalized development problems in the socio-economic environment. Political interference in the functioning of SHGs should be avoided and kept away from the scenario. Women’s groups have to face problems such as, indifferent attitude
of bank officers, exploitation by promoting NGOs, lack of marketing facilities for product/services. These bottlenecks should be routed out on priority basis.

Women groups should be given responsibility of running Anganwadis, fair price shops so that they become permanent entities and mentors. Banks and SHGs provide financial assistance, and organize skill based training programmes in rural as well as semi-urban areas to promote socio-economic development and its sustained contribution to the rural economy.

Patnaik, Eswan Rao and Nayak, (2011) have stated that the past 15 years saw the entry of various types of microfinance institutions in the rural credit sector. Most of these are based in the Grameen Bank Model of Bangladesh. According to the authors, the major role of SHGs is seen in terms of their potential to empower the women members. The participation in SHG and the access obtained to savings and credit can play a transformational role for women, socially and economically. The authors further stated that, according to some available studies it is indicated that as a result of participation in SHGs, members have been able to accumulate significant savings. There are evidence to indicate that using the opportunity of savings provided by the SHGs, women are able to meet various socio-economic needs like housing, education and marriage.

While discussing about the eradication of poverty, the authors stated that the members of SHGs have been able to reduce their dependence on money-lenders very significantly. At the same time, now members are making use of SHG loans for diverse purposes. While use of loan for consumption purpose still remains a major item of utilization, members are increasingly using SHG loans for social and productive needs. Health, education and housing are some of the areas; members have begun to increasingly channelize their loans. Microfinance is the key mantra for a sustained and long term economic growth for India. The SHG movement has a good potential to help develop the socio-economic status of the rural poor and contribute towards women's emancipation.

In the article ‘SHGs Movement Microfinance Programme under Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana’ Pathy (2011), has reviewed the nature and functions of SHGs and examined the suitability of government directed microfinance activities as a complement to the formal credit delivery mechanism of the nationalized banks and scheduled banks and to analyze the impact of Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana programme intervention to employment generation and income. To throw light on the progress of SHGs in India as well
as Orissa under SGSY, secondary data was collected from the leading magazines, journals etc.

‘Development Sustainable Strategy through Microfinance’ by Langsun (2005); attempts to provide the current thinking in development finance, particularly the microfinance sector and how sustainable development can be created through microfinance by exploring the role of culture, especially religion. In this regard the author has examined the emergence of SHGs, the backbone of the Indian economy; secondly the author has discussed the current theories in micro finance. The theories include – the financial system school, the poverty lending school, and the Livelihood Finance School. The author also discussed the strengths and weaknesses, and further has added the fourth school christened as the – Holistic School or the Mate School and established the relationship between culture based on Weber’s theory of religion and economic growth and solution for sustainable Development.

In ‘From Micro Credit to Livelihood Finance’, Mr. Mahajan (2005) has first used the term Livelihood Finance. The author also discusses the strengths of livelihood finance. He discussed six types of benefits, 1) It does not only provide micro credit but also addresses a wide array of issues that are a concern to the poor. 2) Livelihood depends on activities that involve larger amount of funds. 3) The provision of business development services is crucial for enterprises run and managed by the poor 4) Enhancement and access to markets provide goods and lucrative terms to the poor e.g. wage rates etc. 5) It reduces poverty, empowers, securitizes and creates business opportunities for the poor and other marginalized communities and lastly 6) It is profitable for both the interventionist and the poor and creates a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

Sinha (2005) in the paper ‘Access, Use and contribution of microfinance in India’ states that microfinance has significantly contributed to both the savings and borrowings of the poor in the country. The main use of microcredit is for direct investment. Bank government agencies and NGOS in India have different approaches to Microfinance.

In most of these approaches, groups are used as intermediaries for financial transactions. Group based MFIs (microfinance institutions) target women as clients. In the present paper Frances has analysed the performance of 20 MFIS from across the country representing all the three models (SHG Model, Grameen Model, and Individual Banking Model) in terms of use of their services by clients. The paper was divided into four parts.
According to the author, there is some mutual substitution possible, depending on household credit requirements at the time of loan disbursement. Due to the SHG model saving based mechanism for internal group credit to meet household need has been made possible but the coverage of MFIS is still limited and is not integrated into the microfinance programme.

### 2.6 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Vijaya Lakshmi and Sharma (2002) in Women entrepreneurs and Finance ‘believe that, lack of finance’ is the major obstacle for the success of women entrepreneurs. The government should help such women with financial issues. They should encourage the banks to provide loans to such women who wish to start their own business.

Today, there is a remarkable increase in literacy rate of women in our country. With better education and knowledge, women have started taking up various jobs and earning their own income. Many of them want to start up their enterprises. But they face financial problems, because of various reasons. Banks do not provide loans because these women cannot give a collateral security. Women have no business experience; they do not have any property of their own. Banks are not sure whether these women would be able to repay the loans. Some of the financial institutions are reluctant to give finance because they doubt the ability of women to handle financial matters. These are the reasons why women cannot start their own enterprises or even if they start it, they cannot expand the business; they have to make use of older and cheaper technology, which does not give them good results. As a result of all this, women entrepreneurs lag behind.

Many women in rural poor areas are not even aware of various policies and schemes framed by the government for financial institutions to help them. They keep on borrowing the money from local money lenders who exploit them. Various governmental and non-governmental organisations provide finances to women through schemes like Mahila Vikas Nidhi scheme, Mahila Udhayam Nidhi scheme, Industrial Development scheme, Stree Shakti Package etc.

A study reveals that women entrepreneurs are mostly engaged in soft industries like garments, food, cosmetics etc. and a very small percentage of women are into the manufacturing business or any electronic or engineering business. They require less capital, hence they ask for lesser amounts of loans. This is one reason why banks do not provide loans, because they consider the amount of loan to be too small for borrowing. Banks should provide finance to such women also as per their requirements. Women face problems
because they do not know the procedures for borrowing and repayment of loans, or complicated procedures. These women then depend on personal finance for starting up their business.

Women in rural as well as urban India are highly skilled in various fields. They need to be encouraged to utilize their skills and improve their life with their own earnings. The Government should help the poor women to get educated and start earning money. Proper policies and strategies should be made for education, training and development of women in various fields. They should be given a fair chance to prove themselves. They should be given better access to technological advancements. More and more women should be encouraged to start their own enterprises, where they could be the leaders. They would be able to make best possible use of their skills if they are provided all the financial and social support as required. Government should encourage banks and financial institutions to provide loans to such women, where the Government should share the risk of loans. Proper credit facilities should be given to them; they should be given access to markets at regional and national levels also. This would develop leadership qualities in women; make them confident and responsible in the professional field. Women's participation in the business world would help to improve the economy of the nation to a great extent.

Nageswara Rao (2011) in his article states that development of entrepreneurship is very essential for the empowerment of rural women. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as those having an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of employment generated in the enterprise to women. Economic empowerment of women by micro entrepreneurship led to the empowerment of women in many things. Micro-enterprises not only enhance national productivity, generate employment but also help to develop economic independence, and personal and social capabilities among rural women.

For enterprise management women need a little training, finance, co-operation and encouragement in the sphere of activities at all levels, home, society and the government. Laws guaranteeing for their equal rights of participation in political process and equal opportunities and rights in education and employment were enacted. Lastly, he says that there should be better schemes, developmental programs and opportunities for the female folk to enter into more entrepreneurial ventures.
B. Lilly Grace Eunice (Eunice, 2011) emphasized in her article ‘Women Entrepreneurs in Rural India’ Challenges and Opportunities on the problems and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India. She says, besides getting trained in business techniques and market development, semi - literate women need to be educated about the marketing of their produce.

Nowadays there is a growing emphasis on rural small and medium size entrepreneurship led by women for economic development and for eradication of poverty, mainly in developing countries. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures and become economically independent. But still the Indian women entrepreneurs are facing some major problems such as socio- cultural biases, lack of confidence, market oriented risks, motivational factors, business knowledge etc. The women in the rural sector have tremendous potential and expertise in art and craft, handloom, food products etc., but they live in remote areas and without reliable source of steady income. Now the revolution of SHGs is acting as a regulatory mechanism to provide micro-credit and enhancing the credit facilities to the rural poor. Policies are made for the Indian women entrepreneurs through training and capacity building programmes. Lastly, if our universities and institutions join in this matter and give emphasis on women's business education, the future will see more women entrepreneurs.

Manga and Rajaiah (2011) have discussed about the women's micro enterprises and their contribution to the national economy. During the last decade, women micro entrepreneurship has emerged as an important source of economic growth. Women micro entrepreneurs have shown their potential, but they are not capable of contributing much more than what they already have. They are creating new jobs for themselves and others. The micro entrepreneurs are leading to women empowerment and removing gender inequalities. SHGs' micro credit mechanism makes the members self- sufficient and involved in other community development activities.

For the development of the poor women, Government implements various policies. Rural women can do wonders by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Their entry should be encouraged in micro enterprises. Micro enterprises not only enhance national productivity, generate employment but also help to develop economic independence, and personal and social capabilities of the rural women. But there is a need for awareness of Government welfare programmes, knowledge about accessibility of loans,
various funding agencies, technical skills, motivation, support from family and government. The empowerment of women is an empowerment of the family and the nation. This motto is fulfilled only when the SHGs are strengthened.

Namenda Kumar and Brahmananda Reddy (2011) have studied women empowerment in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. According to them, nowadays women have realized their importance in the entire development and would like to be independent. They are even going for self-employment and entrepreneurship. Through SHGs, many illiterate women are involved in micro enterprises. Entrepreneurial skills and marketing talent is to be given to these women for entrepreneurial activities. SHGs have now become a modern weapon for the poor women to fight against poverty and economic depression. The SHGs attack on poverty at micro level and empower the women at grass roots level. Good need- based training should be provided to the SHGs to come out of this evil.

Nangur, Channal and Nanjayyanamath (2005) have shown that rural women can become socio-economically independent by combining agro-based micro enterprises with life on the farm. By undertaking micro entrepreneurship these women are able to contribute to their family's cash income. The authors examined the fruitful and enlightening enterprises that the women can take up as an economic activity. The importance of such micro- enterprises is highlighted with the help of various experiences of women entrepreneurs from various parts of the country. Women undertake various activities such as goat farming, bee-keeping, vermin compost, silk cocoon production etc. These activities are very useful as women from backward castes, who are uneducated, can earn a good amount of money and contribute to the family income. This helps to improve the overall status of the family. Women like Linganva Rudrappa Poojar of Karnataka, Sudha Venkatesh of Dharwad district of Karnataka, Kalavva Malleshappa Makkalad and Shashikala Yadal are successfully carrying on such activities. According to the author, women have realized the importance of earning income and are able to convince their families to undertake such activities. These women enjoy a good support from their family in such micro- entrepreneurship.

The ability of women to generate income is an important factor that helps in the betterment of families & improving their social and financial position. There are various such activities which women can undertake and become socio-economically independent.
In the article ‘NGO’s Role in Entrepreneurship Promotion’, Rajeshwari and Prabha (2009) propose that the promotion of entrepreneurship among women necessitates a conductive environment which involves removing institutional constraints, enhancing information flows, providing access to credit, skill development programmes etc. A Self Help Group is a small economically homogeneous affinity group of rural poor, voluntarily formed to save and mutually agree to contribute to a common fund to be lent to its members as per group decision.

NGOs are playing a very important role in forming SHGs. SHG women are aware of the meaning of the concept entrepreneurship. According to the authors, though SHG women, who are owners of some enterprises, face more hardship than their counterparts, but at the same time for these SHG members, it is a chance to speak openly about all sensitive issues and also a chance to work together and relax together.

The authors Teki, Krishna Kumar Sharma, Kalra, Kujur, Stephen, Bala Sanjay and Basnyat, (2008) have presented sericulture as an alternative for seasonally unemployed rural poor and studied the contribution of a silk production micro enterprise, for livelihood of rural people of select villages in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Providing employment to over six million of persons, mostly belonging to weaker sections of the society, sericulture acts as a bridge between agriculture and industry. The authors review various programmes prevalent for sericulture development like Catalytic Development Programme, Cottage Basin Establishment, Hot Air Driving Chambers Establishment, Seed Maintenance Project, the UNDP, etc. The authors studied the inputs and the cost benefit analysis as well (Both backward and forward linkages). They concluded with the remark that sericulture is an important economic activity of rural poor particularly women in Anantapur region.

2.7 GRAMEEN BANK

Abdulla (2002) has described the success of 'Malaprabha Grameen Bank' (MGB) in the rural areas like villages in Dharwad, Belgaum, Havri and Gadag districts. Malprabha Grammen Bank was started in the year 1976 to help the rural poor in these areas. The main aim of this Bank was to provide credit facilities to the poor people and help them to earn their own livelihood by setting up their own business. MGB encouraged rural women to make best possible use of their talents for earning money. Rural poor women have the skills of making
various handicrafts items of traditional embroidery etc. With the finances provided by the Bank, the women could start up their own business of making such items and selling them in the nearby markets and cities like Goa. Women could earn their own income from this business. They could contribute to the family income to a great extent. The author says that initially the rural people would not entertain the outsiders like Bank or money lenders. They were reluctant to take any help from such banks or any financial institutions. But this scenario was changed when a woman called Pikannava from the village came forward and started earning her income with the help of Malprabha Grameen Bank. She became an inspiration for the other women in rural areas and they too began to work and earn like her. Various SHGs were formed for the socio-economic development of the women. MGB promoted these SHGs in various rural areas. The Bank has opened various branches in different areas to help a large number of rural poor and works especially for 'empowerment of women.' The Bank provides finances to the women and also provides them education, training, social recognition, infrastructure and all the other requirements for starting a business. The Bank provides credit for various activities like farm activities, animal husbandry, cottage industries etc. MGB has 45 branches in Dharwad, 34 in Gadag, 48 in Haveri and 105 in Belgaum. MGB also has special schemes for landless labourers and seasonal occupations. MGB encouraged the people who are involved in pottery, weaving etc. to expand their business. It also provides training on various topics to the unemployed youths. This was done with the help of Syndicate Bank at Belgaum.

With all these facilities for the rural poor and various schemes as per the requirements of the people, Malprabha Grameen Bank helped these people to grow socially and economically and live a better life. MGB continues to encourage various groups of people to take the advantage of this Bank.

Mehta (2000) has described the various schemes for rural women through which they would get employment and would be able to start their own enterprises.

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was a scheme implemented in rural areas by starting micro-enterprises to help the rural poor. This scheme aimed at helping those families who were ‘Below Poverty Line.’ The beneficiaries of this scheme are known as 'Swarozgaris,' who are individuals or groups. Various SHGs were formed in rural areas under this scheme. The members of these SHGs are engaged into various income-generating
activities like making handicrafts, weaving, pottery etc. The people get financial assistance, training, and access to market through such employment schemes.

Thekekkara (2011), in the article ‘Adivasi Women Banish Hunger: The Gramin Bank Chakdu Village Dhule’, stated that food security is a serious problem among the poor in Maharashtra. Malnutrition deaths of children, particularly in the smaller than six age group of tribal children, are often reported especially during the monsoons. The depletion of food stocks during the summer months, coupled with low employment opportunities in remote and inaccessible tribal villages often lead to child deaths and adult mortality. Grain banks have been thought of in this context as a novel community intervention to provide food security in poor and remote areas. Grain Bank is set up by the SHG women of Chakdu. The local tribal Pravaras believe that they are from Pavagad in Gujarat and of Rajput origins.

According to Thekekkara SHGs were first set up in Dhule district under the Maharashtra Rural Credit Project in 1998 in the second phase of the programme in the four blocks of the district through Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM). This programme came to an end in 2002. The Gramin Bank scheme was taken up in Chakdu village by the Durgamata Bachat Gat and the Lakshamitra Bhachat Gat set up by MAVIM. The Santoshimata Bachat Gat formed by MAVIM also joined the scheme later.

Tobbibai Kokinya Pawra of the Durgamata Bachat Group took the lead in making the Grain Bank. After several meetings it was decided that every woman would save fifteen kilos of jowar. In November 2004 they started saving grain and decided the rules. a) Anyone who needs grain would be given it. b) The grain of the same quality was to be given back for every kilo given, a kilo and 250 gms would be returned. The SHG women of Chakdu said that they would increase the grain saved form fifteen kilos per woman to thirty kilos. They would also teach the other SHGs in the village how to start a Grain Bank. Hence the experiment of the Grain Bank started at Chakdu village by the SHG women succeeded as they realized the advantage of having food security and freedom from extortion by the Sahukars (moneylenders).

Dr. Ela Bhatt (1998) has thrown light on the performance of SEWA Bank in providing micro finance to the poor, particularly women, to improve their living standard during the last 50 years, GOI has tied to increase institutional credit to the poor by strengthening the cooperative credit structure through the commercial banks and through 196 regional rural
banks (in 1998). But the problem of credit was not solved. A few voluntary agencies have taken up the challenge of the financing the poor and achieved noteworthy success. The self-employed women’s association (SEWA) is one such agency. Dr. Bhatt has highlighted some important points of Shri Mahila Sewa Sahakari Bank Ltd or SEWA Bank in her article.

The labour movement in India had by-passed this large majority of poor workers. The self-employed women of Ahmedabad formed a union named SEWA in 1972. In 1973, SEWA made an arrangement with some nationalized banks to provide loans to self-employed women, with SEWA acting as an intermediary. Unfortunately the women faced many practical difficulties in dealing with nationalized banks.

In May 1974 the SEWA Bank was registered, and since then, it has been providing banking services to the poor, illiterate self-employed women and has become a viable financial venture. Village women initially tested the reliability of the SEWA Bank by depositing very small amounts. Now they have invested their savings in long term bank securities. The SEWA Bank’s integrated approach distinguishes it from other micro credit efforts. To get the sizeable incomes, assets and a livelihood, the poor need access to market information, technology, market infrastructure, health and social security services, entrepreneurial ability and representation in decisions making bodies. The bank not only provides financial services but has also set up a contributory work security or insurance fund and a housing loans section. Most of SEWA’s account holders are illiterate. ‘Consumption’ loans are also badly needed by poor women. The SEWA Bank has never distinguished between consumption and a productive loan. Consumption expenditure for food, health or even housing help to maintain their key productive work. SEWA women regard SEWA bank as their mother.

2.8 LIVELIHOOD / LIVELIHOOD FINANCE

Srinivas (2010) has attempted to study the SHG-Bank linkage and its impact on the livelihood of poor. The author says that SHGs have provided financial security, and hence, hope for the women to be able to create a sustainable livelihood. The author also says that the programme linking the SHGs to the Banks has been instrumental in increasing the strength of the SHGs.

Formal financial institutions including Nationalized banks, are unable to meet the financial requirements of the poor directly, the SHG Model provides an alternative for poor people not to succumb to exploitative credit, which acts as a poverty trap for the poor.
savings and credit activities of SHGs enable members to build their own capital and avail soft loans for meeting the consumption and working capital needs for their livelihood.

The CARE India Report, ‘Moving from Micro-credit to livelihood Finance’, (CARE India, 2007), focused on the different activities implemented by CARE India. Care India implemented a project called Credit and Savings for Household Enterprises (CASHE). This fairly large project ran from 1999 to the end of 2006 in four states; West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, and was funded by DFID. Through the implementation of this programme CARE became a leader in the field of microfinance and enterprise development in India it was well aware of the limitations and constraints. One of these was the difficulty of bringing real change to people’s livelihoods through the current model of microcredit delivery through SHGs.

The purpose of the study was to consider how a broader approach to livelihood finance can be introduced that will have a bigger impact on changing lives and reducing poverty. Most of the family respondents used credit as part of their livelihood management. Whenever they needed cash they quickly obtained it through sale of livestock or some other asset (usually for emergencies), obtained small loans from informal sources or SHGs (for consumption), or loans against produce (for input purchase and emergencies expenses).

The report states that ideal finance would take a holistic approach to saving, borrowing and repayment strategies. This could be achieved through a simple bank account in which deposits and withdrawals can be made as required and into which loan funds can be put and repayment withdrawn either in the form of an overdraft or as term loans of some kind.

In terms of livelihood finance, the SHGs are enabling women to borrow small amounts, commonly between Rs. 2,000/- and Rs. 5,000/-. Although group promoters like to encourage investment in new microenterprises, most of the loans are probably being used to ease cash flow management and meet a variety of household needs. The groups are also enabling women to grow their savings, although they may not have ready access to them. Ultimately the report comes to a conclusion that in principle there is not a shortage of options for livelihood finance. Actually there is no pressing requirement for any one of the service providers to introduce new products. The issue is how to assist people to use the products that are available and identify the best way to invest money to improve their livelihoods.
The Article ‘From Micro-credit to Livelihood finance’ by Mahajan (2005) raised the question, Does microcredit promote economic growth? According to the author, just to focus on micro-credit alone and leave out micro saving, micro insurance, and money transfers is myopic. It cannot be said that micro credit by itself can promote economic growth. In reality, micro credit is barely adequate even as an instrument for poverty alleviation, leave alone economic growth. The paper proposes that to serve the purpose of economic growth a new paradigm of livelihood finance with much larger levels of resource allocation both from the public resources as well as from capital markets is needed. Livelihood finance is a comprehensive approach to promoting sustainable livelihoods for the poor, and includes Financial Services, Savings, Credit, both long term and short term, Insurance for the lives and livelihoods of the poor, covering health, crops and livestock. Infrastructure finance: roads, power, market places, telecom as needed Investment in human development including nutrition, health, education, vocational training.

Agriculture and business development services: Productivity enhancement, risk mitigation other than insurance. (Such as vaccination of livestock) Local value addition and alternative market linkages

Institutional Development services: Farming and strengthening of various producers, organizations such as SHGs, water users associations, forest protection committees, credit and commodity cooperation, Panchayats and Establishing systems for accounting performance measurement, incentives, MIS etc. Livelihood finance will require large amounts. It may need more than just loans. It will be invariably be for long durations, at least 5 and may be 20 years, and its use will always be for collective purpose.

The paper ‘Sustainability of Micro Finance Institutions’ by Mahajan (2008) appraised the sustainability of micro finance institutions, and the costs of different stakeholders in operationalizing the micro finance institutions. The paper examines the relative cost factor and competitive strength of the micro finance players, cost of entry, cost of exit and cost of staying in the business. The author clearly mentions that, only when the scope of micro finance is increased to cover the combination of savings, credit and insurance services, can MFI make a sustainable contribution to poverty alleviation. This is a departure from the earlier idea that only credit is what the poor need. It recognizes the livelihood patterns and constraints of the rural and urban poor. A vast majority of rural poor are landless and also do not have inclination or are inefficient to become self-employed. To such people, according to
Mahajan the most important financial service needed is saving (usually small and frequent deposits with door step collection – SHGs), and latter, credit which is usually initially used for consumption needs. Only after a certain stage of income can credit be used for ‘Productive’, purposes. In the meanwhile, poor households need insurance to reduce their vulnerability to a variety of adverse events which can make a big dent in the financial health of the household, wipe out savings and send them back to moneylenders.

Kashyap (2008) stated in ‘Livelihood Promotion among SHGs’ that as the SHG movement has become fairly well established in a few parts of the Southern states and is now gaining momentum in the rest of the country, the expectations on SHG’s potential in livelihood promotion are growing. In this background Kashyap’s paper comes forward with field based experience in livelihood promotion and the role of SHGs therein. The author says that the ultimate process in this regard depends on the equality and maturity of SHGs. This is not easy for the members of SHGs as they belong to very poor strata of the society and lack minimum education and entrepreneurial skill. This underlines the need for building the capacity of SHGs on a mission mode.

To address the challenge of livelihoods and enterprise promotion among SHGs, capacity building for opportunity sensing, sub-sectoral approach, value chain analysis, collective marketing, business and marketing plans preparation, cost benefit analysis, convergence is necessary. To create sustainable rural enterprises and livelihoods a range of technical support services are necessary. The author suggests at the end, that there is an urgent need to promote many more one-stop private business development service providers. However ability of the groups to pay for these services is extremely limited. NABARD and CAPART should provide startup grants to encourage young professionals from IRMA, National Institute of Design (NID) and other institutions to start their own market support agencies.

Nanavaty (2009) discussed about work of SEWA in supporting poor rural women to improve livelihoods. SEWA has been working with the poor in rural Gujarat in the area of livelihood for more than three decades. SEWA was registered as a trade union in 1972. Its objective was to organize women so that they have a greater bargaining power and a better chance at combating oppression. Over three decades SEWA has been active in 14 districts in Gujarat with 1 million by 2007. According to Nanavaty, SEWA is continuously organizing the poor people for their livelihood security, and adopted the approach of livelihood finance. Economic activities for the members are initiated that would ensure livelihood security for
the poor both in farm (agricultural) activities and land based non-farm activities. The economic activities are also initiated based on available local skill base or local resources.

The paper discusses how SEWA has used Livelihood and Agricultural finance in organizing the poor women. It describes SEWA’s experiences through case studies of households which have clearly come out of poverty. It summarizes SEWA’s experience in some major trades of rural economy such as salt farming, weaving, handicrafts and agriculture. For instance, the salt farmers in Sunredra nagar district lack of access to markets, which forces them to depend on the local traders on high cost finance and sale of salt at low prices. Clearly micro credit as a single solution is not enough since they would still be dependent on the traders for selling their produce. Hence the multi-pronged Livelihood Finance approach has been discussed by the author in this paper. The paper discusses in detail, how SEWA, through integrated livelihood and agriculture finance package helps the poor workers to come out of poverty. The paper also discusses some of the lessons that SEWA has learnt from its experience in Livelihood Finance activities. Finally, the paper estimates the time and cost required for a complete livelihood finance intervention.

In this paper the author has given the complete livelihood finance package. The package includes, organizing and institutional building - to build collective strength and bargaining power, Credit and other financial services (like insurance, pension) that lead to asset building, Productivity improvement services, capacity building, Market linkages, Marketing services, Human development services- health, nutrition, education.

SEWA has always focused on a household as a unit rather than an individual woman. The emphasis has been on holistic approach towards organizing. The elements of this approach are: Organizing, Capacity Building, Capital formation, Social Security. SEWA’s philosophy, which is very demand–driven in its approach, could be articulated in four broad steps. Organise women, empower them, enlighten them and take up the specific demands made by the members and facilitate their efforts towards meeting them.

With a strong base in place, SEWA goes on to build its livelihood and income generating activities. The earliest activity is almost always training, at the next level building awareness, the next level of training is usually to promote a saving habit, the next level is technical training, and last strive to bring to its members the latest knowledge from contemporary experts.
PRADAN is an Indian based NGO; its abbreviation stands for Professional Assistance for Development Action. In 1983, a few young professionals set up PRADAN, inspired by the belief that well-educated people with empathy towards the poor must work at the grassroots to remove mass poverty.

PRADAN believes that the path towards conquering economic poverty is through enhancing the livelihood capabilities of the poor and giving them access to sustainable income earning opportunities. PRADAN professionals, divided into 30 teams, work with over 225,800 families in 4,500 villages across seven of the poorest states in the country. A majority of the families that PRADAN works with are from Scheduled Tribes and are poor people who live near the forest, for whom forests and trees have, traditionally been an important source of livelihood. Protection oriented public policies affected these livelihood activities, resulting in decreased incomes for the local communities. PRADAN’s forest and tree based livelihood interventions in Jharkhand and Orissa comprise of Tasar cocoon production, Lac Cultivation and production and trading of Siali leaf plates. Farm forestry has also been taken up as part of the program on integrated natural resource management. There are 7,792 families who are involved in these various activities.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood in the regions where PRADAN works. Enhancing productivity and diversification are the core strategies of PRADAN’s agriculture programmes. Specific activities are increasing the productivity of the main cereal crops to improve food security, and diversification into cash crops such as pulses, oil seeds, and vegetables. Whichever program is undertaken, PRADAN seeks to ensure its sustainability. Horticulture is gradually emerging as a significant livelihood program in the high-rainfall regions where over 6000 families are currently engaged in PRADAN’s horticulture programme (PRADAN website, n.d.)

The available literature suggests that the concept of modern Self Help groups in India emerged from the work of organizations like SEWA bank, PRADAN, and MYRADA. The experiences of these organizations and that of others had contributed to its emergence (Mate, 2005). MYRADA through its various programs reaches out to people in various districts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. While the objective is to help the poor to help themselves, MYRADA achieves this by forming Self Help Affinity Groups and through partnerships with NGOs and other organizations.
Fernandez (2006) states that; the first grant from NABARD to promote SHGs was given in 1987. It was given to MYRADA both to train the SHGs (about 300 had emerged in MYRADA’s projects at this time; many emerged from a breakup of the Co-operative societies) and to match their savings. Between 1987 and 1992 several studies initiated by NABARD provided adequate evidence that this alternate credit strategy would work. In 1991 the RBI gave permission for banks to lend to groups and in 1992, NABARD brought out guidelines and launched the SHG-Bank linkage programme. It was in 1999 that the Government of India officially recognized SHGs based on the Nabard-Myrada experiment.

2.9 SHGs, DECISION MAKING & EMPOWERMENT

Sankar (2005) has discussed in ‘Social Mobilization and Micro Finance for Women’s Empowerment-Lesson from the ASA Trust’ how women are deprived of access to improved means of production and productivity, have less access to power and resources and how they play key roles in managing their households and coping with poverty. ASA Micro-Credit programme has resulted in the enhancement of intra-household decision making powers of women in MHHs (Male Headed Households). Women dominate decisions on food preparation (100%), whether to take loan from the SHGs and for what (77%). Decisions with regard to land asset purchase are decided jointly in 58 percent of households, and on production and selling of products in 33% households; however, actual selling is mainly in the hands of men. There has been an overall increase in decision making powers because of asset creation. The decision making power of women who head their households (widows) is higher than MHHs, and in Muslims was seen to be low.

In the view of Patnaik and Nayak (2011) in the present fast growing development era, empowerment of women is essential which can be attained through activity participation and making decisions independently. They can plan an important role in taking decisions regarding livestock production, agricultural production, home based production, house activities etc., but their involvement in development programmers is far from satisfactory. Low literacy level of Indian women has been one of the major hurdles in the way of women’s empowerment. Illiteracy and Semi–illiteracy keep women in a perpetual state of assetlessness. To bring them in the mainstream of economic development, educational and training programmes should be encouraged. There has been rapid growth of SHGs in the past one decade. Their major role is seen in terms of their potential to empower the women members. The participation in SHGs and the access obtained to saving and credit can play a
transformational role for women, socially and economically. SHGs encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sector and prepare women to take up leadership positions. (Punithavathi and Eswaran, 2002) SHGs not only generate income but also improve the decision making capabilities that lead to overall improvement (Sathiabama, 2010).

To improve the capacity of women to take decisions or to create an environment where they participate more and more in the decision making process and their decisions are valued is a very important indicator for judging their level of empowerment.

According to Sahu (2011), empowerment is a process of change by which individuals and groups gain power and ability to keep control over their lives. It involves increased well-being, access to resources, increased self-confidence, self-esteem and respect, increased participation in decision-making and bargaining power and increased control over benefits, resources and own life.

SHGs encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sector and prepare women to take up leadership positions (Punithavathi & Eswaran, 2002). SHGs not only generate income but also improve the decision making capabilities that lead to overall improvement.

In the article ‘Economic empowerment through self-reliance’ Punithavathy and Eswaran (2002) discussed about the SHGs under Mahavir Thittam in Tamil Nadu and its mechanism in Tamil Nadu to find out the change in women’s lives after joining SHGs. To find out the impact of SHGs on rural women in the Seda Patti Block of Madurai district, Tamil Nadu where in 314 SHGs are functioning, nearly 100 women’s were selected. Over 95 percent of women felt that SHGs have enhanced their status and participation in the decision making process. The members agree that SHGs have created better awareness in health and education as well. According to the authors membership in SHG leads to equal status, participation and power of decision making in household, equal status, participation and power of decision making of women in community and village, income and status, participation and power of decision making of women in democratic institution. The rural women was hitherto a stranger in the field of decision making but now feels the power of decision making in the household and community level.
According to Guroomurthy (2002) SHGs enhance the equality of status of women as participants, decision makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. The author pointed out that the SHGs have created great confidence in the minds of the rural women to succeed in their day to day life. We cannot have economic development without inclusion of women in the process. For economic development and social progress of the nation emancipation of women should take place. According to Guroomurthy, SHGs empower women and train them to take active part in socio-economic progress of the nation. SHGs make women sensitized, self-made and self-disciplined, and overcome the social limitations of women such as, superstitions, dormant role in the decision making. Now a days economic development is one of the factors that have changed the entire scenario of social and cultural environment within the country especially for the women. The rural women are engaged in small scale entrepreneurship programme with the help of SHGs. Through that they were economically empowered and attain status in the family and community (Sathiabama 2010).

The rural tribal woman plays a vital role in the farm and home system. She contributes substantially in the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post-harvest and allied activities. Her direct and indirect contribution to the farm and home activities along with livestock management operation save their assets and led to increase in the family income. They are engaged in starting individual or collective income generating programme with the help of SHGs. This programme not only generates income for them but also improve the decision making capabilities that led to overall empowerment.

Accordingly to Punithavathy and Eswaran (2002), the SHGs not only provide credit but also empower women socially and economically. They encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sector and prepare women to take up leadership positions.

Sudharani, Umadevi & Surendra (2002) had undertaken a study to evaluate the social status of women in house management, leadership qualities, health and sanitation and economic status after participation in the SHGs. The findings of the study revealed that in all the four aspects there was positive co-relation between the women’s education status and empowerment, and the self-confidence among women increased. Their decision making power also increased during the period of participation. Micro finance programmes have dealt a definite impact on powers with measurable changes in various socio-economic
parameters namely, children’s education (including the girl child) nutritional and health status and women’s participation in decision making at the household level.

Studies conducted the world over have shown that making micro-credit accessible to the poor (who are considered to be unbankable and low-credit worthy) can be a magic formula to pull the downtrodden up to the main stream of economic activity. One consistent finding was increased self-confidence and self-esteem, and women’s increased participation in decision-making.

The various studies showed that women working in SHGs have more respect and control over resources and better decision making power. Talmaki (2012) in her book ‘Socio-Economic Development of Tribal Women: Changes and Challenges’ showed positive results regarding women who are members of SHGs as well. Out of 498 women respondents 72 percent were members of SHGs. They not only take the decisions regarding family planning, daughters’ education and their marriage, but they take the decisions regarding buying the cattle, selling milk, opening an account in the bank etc. It shows that SHGs have brought transformation among tribal women as well.

The studies above have dealt with the concepts of women’s empowerment, microfinance, micro credit institutions and experience of SHGs in promoting micro-credit interventions, role of SHGs in providing livelihood finance etc. Very few studies have focused on the empowerment of tribal women through SHGs in the above literature review. The present study focused on an in depth analysis of performance of Self Help Groups in making Tribal women empowered, in Tapi district. A few studies also covered some Talukas in the particular state. But the entire district has not been covered in any study which is covered in the present research. The present research study covered all the Talukas in Tapi district (South Gujarat). In the present study NGOs and Government organizations have been taken into consideration and a comparative study was done on that basis, which was not done in the previous studies. Three NGOs and one GO and different prominent communities who are having their own SHGs have been selected in the sample. Hence the comparative study of communities and private & GOs could become possible.

The review of literature enables the researcher to gain background knowledge on the topic and identify the research gap. Taluka-wise and community-wise study of tribal women’s SHGs will fill the research gap.
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